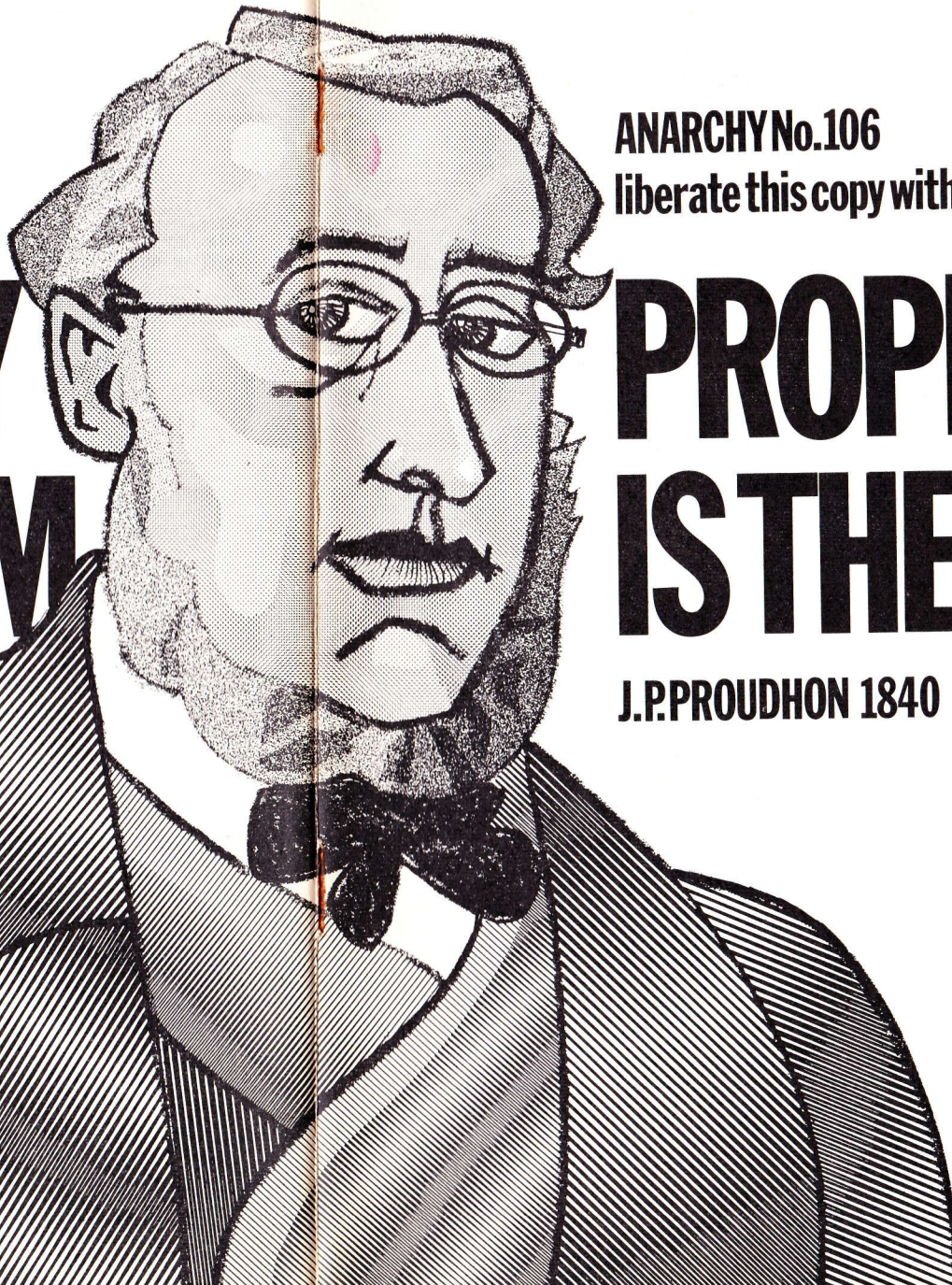


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J.P. PROUDHON 1840

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On Proudhon's 'What is Property?'

GEORGE WOODCOCK

"I BELONG TO NO PARTY, NO COTERIE; I have no followers, no colleagues, no associates. I create no sect; I would reject the role of tribune even if it were offered to me, for the sole reason that I do not wish to enslave myself!" So Proudhon declared in 1840, shortly after the publication of the book—*What is Property?*—which was to bring him both fame and notoriety, and to place him among the great socialist thinkers of the nineteenth century.

It is one of those paradoxical statements Proudhon relished, for it was true and at the same time not true. Throughout the quarter of a century of his career as a revolutionary philosopher, he remained a solitary figure, attached to no party, founding no formal movement to propagate his ideas, and repelling rather than encouraging agreement; there was more than malice in Victor Considérant's description of him as "that strange man who was determined that none should share his views". He enjoyed shocking not only the bourgeoisie but other socialists as well, and in the stormier days of the revolution of 1848 he revelled in the title of "l'homme terreur".

Yet at the same time Proudhon's ideas were so powerful that they fertilized many movements which followed after him. "Proudhon is the master of us all," said his formidable Russian admirer, Michael Bakunin, through whom Proudhon's ideas passed into the historic anarchist movement. The First International was founded largely by the efforts of French working men for whom Proudhon's words were the revolutionary gospel, and it was destroyed in the great fight between those who supported a libertarian socialism of the kind he advocated and those who followed the authoritarian pattern devised by Karl Marx. Later the CGT, the great French trade union movement which is now

GEORGE WOODCOCK wrote this essay as an introduction to a new edition of Proudhon's *What is Property?* to be published shortly by Dover Books (USA).

the captive of the Communist Party, was originated by anarcho-syndicalists guided by Proudhon's theories of working class action, and in Spain not only the anarchists but also the federalists of the 1870's were influenced by his teachings, as were the Russian narodniks. Kropotkin, Herzen and Sorel were all his confessed disciples. Baudelaire supported him during the revolution of 1848; Sainte-Beuve and Flaubert admired him as a writer of classic French prose. Gustave Courbet wove his theories into an art that aimed to express the longings of the people, Péguy was influenced by him, and even Tolstoy sought him out and borrowed the title and much of the theoretical background of his masterpiece, *War and Peace*, from Proudhon's book, *La guerre et la paix*.

This fiery individualist who disdained followers yet wielded such a pervasive influence in his time and afterwards, was born in 1809 in the suburbs of Besançon. His parents were of peasant stock from the mountains of the Franche-Comté, a corner of France whose people are noted for their craggy independence: "I am pure Jurassic limestone," he once said. His father was a cooper and brewer whose beer was much better than his business methods. Whenever the elder Proudhon's ventures failed, which was often, the family would return to the ancestral farm, and Proudhon remembered an austere but in many ways idyllic childhood.

"In my father's house, we breakfasted on maize porridge; at mid-day we ate potatoes; in the evening bacon, and that every day of the week. And despite the economists who praise the English diet, we, with that vegetarian feeding, were fat and strong. Do you know why? Because we breathed the air of our fields and lived from the produce of our own cultivation."

To the end of his life, Proudhon remained at heart a peasant, idealizing the hard but satisfying ways of his childhood, and this influenced his view of existence, so that always—when he envisaged a desirable society—the basis was formed by the farmer assured of the use of such land as he could cultivate and the craftsman assured of the workshop and tools he needed to earn a living.

Proudhon's father added to his commercial incapacity a passion for litigation, and Pierre-Joseph's education at the college in Besançon—where he moved in clattering peasant sabots among the shoe-clad children of the well-to-do—was brought to an abrupt end when the family was plunged into bankruptcy by an adverse court decision. He was apprenticed to a printer, and took a pride in this change of fortune that made him into a craftsman rather than a clerk or a lawyer. "I still remember," he wrote long after he had abandoned the printing shop for the writer's desk, "the great day when my composing stick became for me the symbol and the instrument of my freedom." In his trade Proudhon not only acquired the sense of independence that comes from a

craft well learnt; he also found the printing shop a second school, where he could teach himself Hebrew—as well as perfecting his Latin and Greek—while he set in type the works of the theologians who infested the seminaries of Besançon, and where he came into direct and personal contact with the traditions of socialism through meeting another celebrated native of his birthplace, the eccentric Charles Fourier, and supervising the printing of Fourier's strange but influential masterpiece, *Le Nouveau Monde Industriel et Sociétaire*. Eventually, in the interests of freedom, Proudhon was to reject Fourier's utopian form of socialism, with its planned communities or phalansteries, but "for six weeks", he remembered, "I was the captive of that bizarre genius".

While he was working in the printing shop, Proudhon compiled a rather naive essay on philosophy which was his first published work. It attracted the attention of the Besançon Academy and earned him the Suard Pension, which enabled him to study and live rather penuriously in Paris while he wrote his first important book, *Qu'est ce que la propriété?* or *What is Property?* It appeared in 1840 and was only the first of many books produced in a life of ardent writing.

Proudhon was no mere desk-bound theoretician until in later life ill-health made him so. In his own independent way he played a lively role in the dramatic events of his time. The publication of *What is Property?* brought him a European fame in the radical circles of his time, and during the early 1840's he came into close contact with many of the men who later were to play dominant roles in the socialist movement. Marx, Bakunin and Alexander Herzen were all at this time exiles in Paris, living in poor, furtive rooms of the Latin Quarter, which Proudhon also inhabited, and he became friendly with all of them, spending days and often nights discussing the tactics of the revolution and the philosophy of Hegel and the Left Hegelians, the leading group among French socialists at this period. Within Bakunin and Herzen the friendship was lasting, and both these men were to take Proudhon's ideas into larger contexts than the French revolutionary movement—Bakunin into international anarchism and Herzen into Russian populism. With Marx the relationship was guarded and temporary. Marx first hailed *What is Property?* as "a penetrating work" and declared it to be "the first decisive, vigorous and scientific examination" that had been made of the subject. He was one of the first writers outside France to recognize Proudhon's importance, and he tried hard to recruit him into the international communist network which he and Engels were attempting to create in the years immediately before 1848. In 1846 there was an exchange of letters on this subject in which Proudhon showed clearly his estimate of Marx's overbearing dogmatic attitude towards socialism. The key passage in his final letter marks the real beginning of the conflict of personalities and ideas which divided the socialist movement of the nineteenth century and which, when Bakunin took Proudhon's place as the spokesman of libertarian socialism, was to make the breach between the anarchist and the communist movements complete.

"Let us seek together if you wish" (he told Marx) "the laws of society, the manner in which these laws are realized, the process by which we shall succeed in discovering them; but, for God's sake, after having demolished all the *a priori* dogmatisms, do not let us in our turn dream of indoctrinating the people. . . . I applaud with all my heart your thought of bringing to light all opinions; let us carry on a good and loyal polemic; let us give the world the example of a learned and far-sighted tolerance, but let us not, because we are at the head of a movement, make ourselves the leaders of a new intolerance, let us not pose as the apostles of a new religion, even if it be the religion of logic, the religion of reason. Let us gather together and encourage all protests, let us brand all exclusiveness, all mysticism; let us never regard a question as exhausted, and when we have used our last argument, let us begin again, if need be, with eloquence and irony. On that condition, I will gladly enter your association. Otherwise—no!"

Deeply offended, since he recognized Proudhon's implied reproach to his own bigotry, Marx never wrote an answering letter; he replied in another way when, in 1847, he published a book—*The Poverty of Philosophy*—in which he viciously attacked Proudhon and brought all links between them to an end.

Proudhon hardly noticed Marx's attack—it rated a couple of lines in his diary with the laconic remark, "Marx is the tapeworm of socialism!"—for already events in France were moving towards the revolution of 1848, and he was anxious to spread widely his own ideas on socialism. For this, he felt a newspaper to be necessary and—a few days after he had helped to erect the barricades of a revolution which he felt had been "made without ideas"—he founded *Le Représentant du peuple*, the first of a series of four papers lasting in all over two and a half years, each of them killed because Proudhon's forthrightness was too much even for those revolutionary days. The people bought every issue he published with enthusiasm, but the authorities feared his popularity so much that they not merely suppressed his papers but also, in 1849, imprisoned him for three years for insulting the new Prince-President, Louis Napoleon, who was preparing to re-create the Napoleonic empire.

Before he went to prison, Proudhon had been elected to the National Assembly, and had caused a scandal there by a proposal which he considered would contribute to the desired aim of the revolution; this he saw as the reduction of property to possession by the abolition of revenues. His proposal, for a partial moratorium on rents and debts, would give the proprietors a chance "to contribute, for their part, to the revolutionary work, proprietors being responsible for the consequences of their refusals". When his colleagues shouted for an explanation, Proudhon proceeded to make one of his historic definitions. "It means," he told the assembly, "that in the case of refusal we our-

selves shall proceed to the liquidation without you." When his hearers shouted, "Whom do you mean by *you*?" he answered: "When I used those two pronouns, *you* and *we*, it is clear that I was identifying myself with the proletariat, and you with the bourgeois class." "It is the social war!" shouted the angry members, and they voted condemnation of Proudhon 691 to 2; he gloried in being in so small a minority, and is even reported to have been annoyed with the solitary friend who voted loyally with him.

In fact, though in this way Proudhon clearly laid down his view that the revolution must take on a class form, in which the workers would have to find their own way to freedom, he was no violent revolutionary; the lever of social change he was seeking to create in 1848 was nothing more lethal than the People's Bank, an institution of mutual credit among producers by which they could eventually undermine the capitalist system by evolving their own network of exchange. But the People's Bank, though it had gathered 27,000 members, foundered after Proudhon's imprisonment. His literary activity, however, continued, largely owing to the leniency with which political prisoners were treated in nineteenth century France; he was allowed books and visitors and food as he desired, he could go out on parole for one day a week, and in the process of three years' imprisonment he managed to write three books, to continue editing his newspapers until they were finally suppressed, to marry and beget a child.

He emerged from prison in 1852, and soon he was in trouble again. Under the autocratic regime of Napoleon III most of the socialists had gone into exile, or prison, or silence, and Proudhon, who refused to keep quiet, became almost the only spokesman for the independent left. In 1858, after he published his most impressive work, *De la justice dans la révolution et dans l'église*, he was prosecuted for attacks on church and state, and this time, instead of accepting the sentence of five years' imprisonment, he fled to Belgium, where he stayed until 1862, returning to Paris for the two years that remained to him of life. In that last phase, Proudhon wrote on many subjects, from federalism to the principles of painting, but most of all he was concerned with persuading the people to boycott the elections by which Napoleon III sought to validate his rule (Proudhon thus initiating the anarchist custom of refusing to vote in elections), and with developing his theory that the workers had nothing to gain from supporting parties organized by members of other classes but must recognize their own political capabilities and create their organs of social change. "I say to you with all the energy and sadness of my heart: separate yourselves from those who cut themselves off from you." Many workers began to accept his arguments, so that in the end this man who sought to create no party actually acquired a following, and lived long enough to hear that the International had been founded largely by Proudhonians.

In the career that made Proudhon such a seminal figure in European socialism, *What is Property?* holds a special place. The book, as

we have it today, consists of two separate works, *What is Property?* itself, which in the original appeared in 1840, and the *Letter to M. Blanqui*, which appeared in 1841; Louis-Adolphe Blanqui, a relative of the famous conspirator, was an economist who had criticized Proudhon's original work. The main function of the Letter in fact is to fill in whatever loopholes may have been detected in *What is Property?*

Proudhon launched *What is Property?* with a grand éclat by answering the question in the title with the phrase, "Property is Theft!", a maxim long to be remembered, to be bandied about in the polemics of anarchists and others, and to hang like a verbal albatross around its creator's reputation.

Ironically, Proudhon did not mean literally what he said. His boldness of expression was intended for emphasis, and by "property" he wished to be understood what he later called "the sum of its abuses". He was denouncing the property of the man who uses it to exploit the labour of others without an effort on his own part, property distinguished by interest and rent, by the impositions of the non-producer on the producer. Towards property regarded as "possession", the right of a man to control his dwelling and the land and tools he needs to live, Proudhon had no hostility; indeed, he regarded it as the cornerstone of liberty, and his main criticism of the communists was that they wished to destroy it.

Seeking neither property in its ordinary unrestricted sense, nor communism, Proudhon reached the conclusion that the only society which could possibly guarantee a man's rights to the product of his toil was one of "liberty". Here he came to another celebrated definition, for after examining the various forms of government, he declared he was not a "democrat" but an "anarchist". By this he meant, not that he upheld political chaos, but that he believed in an immanent justice which man had perverted by the creation of wrong institutions. Property was incompatible with this justice, because it excluded the worker not only from enjoying the fruits of his toil, but also from benefiting from the social advantages which are the products of centuries of common effort. Justice therefore demanded a society in which equality and order could exist together. There was only one such society. "As man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy. Anarchy—the absence of a master, of a sovereign—such is the form of government to which we are every day approximating."

Proudhon was not the first anarchist in the sense of advocating a society based on natural co-operativeness rather than coercion; William Godwin had preceded him fifty years before when he wrote *Political Justice*. But Proudhon was the first man to use the word "anarchism", which had formerly been a term of political abuse, as the exact definition of a theory advocating a society where communism and property would be synthesized in such a way that government

would come to an end and freedom flourish in a work of small proprietors united in a network of free contracts.

In Proudhon's as in Godwin's picture of the ideal society it is this predominance of the small proprietor, the peasant or artisan, that immediately impresses one. It is clear, from a reading of *What is Property?*, that Proudhon is talking mainly about property in land, and that his solution is almost wholly an agrarian one—the kind of solution that would have saved honest and hard-working countrymen like his father from recurrent bankruptcy. Manufacture more complex than that carried on by artisans in small individual workshops he appears to ignore. But we have to remember that, like Godwin, Proudhon was speaking from his experience, which had been limited in 1840 to the rural environs of Besançon, where the railway, that pioneer of industrialism, had not yet penetrated, and to the Latin Quarter of Paris which then, as even now, was a nest of small workshops. Afterwards, in Lyons, he was to have experience of the rising industries of the period, and in later works, and particularly in *The General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, he gave ample thought to the creation of co-operative associations for the running of factories and railways.

What is Property? embraces the core of nineteenth century anarchism, without the connotations of violence that were later attached to the doctrine; Proudhon differed from some of his successors, in believing that the abuses of property could be brought to an end without the traumatic convulsions of a bloody revolution. But all the rest of later anarchism is there, spoken or implied—the conception of a free society united by association, of workers controlling the means of production. Later Proudhon was to elaborate other aspects—the working class political struggle as a thing of its own, federalism and decentralism as means of reshaping society, the commune and the industrial association as the important units of human intercourse, the end of frontiers and nations. But *What is Property?*—though it is a young man's book, and far less eloquent or decorated with autodidactic trophies of learning than such later works as *De la Justice* and *La guerre et la paix*—remains the foundation on which the whole edifice of nineteenth century anarchist theory was to be constructed.

Anarchism and revolution

ANTONY FLEMING

1. THE NECESSITY OF REVOLUTION

IT MAY BE, and has been, argued, that it is enough just to provide an alternative example to the sick society. I once heard Barnaby Martin advocate this view, and it seems to be the basis of the anarchist *Catholic Worker*. This indeed is the situation with the kibbutzim in Israel.

Maxime Rodinson has provided a useful analysis of the kibbutz as a socialist utopia. While socialist and non-Stalinist itself, "on the other hand, both under the British mandate and to an even greater extent in the young State of Israel, this socialist sector within the Palestinian Yishuv formed part of a social structure dominated by economic considerations which had nothing specifically socialist about them; the market economy was paramount. . . ." As a certain Israeli banker has stated: "To the outside world, the kibbutz behaves exactly like a capitalist enterprise, and keeps to its contracts better than an individual."¹

Nor is this a matter of choice. A community that interacts economically with another community, and is dependent on it, must conform to its pattern of interaction. The kibbutz is like the schizoid: as long as he presents a false self he is 'sane', i.e. culturally acceptable. As soon as he challenges the form of interaction: as soon as he defies it he is classified as 'mad'.

Perhaps it could be argued we should accept this and work to economic self-sufficiency in the Commune. But two consequences become inevitable: either we are forgotten, in which case we are surely hardly being revolutionary, and anyway, which is perhaps more

ANTONY FLEMING (7 New Road, Clifton, Bedfordshire) would be interested to hear other readers' views on the subject.

important, the Commune dies of a lack of a friendly environment and the human desire to be sociable. Eventually the members would want new human relationships. After a time this would mean extinction, unless the new relationships were anarchic, and therefore revolutionary. Alternatively, the Commune is destroyed by the System, because the System cannot cope with deviance.

The example of the miners in Bolivia, quoted by Debray to show the uselessness of fixed bases,² in fact to leave the initiative in the hands of the System is to invite destruction. In England, land of compromises, it is more likely the drop-out community, providing it had bought and paid for its land and kept the law, would end up like the kibbutz.

Is this a libertarian aim? No, because libertarianism hardly exists when your Commune has to conform to the demanding laws of an authority-culture.

If the Commune is to be truly libertarian, then, it must attack the System. Not by a crude ridiculing of the conformist, but by the 're-inforcement' of his innate spontaneity, his desire to do his own thing and have some control over his life—the drive that the System copes with by the 'human face' of participation (meaning when you get the sack you can thank boss and union bureaucrat jointly, instead of just boss). By aggravating the contradictions repressed in every soul to the point of explosion, which is the crisis point when the System breaks down—but only as long as the desire for freedom has been sufficiently strengthened. Otherwise you just get violent action against the Commune.

It must attack, not just as a demonstration of its belief in total freedom, but as an act of self-preservation.

At a particular point in time the culture reaches a revolutionary situation. At that point the capitalist and revisionist CP stand by and say it is too soon. A thousand vanguardist sects jump on the bandwagon, attempt to seize control of a workers' liberation and make it the triumph of their faction. At a certain point the impetus of the revolution slows down—then, as with the Bolsheviks in Russia, the vanguardist takes control.

Why? And how can it be avoided? Only when the revolution ceases to be an upsurge of protest against the status quo, mingled with demands for change, and becomes a positive transformation of society. Trotsky was right to advocate "a revolution whose every successive stage is rooted in the preceding one and which can only end in the complete liquidation of class society".³ But he did not understand that the economy is not all—the basic brick of a society is the attitudes of the culture. Economic factors may radically alter them, but it is by its effect on cultural attitudes that a revolution ultimately stands or falls.

A revolution is the point at which a culture is transformed, brought about by the breakdown of that culture in the face of its own contradictions. Each culture has different contradictions, even in the Western capitalist complex. And those who tell us each country must make their own revolution are right. As the Commune is a catalyst in the culture, so one culture is a catalyst among others. It can only help other cultures to make their own revolutions, just as it does not lead the revolution in its own. I do not accept the World Revolution—least of all the Stalin version of a liberation which is really an imperialism. Every culture does not arrive at a revolutionary situation at the same time. The revolutionary culture must make its advance to freedom even in the presence of surrounding forces of elitist-statist aggression. But it must also be prepared to defend itself. And to stimulate its neighbours to find their own revolutionary paths to freedom—for there is, in spite of what Kropotkin seemed to feel towards the end of his life,⁴ there is no other way.

NOTES

¹M. Rodinson: *Israel and the Arabs* p. 47-8 (Penguin)

²R. Debray: *Revolution in the Revolution?* p. 32-3 (Pelican)

³L. Trotsky: *Introduction to the Theory of Permanent Revolution in Age of Permanent Revolution* p. 62 (Dell)

⁴G. Woodcock: *Anarchism* p. 162 (Pelican)

2. IS REVOLUTION AUTHORITARIAN?

Nicholas Walter acknowledged the insurrectionism of many anarchists,¹ but he does not seem to take into account the moral question of violence in any depth, though he does tell us that "anarchists see violence as a stronger version of authority".² We have already pointed out that Kropotkin thought anarchy might come by evolution—suggesting it as early as 1891,³ but it is a view I have rejected.

Bakunin is of course right to assert that revolutionary action is purative and regenerative both for society and the individual.³ The revolution is liberative for the oppressed.

But, equally, is there not some truth in Lenin's view that "we must suppress them (the bosses) in order to free humanity from wage slavery. Their resistance must be crushed by force; and it is clear that where there is suppression, where there is violence, there is no freedom and no democracy".⁴

This point is even more important for the anarchist, who rejects democracy (the dictatorship of the majority) anyway. We have already seen that the ruling class will not give in without a struggle. Have we, as anarchists, any right to coerce them?

Theoretically, of course, the revolution, by ending the boss-worker relationship, frees both worker and boss. "Freedom is freedom not

only from the masters but from the slaves also. The master is determined from without; the master is not a personality, just as the slave is not a personality. . . . The master knows only the height to which his slaves raise him".⁵

But the revolutionary coerces the ruling class into freedom. He has acted as a catalyst in a revolutionary situation, and the crisis has occurred. The oppressed rises against the oppressor (this picture is true when the oppression is upbringing, school, mental hospital and prison as much, if not more, than when it is by physical violence) and throws off his chains. He has chosen freedom. The boss has not.

The boss may anyway choose to fight the revolution. The revolutionary must fight back. And so we arrive at another problem for anarchists. I think it was Camus who believed to kill a man is the ultimate offence against his freedom. One could of course trot out the mediaeval scholastic argument that one shoots to defend oneself (one's freedom, in this case) and the death of the enemy is a secondary effect. This is pure rationalization. The anarchist militiamen in Spain did not shoot to defend themselves—they shot to destroy their enemy.

In fact, there is an inherent contradiction in the culture that provides the core of the crisis—the conflict between the freedom of the oppressed and the freedom of the oppressor. The oppressed must destroy his oppressors is a first step towards his own total liberation.

The freedom revolutionary can in fact only find his own total, irreversible, freedom if the enemies of that freedom are destroyed. He has to adopt a Macchiavellian attitude—the readiness to coerce the oppressor to gain his own freedom.

The alternative is a Gandhian 'drop-outism': we have already seen the inherent contradictions of that approach.

This at least is how I experience the problem existentially. Perhaps other anarchists can show that the apparent dichotomy is in fact an illusion.

NOTES

¹N. Walter: "About Anarchism" in *ANARCHY* 100 p. 170.

²N. Walter: *ibid* p. 171.

³G. Woodcock: *Anarchism* p. 162.

⁴V. I. Lenin: *State and Revolution in Essential Works of Marxism* p. 171 (Bantam Matrix).

⁵N. Berdaeyev: "Personality, Religion and Existential Anarchism" in *Patterns of Anarchy* p. 157 (Doubleday Anchor).

3. THE SHAPE OF REVOLUTION— MARXIST vs. ANARCHIST?

I am not discussing here whether it is preferable to have a Marxist or an Anarchist Revolution, but whether the concepts of the revolutionary process differ fundamentally in Marxism and Anarchism. Note I don't use the term Marxist-Leninist. There would be nothing to discuss if I had.

At the time of the First International, the theoretical difference between Marx and the anarchists on revolution was that Marx believed the state could only disappear after the abolition of classes by a proletarian dictatorship, while anarchists seem to have believed it was enough to abolish the State.¹ If in fact this analysis is correct, I certainly don't think it is a picture most of us would accept now. John Pilgrim very successfully indicated the authoritarian structure of many stateless societies a long time ago.²

The first difference between Marxists and anarchists is that, while the former believes in a class revolution, organized by a party, the latter believes in a spontaneous uprising in which each participant is involved as a sovereign individual.

I think one is justified in saying that, though each individual chooses to take part, and the individual is certainly the basic unit, not the class, yet the revolution is a class revolution, in the sense that a class is composed of a number of unique persons who share various attributes, and it is this shared identity that is in conflict with the identity of the culture.

Apparatus theoreticians, from Lenin³ to Frantz Fanon⁴ and Mao Tse-Tung, who claimed: "If there is to be a revolution, there must be a revolutionary party",⁵ have decried spontaneous uprisings as inevitably doomed to failure. And this in spite of the fact every uprising is in origin ultimately spontaneous—the agitation of revolutionary factions only aggravates a crisis: they cannot make one out of nothing. The occurrence of a revolutionary crisis sometimes explodes the status quo: at other times it does not. At these times a protracted struggle occurs, and this is the basis of the confusion. No doubt then, as Cohn-Bendit admits happened in the May Events, some organization is essential:⁶ this is something entirely different from accepting the concept of a hand-picked elite, or, *a la* Debray, a politico-military Leader.⁷

Anarchists have traditionally opposed the concept of proletarian dictatorship. And yet the forms of revolutionary power are monotonously the same—Russian Soviets, Hungarian Workers Councils,⁸ Paris Commune 1871, a power structure already discussed in the analysis of the 1871 and 1917 Revolutions—a power structure that has occurred in our own time in Paris and a thousand other places.

The eruption of workers' power forms represents a significant breakdown of bourgeois cultural conditioning: but, it is always possible the revolutionary will regress to conformist attitudes if the pressure is not kept up until these conditioned reflexes are irreversibly extinguished. Perhaps we have overstressed this point now, but it is of crucial importance. Man only becomes deconditioned through persevering choice or under the impetus of a continuous revolution. It is not even enough to extinguish class attitudes. A libertarian revolution must end all

inhibitions. Freedom is a mode-of-being in a free environment. Kardelj has said "revolution should inaugurate the process of the withering away of the state".⁹ It should also see the end of the state and the release of total freedom.

Before that point is reached, the ruling class, those with an investment in a coercive culture, will resist in every way possible. No ruling class has ever given in without a fight. The revolutionary has to destroy before he can build.

The worker seizes his own factory, the peasant his own land: he throws up Communes as organs of his power. Power that is at the bottom not in a Central Committee, in Communes the members of which are "without exception, elected and subject to recall *at any time*"¹⁰ — Chairman Mao's elitist condemnation of ultra-democracy¹¹ only serves to demonstrate he never read Marx's *Civil War in France*.

A proletarian dictatorship is necessary, in the sense that the worker must force the boss to accept the revolution, or he will see his revolution destroyed.

"After overthrowing the yoke of the capitalists, should the workers 'lay down their arms', or use them against the capitalists in order to crush their resistance?"¹²

And what is that if not a transient proletarian dictatorship?

Is this picture of the shape of the revolutionary process not in fact incompatible with anarchism? Does it not fall into the mainstream of Marxist thought?

Even a cursory reading will demonstrate the points of difference. The continuous revolution destroying the coercive culture and liberating self and environment. The fact the Commune is an organ of liberative power and exists at grass-roots level. The fact the libertarian community is a catalyst, not a vanguard, and that revolution is spontaneous. Yet in a sense this is what Marx was saying in his concept of the withering away of the state—some at least of it. In so far as he agrees with this picture, I believe we can say he belongs to the libertarian tradition.

To proclaim such a picture is, I believe, to step out of the mainstream of both pure anarchism and pure Marxism into what could be called anarcho-Marxism, but is more accurately defined as a return to the Commune democracy, and an advance towards a horizon it never reached. Nor perhaps ever saw clearly.

NOTES

¹V. I. Lenin: *State and Revolution in Essential Works of Marxism* p. 148-9 (Bantam Matrix).

²J. Pilgrim: "Anarchism and Stateless Societies" in ANARCHY 58.

³V. I. Lenin:

⁴F. Fanon: *Wretched of the Earth* Ch. 2 (Penguin).

⁵Mao Tse-Tung: "Revolutionary Forces of the World, Unite!" in *Selected Works* Vol. IV p. 284 (Peking Foreign Languages Press).

⁶Cohn-Bendit: *Obsolete Communism—the Left-Wing Alternative* (Penguin).

⁷R. Debray: *Revolution in the Revolution?* p. 71-3 (Pelican).

⁸A. Anderson: *Hungary 56* (Solidarity Book).

⁹E. Kardelj: 1954 Speech in Oslo in *The Marxists* p. 412 (Pelican).

¹⁰V. I. Lenin: *State and Revolution* in *ibid* p. 135.

¹¹Mao Tse-Tung: "Ultra-Democracy—On Correcting Mistaken Ideas In The Party" in *Selected Works* Vol. 1 p. 108-9.

¹²V. I. Lenin: *ibid* p. 148-9.

4. THE FAILED REVOLUTIONS

Russia 1917-18

In February 1917 the Russian Empire crumbled in ruins, leaving behind it a thousand factions—from the Cadets to the Anarchists, pass through the various shades of SR and Marxist in between. For the ensuing months the bourgeois politicians, led for most of the time by Kerensky, tried to make the Constituent Assembly the centre of power, and destroy the Soviets. In the face of their failure, Kerensky seems to have resorted to a military putsch, organized—and messed up—by Kornilov.

During these months there were in fact two centres of power. In June 1917, in spite of the efforts of the Bolsheviks, the masses rose in revolt. This time they failed, and the Establishment seized the opportunity to persecute the Bolsheviks.

The February Revolution was a spontaneous refusal of the masses to tolerate Tsarism a moment longer. The bourgeois democrats tried to seize control of it. The October Revolution was a total rejection of their efforts. But this time it was the Bolsheviks who tried to take it over—and they succeeded.

On all three occasions "the masses at the turning point were a hundred times to the left of the extreme left party":¹ "It might be argued that . . . it (the Party) has the October Revolution to its credit. Nothing could be farther from the truth".²

It is a widely held view among anarchists that the October Revolution was a deliberate device organized by the Bolsheviks to undo the 'libertarian' February Revolution.³ The Bolsheviks then won control of the Soviets by their proclamation of "Bread and Peace" and "All Power to the Soviets". Yet, for some months afterwards, they followed a policy that produced the remark "the Bolsheviks . . . have become anarchists of a sort".⁴ Their policy continued until the banning of non-Bolshevik factions, and the banning of intra-Party factions soon after Lenin forced one man-management on a reluctant Party.⁵

What is the explanation of all this? Why did the former advocate of elitism in *What Is To Be Done?* become a libertarian, then return to his former elitism?

We have first of all to remember that Lenin came from a bourgeois family—not only bourgeois, but also bureaucratic. "His father had risen high enough in the government service, as inspector of schools, to receive the title of nobility".⁶ It is clear that he followed his father's attitudes, even if he did graft them on to Marxism.

But the Bolsheviks like Kamenev, Stalin, etc., were not revolutionaries. Lenin was, and he saw that it was the proletariat, not the Party, who were his allies. "We have said that there could not yet be social-democratic consciousness among the workers. It could only be brought to them from without", he said in 1902.⁷ Now he found how wrong he was.

But once in power Lenin was faced with the fact the workers were libertarian. Had he waited he would either have had to take his libertarianism to its conclusion and made himself and the Bolsheviks redundant, or have lost power. In his own desire for power, his association of the Party with right, once again he saw the workers as ignorant—worse, they were anarchic. His own desire to rule combined with a revived bourgeois elitism.

The Soviets were destroyed. Marx was destroyed. And the road to Stalinism was built.

The revolution lost impetus, because the desires of the workers for peace and bread were not replaced by a real liberation. The Bolsheviks seized the helm, and they were allowed to consolidate their power.

*Hungary 1956*⁸

The story of Hungary is a different story. The enemies were not the capitalists, but the so-called revolutionary CP, the new Tsars. The revolution failed for different reasons, equally significant.

The course of the Hungarian Revolution is easy to describe: the rising tension under the Rakosi dictatorship; the Poznan trials in Poland, the Laszlo Rajk funeral under Gero, the new Stalin who had replaced the damned Rakosi. Then the start of the demands for workers management, twisted by the Party, uncomprehended by the Petofi Circle. Then the demonstrations of October 23—a peaceful march, the tearing down of Stalin's statue, the meeting outside the Radio Station, the animal conditioned reflex of the AVO, and the explosion into violence.

A spontaneous uprising that the CP, including Nagy, met in the only way they understood—by calling in the Russian tanks, and following it with appeals to the workers to lay down their arms. Some Russian tanks joined the rebels. The AVO at their barracks were massacred.

And still the workers' councils mushroomed. The West looked to Nagy as the leader of the rising—Nagy who had called in the Russians, Nagy who called for capitulation, Nagy who in his book on his idea of Communism never once mentioned workers control.⁹ The West merely mentioned demands for parliamentary democracy.

Here of course lies the crucial difference between Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968. Hungary was a revolution in the tradition of proletarian democracy. Czechoslovakia was a take-over bid by the new technocrats, with bourgeois democratic trappings. Employees' Councils were mentioned, but they were a minor concession. The 2,000 Words manifesto, darling of the West liberal press, had the dubious but time-honoured pride of pointing out the rights of management to push the workers around.

The Russians withdrew and returned, with new tanks and 'safe' troops. After long and bitter fighting the revolution was crushed, legitimized by the appeal for intervention by Kadar's new dictatorship—after the Russians had moved in anyway. The workers councils were whittled down, and legally dissolved on December 9, 1956, with those remaining in some factories abolished on November 17, 1957.

The West ignored the appeals of the Freedom Fighters for help. Goldwater has since written that it should have intervened,¹⁰ but if he did not understand most bourgeois politicians did. The Hungarian Revolution had to fail because the capitalist, no more than the Marxist-Leninist, sees a place for workers' management.
*Paris 1871*¹¹

The Paris Commune of 1871 has been claimed by every faction on the Left. It was, for Lenin, the prototype of the proletarian revolution. Yet the Marxists hardly played any part in it.

The French 2nd Empire had collapsed. The Germans had beaten France into the ground. But Paris held out. And the French government of Thiers and his fellow-reactionaries, in this very hour of defeat, came to an agreement with the victors. The interests of international capitalism united to crush the rising of a confused urban proletariat that had spent the past eighty years upset the sedate bourgeoisie by its extremism.

Who can claim the Commune?

"Neither the Blanquists nor the anarchists, much less the Marxists, can claim it as their own. . . . Even the mutualists and collectivists within the Commune made little effort to put their ideas into practice. . . . The most that can be said is that they often showed that working men can be efficient administrators."¹²

Marx claimed that the Commune taught the lesson of democratic centralism¹³ when the Communist Manifesto in fact proclaimed a Proudhonist federalism.¹⁴ But the Commune did replace the standing army by the armed people.¹⁵

Most vital and significant of all, it replaced the periodic elections of bourgeois democracy with the radical new form of Commune democracy, in which all representatives were, "without exception, elected and subject to recall at any time, their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary 'workingmen's wages'". Lenin tells us "these simple and 'self-evident' democratic measures, while completely uniting the interests of the workers and the majority of the peasants, at the same time serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to socialism".¹⁵

But when it came to the crunch Lenin no longer thought these democratic forms were self-evident—precisely because he was a member of the bourgeoisie, bourgeois in his attitudes. The Commune democratic form is the spontaneous form that proletarian democracy has always taken, in spite of the efforts of bourgeois liberal-democracy and Marxist-Leninist democratic centralism.

Lessons from history

The experience of these failed revolutions is obvious, and twofold.

The spontaneous form of proletarian democracy is the Commune, and the Commune is of its nature liberative, though it can be manipulated in its evolution to freedom.

Vanguard parties proclaiming their belief in the Commune are not to be trusted. They must betray proletarian democracy of their very nature.

Capitalism, whether it calls itself Free Enterprise or Marxist-Leninist, or faced with national wars, will unite, explicitly or tacitly, to crush proletarian revolution.

The Commune is a step towards freedom: it is the form workers' power takes to transform society and to end both the State and non-State as coercive cultural entities. The Commune in the end becomes the community in direct democratic congress, progressing into voluntary relationships completely without inhibition.

What is the shape of the free society?

NOTES

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²Cohn-Bendit: *Obsolete Communism—the Left-Wing Alternative* (Penguin).

³"October 1917—No Revolution At All" in *FREEDOM* Vol. 28 No. 33.

⁴Cohn-Bendit: *ibid* p. 218.

⁵A. Kollontai: *Workers' Opposition* p. 49-50 (Solidarity Book).

⁶A. Mendel: *Essential Works of Marxism* p. 90-1.

⁷V. I. Lenin: *What Is To Be Done?* in *Essential Works of Marxism* p. 92.

⁸A. Anderson: *Hungary 56* (Solidarity Book).

⁹I. Nagy: *On Communism* (Thames and Hudson).

¹⁰B. Goldwater: *Conscience of a Conservative* p. 119 (Fontana).

¹¹F. Jellinek: *Paris Commune 1871*.

¹²G. Woodcock: *Anarchism* p. 271.

¹³V. I. Lenin: *ibid* p. 143.

¹⁴as ¹².

¹⁵V. I. Lenin: *ibid* p. 132.

¹⁶V. I. Lenin: *ibid* p. 135.

5. THE SHAPE OF THE FREE SOCIETY

“Our ideas of what freedom means and will produce are expressions of our largely conditioned personalities.

Nevertheless, on the basis of anthropology it is possible to put out various ideas. Are we going to have far greater communalization, or are we going to see Stirnerite self-sufficiency? Is the Marxist picture of sexual communism or the alternative of the family going to occur? Will factories be operated on a system of workers' management? The anarchist has never been very specific about his utopia, and when he has differences of opinion have been obvious. Because in expressing his utopia he is expressing his largely culturally conditioned being. It is interesting, even helpful, to have some idea of which way we will go: but the fact remains it is very largely guesswork.”¹

The criticisms of anarchy vary, but in discussing the shape of the predicted free society one hardy perennial has to be dealt with. Bernard Shaw summed it up thus: “Kropotkin, too optimistically as I think, disposes of the average man by attributing his unsocialism to the pressure of the corrupt system under which he groans. Remove that pressure, and he will think rightly, says Kropotkin. But if the natural man be indeed social as well as gregarious, how did the corruption and oppression under which he groans ever arise? Could the institution of property as we know it ever have come into existence unless nearly every man had been, not merely willing, but openly and shamelessly eager to quarter himself idly on the labour of his fellows, and to domineer over them whenever the law enabled him to do so?”²

Shaw of course, like perhaps Kropotkin, failed to see the importance of the internalization of cultural values—the fact that a society depends more on attitudes than structure in the final analysis. He also appears to have failed to recognize that it does not require a majority to change society, only a ruthless elite and a majority that is too scared to do anything, as per South Africa.

Even with this qualification, the point remains. If, as Kropotkin claimed, “mutual aid appears to be the rule among the more successful species and is in fact the most important element in their evolution”,³ how could a competitive-coercive culture have ever arisen in the first place?

Is man by nature co-operative? Is he, indeed, even gregarious?

Malinowski has argued that there is in fact no innate herd instinct in man, unlike the other animals. There is, he says, no anatomical outfit subserving any specific act of “herding”: man's collective behaviour is a gradually built-up habit. Man is, after all, able to survive by himself if necessary. And if herding is not an innate instinct, it is a product of being brought up in a family.⁴

It is instructive to take a quick look at how the different species match up on period-with-family.

“Parental care in primates continues for an exceptionally long time. The most spectacular example is man himself. In plant-eating mammals survival depends very largely on ability to escape from enemies, and therefore mobility at a very early age is essential. By contrast, typical carnivores are born in an almost helpless condition. They are often blind for some time after birth and remain with their parents for periods ranging from several months to well over a year. A moment's thought will show the reason for this different evolutionary pattern. Being predators, (they) are not themselves in serious danger of attack, for any threat that might appear could usually be warded off by their parents. On the other hand, to become successful hunters, they must undergo a complicated process of learning and this requires a prolonged period of association between parents and offspring.”⁵

But carnivores are by no means all herd animals—what about lions, tigers and similar species? For that matter, what about domestic cats and dogs?

These animals have a prolonged upbringing, and yet they lead a solitary adult existence. Man, on the other hand, like the monkey, is a social animal.

It is not, of course, strictly correct to claim that lions do not co-operate with each other. They do, of course, pair up to mate. Equally, the African lion travels in family groups, and some of the members of the pride sometimes co-operate in hunting.⁶ Nevertheless, though intra-special co-operation occurs, there is rarely the social unit that exists with the primates, and some, but by no means all, birds.

So that we have to modify the term ‘solitary’ to some extent. But these animals are far less social than man. Varying though different types of lion are, this very fact itself implies for the more gregarious an innate factor must be posited. For the different types of lion have a closely similar childhood period. It must be something innate that produces the extended family on the African plains, and the virtual solitary of elsewhere.

Man, we conclude, has, in spite of Malinowski, an innate herd instinct.

Man is, of course, omnivorous. It would be possible for him to live on wild fruits, which seems to have formed part of his diet in the beginning, and have led some kind of Hobbean pre-society existence. In fact, however, it is worth remembering the specialized fruit-eating monkey appears to be social anyway. It was, however, certainly biologically necessary for the weak, and small by comparison with other species of the time, for man to be social to kill other animals. And indeed to survive.

It is interesting to note that African mountain gorillas appear to have an extended family system to some extent, though loners sometimes join other groups.⁷ Other monkey species apparently follow the same pattern. The highly primitive Kung Bushmen, of course, follow a somewhat similar pattern. The membership of bands is mainly through lineal descent from the headman or close collaterals. There is some choice. Married couples may join after bride-service has been completed, on the basis of one's blood relationship. A sibling may choose between different groups each of which contains one of his brothers or sisters. A widowed mother might join the band of one of her children. Choice depending on the respective resources of the alternative bands.⁸ The extended family system is of course characteristic of numerous human societies, as various researchers have pointed out. R. D. Laing has summed the position up well: "From comparative anthropology and in terms of the history of cultures, from what I have read and from what a number of anthropologists have said to me personally (this is second-hand, taking at trust their reading of the situation), our nuclear family has never ever existed in the history of the human race until not much longer than 100 years ago in Europe."⁹

Allowing for the exaggeration, the fact remains the extended family is a widespread phenomenon.

We have established, then, the genetic basis of human sociality and the importance of the extended family.

We have two factors to deal with within this context—economic and social.

"A whole array of primitive cultures meet such conditions (of seasonal cycles of starvation and sufficiency) by sharing food which is at other times less communal."¹⁰ And yet we have the highly competitive cultures of, for example, the Pilaga in the Argentine, in the same food-situation: "This (system) is rare among primitive peoples, but it occurs in several parts of the world, always associated with marked hostility."¹¹

How can we explain this? The possibility of there having been a source of food that became extinct after having raised the culture to a secondary stage. This is and must be purely hypothetical.

But even if this hypothesis is valid it indicates that a subsistence

culture can be competitive. And thus that man does not have an instinctive mutualism. We seem to be justified in saying that man started in a mutualistic social organization not by choice, but because survival demanded it and there was no drive against it. By the discovery of surplus food, or by the cultivation of plants and animals, a surplus was produced. There is conflicting evidence about what exactly happened next. Gordon Childe seems to suggest that the surplus was first used to create a religious elite, which later became the first ruling class.¹² The evidence of the Pilaga, if we can regard it as such, would point away from this. Possibly there was no universal line of socio-economic evolution.

It has been proposed in fact that classes are the product of conquest, but if we are to go by the example of the Ankole, it is clear that differences of wealth already existed.¹³

On the other hand, we have the writings of Gordon Childe,¹⁴ and others¹⁵ to the effect the ruling class was identified with the priesthood. We also have the fact that the North American Indians conquered each other, but provided the alternative of integration or extermination: there was no question here of a class society being created by conquest.¹⁶

The priesthood used the surplus wealth to create an artisan class, and we move into history.

Once again we seem to have to admit the possibility of different courses of social evolution, in spite of Marx. Nor is this anything but a statement of the obvious. Africa has not followed the same evolution as Europe: having reached the Sumarian stage, European adventurers put it back into the Stone Age, and then whipped it into the 20th century, complete with its own capitalist forms.¹⁷

Dorothy Lee introduces another not irrelevant point. She indicates the existence of various cultures where, although there is inequality of wealth, there is also a deep-rooted respect of the individual as an autonomous self.¹⁸

We find something on these lines among the more primitive Eskimos. There is a chief who seems to have no authority except in the respect others have for his experience. And no Eskimo will tolerate coercion. The Southern Eskimos have evolved towards more authoritarian forms, of course, under the impact of European civilization.¹⁹

But all this does not alter the fact man evolved beyond a system of mutualism, an evolution that involved the march from sexual communism, through the consanguine family, the punaluan and pairing families and into patrilineal monogamy.²⁰

Fromm has described social evolution as an evolution out of sub-human collectivism into individualism. But in this process natural

human spontaneity has been lost. Culture demands that we surrender our innate spontaneity and conform. This he saw as the basis of neurosis—which he defined as a partial rebellion against the crushing of spontaneity.²¹

Marcuse has identified Freud's death-urge with the urge to return to the womb.²² Jungians could argue that in fact what is involved is a racial memory of the primary culture. Our longing is not for the womb, but for this Garden of Eden.

The myth of the Garden of Eden in one form or another is clearly a universal myth.²³ But it is a myth. Ernst Fischer tells us of the poets mourning the lost collective,²⁴ but as we have seen it only survived because it was necessary for human survival, and no contrary cultural conditioning had occurred. It broke down because there was a surplus. Sooner or later, a competition for this surplus occurred.

We have to recognize the simple fact that, although social, at the crunch a man looks after himself first. The process of transformation from mutualism to competition was a long one, and seems more like a cyclic process than a straight line at times: cultural attitudes had to adapt, and indeed serve to reinforce the existing status quo of the particular stage.

Is this an argument for capitalism?

We come back to Fromm and the concept of an evolution towards individualism. Jung himself has outlined the same process on a personal level. "Individuation means becoming a single, homogenous being and, in so far as 'in-dividuality' embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as 'coming to selfhood' or self-realization."²⁵

And the ultimate lesson of anarchism is that self-realization is only attainable in freedom.²⁶

Spontaneity. Individuality. The constant impetus to return to the womb, to flee selfhood into totalitarian systems in an unfree society. The middle-class backlash which in the end comes down, as all fanaticism does, to the inability to tolerate in others what cannot be accepted in oneself.

But all this, and the lesson of respect in selfhood, does not imply man is a solitary animal. It simply tells us that we are evolving from blind mutualism towards voluntarism. Man, I, only exist as a person when I relate to others. "In the absence of personal relationships, men become more alike, not more individual": isolation leads to insanity—we could add that schizophrenia, the withdrawal into inner space under the impact of double-blind situations,²⁷ or repeated construct invalida-

tion,²⁸ leads to explosion into consciousness of 'archtypal' fantasy, and the regression to the stage immediately after birth, the so-called paranoid-schizoid phase):²⁹ doodling, one would think the most individual of art forms, in fact fit into a few types. Man needs other people to become fully mature. The final stage of human development is, in fact, 'mutual interdependence'—the ideal of human relationship is one "in which giving and taking are equal; in which each accepts the other, and I confronts Thou".³⁰

We have in fact two forms of collectivism—the regressive form, present in ideological totalitarianism and, paradoxically, in schizophrenia, and we have the progressive form.

In the latter, we have a released spontaneity, an individuation within the context of mutual interdependency. Sartre asserts that in any human relationship I become the object: in some way I lose my selfhood and become merely a constituent of someone else's pattern of existence.³¹ In a sense this is true, but it is so only in a theoretical way. Where each respects the other as a unique and autonomous self, being an object does not involve a loss of identity in any meaningful sense.

Man broke loose from the primary culture because it was collective and he is individual. Anxieties of loneliness, etc., have brought regression from time to time, but in spite of this a social and economic evolution has occurred stressing and reinforcing his individuality. It has done so at the price of spontaneity and mutuality. It has also done so for some at the price of exploitation for most. And we are 'regressing' into a bureaucrat capitalist form.³² But this does not solve the problem. The system contains inherent contradictions that have in the past built up to abortive crises, but which in due course must blow the whole system wide open.

It is possible such an explosion would lead to a new totalitarianism, a new regression of the most primitive kind. But it certainly isn't necessary. Man, is, after all, a self-righting mechanism. In a few generations he has seen every solution fail. The strength of demands for workers' power, the key to the door, increase.

I have not given any blueprint for the free society. I have only outlined the psychological basis of it. The forms it takes depend on the nature of the economic situation, for example. Thus while man operates factories, there must be workers' management: but the day is not too far off when factories will operate themselves. The question of how much one works at that point becomes irrelevant. Each receives according to need—not only to physical need, but according to what he or she requires for her full individuation, for total self-realization, in an environment of total freedom.

NOTES

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- ²⁷R. D. Laing and A. Esterson: *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (Tavistock).
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No right to speak . . .

MARY ILES

THIS REPORT ON DETENTION CENTRES is timed to coincide with the findings of the Home Office Committee of Inquiry into the whole Detention Centre system. At the same time the Detention Centre for Girls (Moor Court) is being closed, and proposals are now going through Parliament in the Children and Young Persons Bill, that the four Junior Detention Centres (age 14-16) should "eventually" be replaced by Community Care Homes. Of the fourteen Senior Detention Centres (age 17-20), Aylesbury was closed in March 1969.

This may reflect some change in the attitude of magistrates, but set against this progress is the drag-weight of authoritarianism.

In Section One of this report the Prison Reform Council shows:

1. That the motives of those who wish to retain Detention Centres are, consciously or unconsciously, *the desire to punish*.
2. That Detention Centres were set up in 1948 as a result of a compromise with those who wished to punish.
3. That a recent Prison Department report indicates no relaxation in Detention Centre discipline. The punishments and types of labour are listed.
4. That the latest Criminal Statistics show such high re-conviction rates that they prove conclusively that *punishment does not work* and therefore must be replaced.

In Section Two the Prison Reform Council supplements the critical reports made by the Howard League for Penal Reform and the Quaker Penal Affairs Committee, by giving inside information from ex-Detention Centre boys, who were specially selected by their Probation Officers as being truthful.

SECTION ONE

1. Declarations By Believers in the Detention Centre System

"Make no mistake. Detention Centre punishment is designed to punish, train, educate and discipline. Discipline must be rigorously maintained." (Coroner to jury, concluding inquest on the death of an

MARY ILES, in response to Stan Cohen's article on Detention Centres in *ANARCHY* 101, kindly sent us the text of this report which she has just prepared for the Prison Reform Council.

18 year old boy at Buckley Hall Detention Centre during Punishment P.E. 21.9.68.)

"I am a believer in detention centres. The discipline is tough, as it should be, but the conditions in which the inmates are confined are no worse, and probably better, than that given to some recruits in the army." (Lord Mais, his maiden speech. House of Lords. 30.11.67.)

"I'm rather alarmed by the element of reform creeping into Detention Centres. That, to my mind, will defeat the whole object of the exercise." (Lord Chief Justice Parker; quoted *Sunday Times* 28.4.68.)

"I am not nervous of the word deterrence. Detention Centres deter simply by providing a warning as an alternative, let's face it, to corporal punishment." (William Addison, Magistrate, Chairman of Magistrates' Association, in B.B.C. radio programme on Detention Centres. 21.3.68.)

"But for the shortage of places, magistrates would have sent twice as many young people to Detention Centres last year." (Joseph Brayshaw, Secretary of Magistrates' Association. June 1968.)

Such statements clearly declare their interest.

The purpose of a detention centre is to frighten a boy, to suppress him, to punish. What he thinks or what he feels has no importance.

2. The Origins of Detention Centres

"Detention Centres were created in 1948 specifically as an alternative to flogging and birching. Detention Centres were part of the price paid to abolish them." (Duncan Fairn, 20 years in the Home Office, speaking on Detention Centres at the Quaker Yearly Meeting, 3.8.68.)

3. The System Has Not Changed

Since that original compromise there has been very little, if any, alleviation in Detention Centre Discipline. The Report of the Work of the Prison Department, 1966 states clearly as to Detention Centre Discipline: "There has been no relaxation of the demand for proper discipline and behaviour." It lists the punishments for that year. Here is a brief selection:

FORFEITURE OF REMISSION:

Haslar	253
New Hall	229
Blantyre House	209
Erlestoke	175
Aldington	168
Usk	160
Latchmere House	143
Medomsley	137
Swinfen Hall	136

STOPPAGE OF PAYMENTS:

New Hall	230
Swinfen Hall	46

FORFEITURE OF PRIVILEGES:

Swinfen Hall	61
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REDUCTION IN GRADE:

Erlestoke	76
Swinfen Hall	55
Medomsley	48

EXTRA WORK OR FATIGUES:

Haslar	115
Aldington	65

REMOVAL TO DETENTION ROOM with restricted activities:

Werrington	52
Blantyre House	37
Campsfield House (junior)	15

CONFINEMENT TO DETENTION ROOM:

Medomsley	27
Swinfen Hall	24
Kirklevington (junior)	22

The Prison Dept. Report also lists the types of labour (which were described in the Quaker Report as "boring, tedious and quite unrelated to the employment situation outside").

Maximum weekly pay for a full working week of 44 hours: 2/6d.

LABOURERS		"INDUSTRIES"	
Cleaners, Jobbers, Labourers	377	Laundry Workers	30
Works Dept. Labourers	85	Weavers	18
Metal Recovery	99	Mats, Matting	53
Sorting Salvage	81	Vocational trainees (<i>only</i>)	27
Concrete Moulders	51	Cooks, Bakers	144
Wood-chopping	19	(Small numbers not included)	
Gardens, Sportsfields	113		
	825		272

Percentage of 1,710 boys 48.3% 15.9%

4. The Statistical Evidence

The Criminal Statistics, 1966 show the results of this system.

RE-CONVICTION RATES (OVER A THREE-YEAR PERIOD)

Boys discharged 1962:

Junior	66.2% re-convicted
Senior	58.2% re-convicted

Ex-Approved School boys sent to Detention Centres:

Junior	87% re-convicted
Senior	79.7% re-convicted

Magistrates are permitted to exercise their power to punish without having to inform themselves of its effects. But the Home Office has finally become concerned. The 1966 Report announced that its Research Unit would "investigate factors associated with Detention Centre failure,

and changes in behaviour and attitude in boys serving sentences of detention", and in November 1967 a sub-committee was set up to review the whole Detention Centre system.

Both the Howard League for Penal Reform and the Quaker Penal Affairs Committee have submitted detailed memoranda and reports to the Home Office sub-committee. Both are highly critical of Detention Centres and both make recommendations for positive alternatives.

The National Council for Civil Liberties also commissioned a report on the "Rights of Children and Young Persons" (January 1968) which concluded that since the regime of Detention Centres was calculated to break the wills of offenders in the shortest possible time, committal to a Detention Centre was a "flagrant denial of every principle of rehabilitation".

What needs to be added to these reports to make them strike home are the recorded opinions of those who have felt the Detention Centre experience on their own skin and spirit.

SECTION TWO

In the last few months, with permission from the Home Office and from the North Lancs Probation and After-Care Committee, we have been interviewing ex-Detention Centre boys who were *selected by their Probation Officers as being truthful*. They were from both Senior and Junior Detention Centres. A political detainee was also interviewed. The verbatim accounts of all these boys give the detail behind the "rough, tough time" and "harsh, frightening, punitive experience" referred to in the Quaker P.A.C. Report (p. 12). They also show clearly that the Detention Centre Punishment hardened the boys' own attitude.

Each boy was interviewed separately. They were asked general type questions about their Detention Centre experience. Here follow typical extracts from their replies.

What Was The Discipline Like?

"All along you get pushed around, thumped, and all for little things—for owt, for laughing. Shove or kick or thump . . . not in the face—in the belly or chest or back."

"I saw one boy really beaten up, and one other dragged out of the dining room for some misdemeanour, punched in the eye, and smashed right into a door—after which his condition was accounted for by the official statement that he had fallen downstairs."

"Some officers are all right, some are strict. They may need to be to maintain discipline, but it made you feel like hitting them back."

"Only two or three are good and like a bit of fun, a joke. The others—you have to call them all sir—they treat you like you're a prisoner, like a robot. It makes you hate them."

"There was a reasonable amount of thumping, but the boys never said owt. The officers were usually O.K. but there are some who enjoy

hitting. If an officer hit a boy, the other officers present would mind their own business."

"Officer X. would walk round hitting boys on the back of the head with an aluminium ladle every time he was on tea duty, which was once or twice a week. It didn't seem any joke to us. It was hard enough to bring up lumps. He hit you and said: 'Say "thank you sir"' and if you said nothing you got hit again. One day a boy was crying because his father was dying. X. hit him on the head with the ladle and said 'Stop blabbing', and he knew why it was because the boy told him. And the next day he took it out on that boy worse than ever."

"When the boys were in the showers in the morning Y. (the officer in charge of gardens) would shout: 'Are you joining the land gang?' and leave his red hand mark on your chest where he had slapped you. It hurt at the time but then went. One day behind the garden sheds he caned me with a short broom handle. He laid that in; he left a mark with that."

"The whole emphasis was on instant obedience and 'discipline'. It was all completely negative. There was no sense in anything. If the screws didn't like you, they'd say 'There's a button off there', and tug it off or cut it off with a razor blade—usually just before inspection by the Warden. Other times they'd give you a certain time to get it sewn on again, and if it wasn't sewn on in that time you were fined."

What About The P.E. And Circuit Training?

"The P.T.I. is a decent fellow, but he has a very bad temper. He threw me across the gym the first day we were there marching. I had never done it before; I wasn't getting it right. Z. (the P.T.I.) is all right till someone upsets him. When one boy does something wrong Z. takes it out on all of them. Z. dragged a lad who had had asthma round the field. You had to run round three times wearing heavy boots. This lad was starting to go blue because he couldn't breathe, and said he couldn't make it. Z. said: 'You'll make it' and dragged him and kicked him round."

"There were only two really vicious screws. One was the P.T. instructor, and I was lucky enough to get on the right side of him. He was an ex-mercenary from the Congo, and hated 'blacks'."

"V., one of the two P.T.I.s, was army type. During Circuit Training a lad passed out from exhaustion. V. threw a fire-bucket of water over him. When he came to, V. made him mop up the mess." (The interviewer asked: "Did you think the boy was putting on an act, or did he really pass out?" Reply: "It looked genuine to me.")

"There was a lot of shouting, military style. In Circuit Training people were made to go on even when near collapse."

What Punishments Were Given?

"We were meant to have half an hour Recreation after supper, but we had to sit back in the dining-hall with folded arms and if anyone

spoke we were warned 'No Recreation' or 'No Games'. Sometimes it went on for nights on end. They treated you like little children."

"If anyone talks after hours in the dormitory, everyone has to stand out of bed for an hour—even if they had been asleep—or make and unmake and box the beds. This happened about a couple of times per week. During the period of my Detention it happened about five times in the middle of the night: about 1-2 a.m."

"My first night in the dormitory the lads were messing about because I was new. The officer came in and told everyone to get out and stand by his bed; then he hit me in the stomach hard enough to wind me."

"Because I was a political prisoner, I was always put on clearing out the bogs."

"When there were incidents of violence among the detainees themselves the screws simply turned a blind eye, unless it began to look really dangerous when they would intervene, and generally take the victim to the punishment cells for 'starting trouble'."

"There was Punishment P.E. In the dining-hall someone spat, so everybody was sent to the gym, in suits not in gym kit, to do press-ups and jumping with a medicine ball on the head. Eventually the person owned up."

"With Punishments everyone was done just for one lad. Everyone would be on double P.T. until they found out who did something. Mostly it was for trivial things."

Detention Cell:

"My mate, who was at the Centre because of absconding from an Approved School, was taken to the cell block and made to scrub dustbins with sandpaper. The officer on duty would come in the night; waken him up; say 'Are you all right?' and give you a clout: 'Go back to sleep then'. They would make you run while you had a meal; run while you collected it; go on running while you ate it, and then run back upstairs with it. I have seen the officers running the boys down to the block, hitting them. They were usually kept there 24 hours."

Did You Ever Complain?

"No one complained. Everyone takes it that clouts are normal—that is if you've been brought up that way, that you get a clout or a strap if you do owt wrong."

"The Warden was full of time (old). He seemed not to know what was going on. He would ask if I was all right, but I didn't tell him anything for two reasons: One, you'd be done by the officers; and two, you'd be done by the other lads who were scared of losing remission."

"One boy, small in size, had been hit many times by officer Y., including hits in the stomach. Finally he was driven to saying he would tell the Warden: he was talking on the field, he was supposed to be

digging a patch but he had finished it. Y. came up and hit him on the back of his head. He fairly laid into him. He had been in a bad mood all morning and seemed like he was taking it out on him. When the boy said he would tell the Warden, the officer threatened: 'If you do I'll put you on Warden's Report and you'll be losing remission as well, and he won't believe you', so he didn't complain.

"During a visit I told my father what was happening, so he complained to an officer who said it was all 'a pack of lies'. My father did not arrange to see the Warden because it would have meant waiting for an appointment and he was on shift work and had a long way to travel back."

What Effect Did The Detention Centre Have On You?

"It failed to make me change my political views, though it did succeed in losing me my flat and my job."

"It just makes you hate them more than what you did already, and after a bit it gets on your nerves like. You just feel like going mad, hitting out, shouting."

"You were not allowed to think for yourself. I came out in a state where I couldn't add up two rows of figures."

"It makes you worse. Makes you grudge against people—keep shoving you round. And when you get out, you feel you are free and you couldn't care about anybody."

"What would I like to see changed? I don't have the right to say what should be done. . . ."

* * * *

Undoubtedly the Detention Centre is a deranging, disintegrating experience, and one that is dangerous to the community not just in terms of re-conviction rates.

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As readers of FREEDOM will know, the increasing financial liabilities of Freedom Press make it necessary for us to raise the prices of FREEDOM and ANARCHY from the beginning of 1970.

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