

THE TRIUMPH OF THATCHERISM

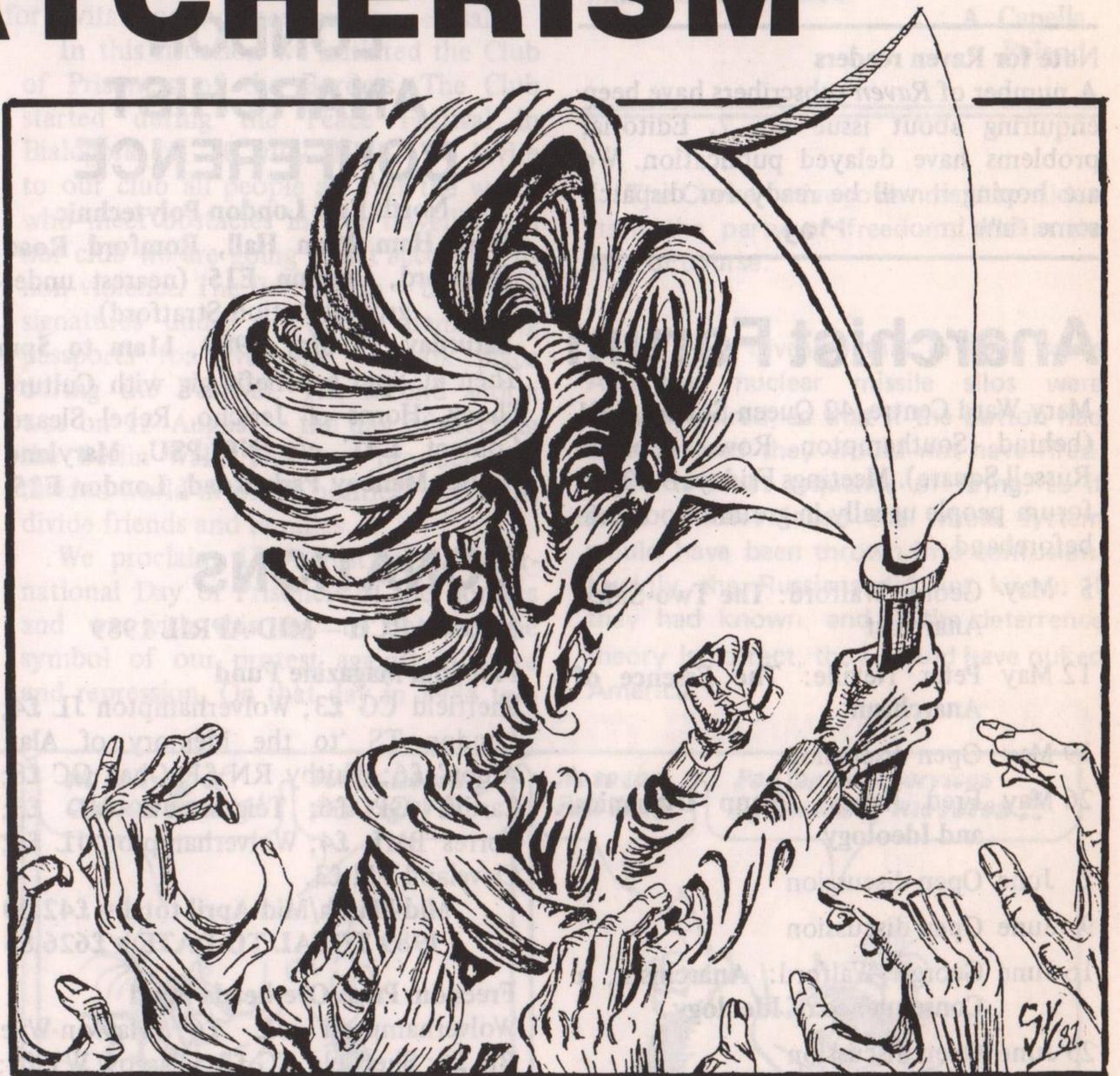
AFTER more than ten years of Thatcher Government, the political pundits are cashing in by publishing books analysing the Thatcher era. Hugo Young in his book *One of Us* has said Thatcher promises to stay with us 'into an indefinite future', and one critic recently admitted he'd given up writing her obituaries.

For Hugo Young the triumph of Thatcherism is a personal one: 'There was no corner of British society to which "Maggie" could not sooner or later turn her hand: no problem which she could not solve, no governmental triumph that failed to be peculiarly hers.' In politics staying the course is important, and being on top is even more important. Because of this ability to stay on top the aura of greatness, and even genius, sticks to Thatcher, as they say, like shit to a blanket.

Even her political enemies and rivals must now apply to her the mantle of greatness, and admire her political skills. Not to do so, having failed to unseat her for over a decade, would be to cast themselves in an incompetent light. Now her greatness is established it will become possible for historians and political theorists to issue mountains of books on the subject.

One contribution to this inflation of the Thatcher factor was made by Bernard Crick in *The Independent* last year, when he suggested that the Labour Party leaders 'have missed a vital part of her [Mrs Thatcher's] popular ideology, and they have not understood its roots, which lie in high theory'. I had a feeling that Crick was after promoting a bit of job creation for leftist intellectuals; implying that the Labour Party should set up a 'Think Tank' to combat Thatcher's right-wing theorists. No party stipend was mentioned, but he urges Kinnock to listen to the intellectuals of the Left like Hobsbawn, John Lloyd and Raymond Plant.

Like most political theorists, Mr Crick tends to see successful politics in terms of schemes and strategies rooted in the realm of 'high theory'. If only Labour could come up with the correct theoretical formula, all would be well!



Middle Class Utopia

Now as a possible dock strike looms, we must admit that Thatcher's supreme triumph has been that of deflating the trade unions. But are there rules for smashing unions? Is there a trick to it, which could be taught like a trade at some school of government?

The case for Thatcher the great tactician seems to be, according to Crick, that she, armed intellectually with the 'economic liberalism of Hayek and Milton Friedmann' has been able to execute a preconceived political blueprint. Is Thatcherism the product of some masterplan?

Curiously enough an early twentieth century novel maps out how a middle class utopia, such as Thatcher's, may be realised. In 1907 Ernest Bramah wrote *The Secret of the League* in which he visualised a Labour Government in office. This imaginary Labour administra-

tion didn't introduce a Socialist economy but continued to run capitalism for their own benefit — raising wages, promoting a massive bureaucracy, and placing tough taxes on the rich. Against this regime a conspiracy develops among the upper class. Their weapon is the consumer strike.

For two years the upper class conspirators secretly hoard fuel-oil, and convert coal burning plant to oil-burning: then suddenly they boycott Britain's main industry — the coal industry. The miners have no outlet for the sale of coal, vast unemployment and distress follow, ending in a civil war in which the upper class get foreign aid. After their victory they abolish the unions, and set up a non-parliamentary regime.

The current crippled trade union movement, and impotent parliamentary opposition, is as good a result so far as

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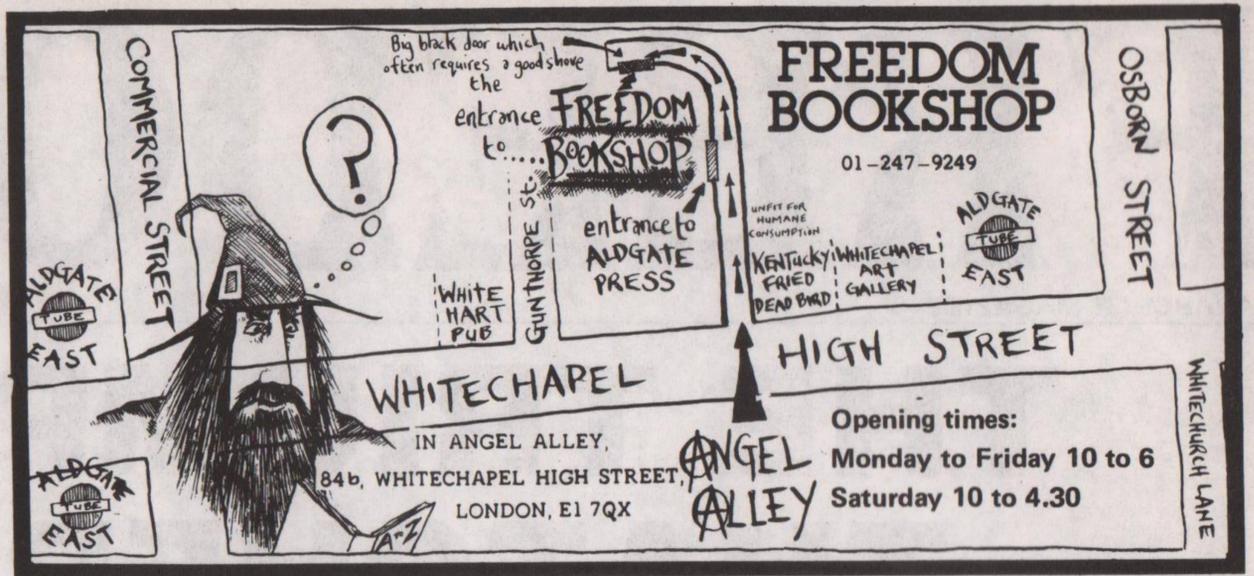
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LONDON ANARCHIST CONFERENCE

North East London Polytechnic
West Ham Main Hall, Romford Road,
Stratford, London E15 (nearest under-
ground station Stratford)
Saturday 27 May 1989, 11am to 5pm
Then at 8pm a benefit gig with Culture
Shock, Horns of Jericho, Rebel Sleaze.
Contact LAC c/o NELPSU, Maryland
House, Manbey Park Road, London E15.

DONATIONS

MID-MARCH - MID-APRIL 1989

Freedom Magazine Fund
Sheffield CG £3; Wolverhampton JL £4;
London TS 'to the Memory of Alan
Albon' £6; Whitby RN £1; Oban GC £8;
Cardiff GP £6; Teignmouth MD £3;
Forres BML £4; Wolverhampton JL £4;
Cleveland FM £3.

Mid-March/Mid-April total = £42.00
1989 TOTAL TO DATE = £626.83

Freedom Press Overheads Fund
Wolverhampton JL £6; Hay-on-Wye
BR £6; Sheffield CG £3; Glasgow WT £2;
Cenarth CJ £11; Newcastle CAR 70p;
Cardiff CP £5; Brighton BH £6; Teign-
mouth MD £3; Cheadle Hume CJ £6;
Kapiti, New Zealand NM 'to the Memory
of Alan Albon' £21.36; W'ton JL £6;
Cleveland FM £3.

Mid-March/Mid-April total = £79.06
1989 TOTAL TO DATE = £452.45

Sundays at 121

Sunday afternoon anarchist discussion
meetings at 121 Bookshop, 121 Railton
Road, Brixton, London SE24 (phone 01-
274 6655). Vegan meals at 1 pm (donation)
Discussion starts 2 pm.

7 May: Does the struggle against fascism
start with the struggle against
Leninism?

If child care is needed, please contact us
a couple of days in advance. Access bad.
Organised by Brixton DAM,
BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

Lee House

THE Vegan cafe at Lee House continues to
serve hot nutritious meals from Thursday
to Sunday 3pm to 8pm, and Mondays
3pm to 8pm are now 'Women Only'
nights. The bookshop has been 'refitted'
thanks to Earth Exchange in Archway,
making the stock look all the more
irresistable.

Every Sunday and Tuesday night at
8pm we have a video show of controver-
sial, thought provoking, or at least
interesting, videos.

In the garden we now have a mega-
size 'half-pipe' skateboard ramp for the
local kids and the 'anarcho-skate muties'
alike.

Unfortunately, Lee House's days are
numbered, so come and share in the
experience now!!

Lee House, 6a Rectory Road, Stoke
Newington, London N16 E8.

Bonanno/Stasi

AS WE reported in the March *Freedom*,
Alfredo Bonanno and Guiseppe Stasi
were arrested following the robbery of a
jeweller in Bergamo on 2 February. They
are charged with armed robbery, aggrava-
ted assault and resisting arrest.

Bonanno is the editor of *Anarchismo*
and *Provoc Azione*, and an associate of
the London anarchist publisher Elephant
Editions. He is the author of *From Riot
to Insurrection*, and of the introductions
to Kropotkin's *Conquest of Bread* and
The Great French Revolution, and other
Elephant books.

Robbery cases in Italy usually come to
trial in two to three weeks, but the case
of Bonanno and Stasi has been referred
by the Public Prosecutor to an Instructing
Magistrate, which means it could take up
to three years.

Comrades wishing to be kept up to
date on the case can contact the *Insurrec-
tion* group, c/o Elephant Editions,
London WC1N 3XX. A defence fund has
been opened. The address is c/o Carmela
di Marca, post office current account no.
1646950, Catania, Italy. Elephant Edi-
tions will accept donations in British
currency for onward transmission.

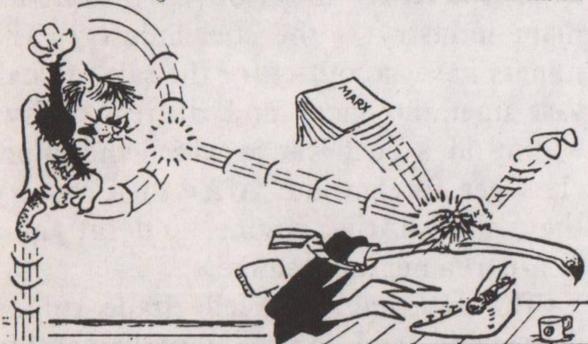
Anarchist Forum

Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square, WC1
(behind Southampton Row, opposite
Russell Square). Meetings Fridays 8.00pm,
forum people usually in ground floor cafe
beforehand.

- 5 May George Walford: **The Two-Sided
Anarchist**
- 12 May Peter Neville: **The Essence of
Anarchism**
- 19 May Open discussion
- 26 May Fred James: **Group Dynamics
and Ideology**
- 2 June Open discussion
- 9 June Open discussion
- 16 June George Walford: **Anarchism, a
Consequence of Ideology**
- 23 June Open discussion
- 30 June Open discussion

WILDCAT STRIKES AGAIN

May 1989. More of Donald Rooum's hilarious comic strips,
the bad-tempered Pussycat, the clever-clogs Egghead, and
the rest, poking fun at anarchists as well as their enemies.



Wildcat Strikes Again (due May) 48pp £1.95
Wildcat Anarchist Comics (reprint) 48pp £1.50

INFORMACJE

FOR many years the citizens of Poland have been deprived of one of the basic human rights – the freedom to travel freely, to leave the country and come back without insulting formalities. Possessing a passport is not a right resulting from the fact of Polish citizenship but a privilege. Authorities treat it in terms of reward and punishment. Issuing a passport can take place only after completing long (about seven weeks) and humiliating formalities. First one has to fill in a form including a lot of ridiculous and inquisitive questions about the family, military service, party membership, family living abroad, the place of work, etc. Then permission from the army and the place of employment have to be enclosed. Only those people who have got an official invitation (which Polish embassies sell all over the world, thus making a huge business) are allowed to apply. The final decision belongs to the secret service. Politically involved people are usually refused passports. In this way the secret police have a powerful tool for controlling society. People are afraid to act independently, to reveal their views openly, because they fear they won't be granted their passports. Some are even afraid not to vote in the mock elections, also because of passports.

This situation is an additional factor causing emigration from Poland. Once allowed to leave the country nobody is sure when the next time will be. This humiliating procedure repeats every time one wants to travel. Staying a few days longer than permitted or going to another country is a crime punished by refusing a passport at the next application, so people prefer not to come back than to be exposed to waiting, insulting, asking for invitations and then, maybe, refusal.

In this situation we initiated the Club of Prisoners of the Borders. The Club started during the Peace Festival in Bialogora on 30 July 1988. We invite to our club all people all over the world who meet obstacles in free travelling. In our club we are going to act according to non-violence. The first action – collecting signatures under a petition demanding passports for everyone – took place during the Festival. The second action was on 13 August – the day of erecting the Berlin Wall. This is a product of a divided world in which political situations divide friends and families.

We proclaim 13 August as the International Day of Prisoners of the Borders and we wish this day to become the symbol of our protest against injustice and repression. On that day in 1988 two

participants of Gdansk WiP – Wojtek Blazek and Klaudiusz Wesolek – entered the passport department in the headquarters of Gdansk police and sat on the floor with banners demanding passports for everyone. Wojtek was brutally kicked out of the office and after one hour Klaudiusz was arrested and sentenced to 50 hours compulsory labour.

We want to put an end to the situation in which passport policy is another way of controlling the society. We propose joint actions demanding that all political prisoners in home arrest are to be immediately released.

A. Capella
Poland

The Conservative government considers itself the party of freedom. Within the law, of course.

It has been revealed that in 1985 some American nuclear missile silos were wrongly wired, so that if the button had been pressed they would not have fired. There is a set sequence of firing, so if some missiles failed the whole system would have been thrown into confusion. Luckily the Russians did not know. If they had known, and if the deterrence theory is correct, they would have nuked America.



Spanish Supreme Court: only CNT-AIT can use CNT name

ON 8 APRIL, the Supreme Court of Spain published its judgement concerning the title to the initials CNT:

The name 'CNT / Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo' has been adjudged exclusively to the CNT-AIT.

The Court did not recognise the so-called 'Congress of Unification' of breakaway groups in 1984 as a CNT Congress because it has not been convoked by the majority of the unions of the CNT through organisation. The statutes say clearly that an extraordinary congress can only be convoked by the National Committee or by it on petition of the majority of the unions.

We have been informed that the splinter confederation has already changed its name into 'CGT'. We do hope that by this step a conflict forced upon our Spanish section will come to an end.

**Brigitte Czyborra, press secretary
for the IWA Secretariat, Cologne**

CNT answers media

WITH regard to the media coverage following the recent judgement of the Supreme Court concerning the legal possessor of the initials CNT, we find ourselves compelled to counter certain statements which we consider false and unjust:

1. To label one sector of the CNT historic' (*historicos*) and another 'reformed' (*renovados*), as the press is doing, is misleading. If the intention is to characterise one group as being attached to the past and another as being reformist, and to present one group as the 'good guys' and another as the 'bad guys', it is obvious that as well as spreading confusion among workers, it is an attempt to encourage a specific trade union option in a totally artificial way. This defies and damages the principle of neutrality of the media which a democratic society should uphold.

Our strategy is based on strengthening the trade union sections, the true centres of genuine trade unionism, and not on the trade union elections which in our opinion alienate the workers from trade unionism. To think that simply because of this we are attached to the past is completely illogical.

2. The assertion that the splinter group led by March Jou represents the majority and that this has been recognised in the

[This judgement of the Spanish Supreme Court concludes the legal process which began in August 1984, when the General Secretary of CNT-AIT applied for a judicial ruling that it alone is entitled to the name CNT (the AIT indicates membership of the International Workers Association). A month earlier, several groups who had broken away from the CNT-AIT had met as a 'Congress of Unification' and declared themselves to be the real CNT (called the CNT-U for convenience). They entered a counter-claim.

The court judgement published in June 1986 went in favour of the CNT-U. So did the Appeal Court judgement of December 1987. This judgement in favour of CNT-AIT, however, is the definitive ruling against which there is no appeal.

Who owns the name is important because with the name goes the 'historic patrimony' — 248 million pesos (about £6 million) confiscated from the CNT by the Franco government, which the present government has stated it will restore. The 'historic patrimony' of the socialist

judgement, is wrong. Rather the judgement affirms that the extraordinary congresses of the CNT can be called only by the National Committee, or by petition to the National Committee of a majority of the trade unions. An extraordinary congress called by any other body would be null and void. In this the Supreme Court followed the arguments which our barristers brought forward.

And, of course, it must be that way, because otherwise trade unions would have no legal security against being dissolved again and again on application of the minority sectors. Furthermore, the court declared that all our congresses have been run in a totally democratic fashion. Those, who, even as a minority, tried to impose their views 'manu militari' on the majority of the organisation, are left without arguments. Everybody will understand that if they had been in the majority, as they tried to maintain, they would not have needed to call a parallel congress. They could have imposed their position regarding participation in trade union elections through constitutional methods; for if they were that majority as they maintain, the National Committee would have had no choice but to accept that position. According to our statutes the National Committee is only an executive instrument administering the

UGT was restored (except for a few disputed items) in 1984.

Both sides of the dispute had partisans outside Spain. In this country the Direct Action Movement, the British section of the IWA, sided with their counterparts the CNT-AIT, while Spanish Information Network tended to the CNT-U. *Freedom* made a considered decision (last reiterated in May 1988) not to take sides, but to publish communications from both CNTs — a decision which was understood and respected by comrades in both DAM and SIN.

The prompt statement from the National Committee of the CNT (it no longer needs to call itself 'CNT-AIT') includes a call for reconciliation: 'We alone have made calls for harmony and understanding, on three different occasions, and today we repeat this call. The door of the organisation is wide open to all who broke away. They left for comprehensible reasons in most cases.'

We hope that from now on the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists will work together. Eds.]

decisions of the majority, and a majority of trade unions can dismiss any National Committee at any time it wishes.

3. The splinter group tell a barefaced lie when they claim to have made calls for unity. We alone made calls for harmony and understanding, on three different occasions, and today from here we repeat this call. The door of the organisation is wide open to all who broke away. They left for comprehensible reasons in most cases. Their leaving has been used, however, to justify keeping an organisation as is the CNT divided for ten years. What has been at stake is the very essence of the CNT, which is to say that if our inherent strength is the totally democratic way in which our decision making process is conducted (apart from considerations on trade union strategy) then we cannot allow a minority having different trade union strategy from the rest to break our statutes and impose its postulates on the rest. Due respect for minority opinion is one thing, but minorities imposing their opinion on majorities is a different thing.

4. It is also absolutely untrue to maintain that we approved of the government's valuation of our historic patrimony. By maintaining this untruth, the splinter group intends to camouflage the fact that they have supported the CCOO position, which is, and always was, contrary to

TONY EARNSHAW'S VIEW FROM THE BACK OF TOWN

refunding the historic patrimony. They even went as far as to demand a share of it. Independently of our claim for the 248 million pesos which are deposited for CNT in the Banco de Espana, we will not be quiet until justice is done, and we are refunded the totality of the historic patrimony, in its true value.

5. Finally, we would like to express once again our satisfaction with the results of the judgement, if only because on the one hand it proves that reason and recognition of what is only just may still prevail in this country and, on the other hand, it paves the way for the development without artificial obstacles of a vital and modern anarcho-syndicalism which is necessary for the defence of the interests and the cause of the workers in this country.

Granada, 8 April 1989.

CNT National Committee press secretariat
signed Jose Aurellano Martin Segura
(Translation IWA secretariat, Cologne)
edited by Freedom

Michael Randle and Patrick Pottle, two old friends of ours from the Committee of 100, now openly admit helping George Blake to gain his freedom from a 42-year prison sentence in 1966. Since the Crown Prosecution Service appears to be ignoring the matter, a private prosecution has been started by ... the Freedom Association!



*Blackbirds over a mob of rats, tapeworms,
fleas and body lice, led by a cockroach,
heading for Westminster.*

Overcrowded Prisons

ON 3 APRIL it emerged as a fact that out of the 50,265 people resident in official British adult prisons, only approximately 16,000 were imprisoned for violent or sexual offences. The 34,000 property offenders — those in for theft, etc. — constitute the vast majority of adult prisoners.

At the same time that modern affluent Britain preaches to the Eastern bloc countries about human rights, it is common practice in British prisons to intern inmates in prison cells that measure roughly 5 by 6 yards. Interning a single person in such confined conditions was actually deemed respectable by Victorian society and it is from that period of British respectability that many of the present prison buildings date.

The 'net curtain' ethos of the Victorian era never really did go away, despite attempts in the '60s to subvert thought patterns of individuals. Instead, the establishment stood firm and merely looked the other way until the euphoria and the 'unrepresentative' political reality set in. A consequence of standing firm was the slow build-up of crime and crime fighting forces. Increased crime meant in reality more prisoners. In fact, despite massive increases in prison building, one-man Victorian cells are now being

used, and will be used, to house not one man but three men.

Scanning the available data outlined above (and supplied by NACRO) a simple extrapolation would suggest that if a single, swift Act of Parliament was passed that only persons who had been violent or had sexually abused someone could be imprisoned, then an immediate cost-effective answer could be found for the barbarism of prison overcrowding. Two-thirds, or two out of the three people currently imprisoned in the one-man cells, could be immediately released.

Prison is the unpretentious reality of the price of your freedom. To be able to enjoy your freedom you imprison 16,000 people. To be able to maintain your property rights you imprison 34,000 people at any one given time. One in eight people are imprisoned at some time of their lives.

After being imprisoned, the ex-prisoners return to society to find that they as individuals are barred from holding (in law) any public position. They are effectively excluded from the political system as individuals, and collectively as a pressure group. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act has also dramatically collapsed in practice and in line with the upsurge of the activities of

groups such as the 'Economic League'. Distressed with the situation, as many reformed ex-prisoners are, they are further disappointed to find that any application to a foreign embassy to emigrate is also turned down as a consequence of their criminal record or uncollaborated past lives. Effectively unable to operate within British society and also unable to leave British society, reformed ex-criminals seek to survive as dissidents.

British dissidents are growing in numbers under the black flag of British anarchism. The collected intellectual gobbledegook that has passed for so long as the anarchist movement is feeling threatened by the current usurpation emanating from the grassroots level. Further examples that may be cited by the anarchist movement would be the apparent disregard shown by the intellectuals to both the 'Stonehenge' and 'Tally Tepee Valley' issues, not to mention little coverage of the 'Peace Centres' and the failure to encourage a more prominent radical-feminist input. The anarchist movement must transcend blaming just the young for the current vogue of 'ageism' as well. The new angry anarchists are the price of your freedom. Has anarchy become too invested in property that it has lost its roots and its voice?

CA

Holy Liberals and Housing

EVERYBODY loves a liberal because they bleed so easily. In any major catastrophe among the ruins and the dying they are the ones who will run to put the kettle on to make the lovely cup of tea, for their fault, if it be a fault, is to accept and to soothe the major evil by trying to kiss it better. Ma Thatcher rants so much of Victorian values and it is the world of laissez-faire capitalism, of the sweat-shop, child labour, slum landlordism and of all the evils that went with those things, and from the pen of Dickens to his middle class readership went the liberal answer that the solution lay in giving everyone a plum pudding, a goose and a rich, plump uncle. We are once more back in the pastoral world of Pickwick and Trollope's Barchester Towers, kindly members of the Church caring and goodly men with the ol' obvious answer to the meeting hall posed problems. The two bishops of Liverpool, Derek Worlock and David Shepherd, write a book *Better Together: Christian Partnership in a Hurt City* (Penguin, £3.99), where they state that in all the post-war horrors of Britain's housing problems, the selling off of council built houses is part of an acceptable answer to the problem of the homeless and the overcrowded. I live out my life in two rooms under private landlordism having never owned a brick in my life, so I too can take the universal spectators view if so wished, but I do not wish. That houses and flats built by the taxes of the working class and the labour of the working class to house the working class should be sold to the highest bidders and then on to the property 'free' market is to me a monumental evil, and if I am told that its reluctant acceptance is but a few pages of both books then I say herein lies liberalism and its flawed morality. Like unto the white-haired old lady who owns a single share in Ma Thatcher's share owning society, the ersatz image of the working class family forever embalmed in *Railway Cuttings* complete with the *News of the World*, roast beef, potatoes, batter pudding and the little garden out the back is a middle class fantasy that never was and never will be recaptured. Home ownership is a rural pastoral prize for the wealthy and to demonstrate it they long ago took over the farm labourers and the fishermen's cottages just as the property 'Rachmans' are now moving into labouring Wales. In his postscript to the new edition of his *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* (Freedom Press, £2.25), Colin Ward writes that 'the notion that sales to tenants diminishes the nation's stock of houses is demon-

trably false'. Oh the words 'demonstrably false' calls for a cry of protest for every working class area in every major city house, in evil discomfort, more people to the square foot than any residential area and when the Rachman landlords, the yuppie property developers and the Health Authorities drive those unfortunate people out then fewer people move in and then, comrade, vicar or father, we are back to the overcrowded squats and the mercies of the liberal councillors. To journey mile after mile through our major cities, brick upon brick, flat upon flat, and believe that there is some virtue in being the legal owner of some group of rooms is a joke and the answer does not lie in flogging off the fringe council estates. Like Japan we are a small overcrowded island and as a society we have to seek answers.

Speaking without any elected authority, I state that what the millions of tenants want is a guaranteed and enforceable tenancy for life with rent compatible with the working labouring wage and then let whoever wishes own the bricks. Between the wars sociologists fixed the rent of a working class flat at one-sixth of the weekly wage. The labouring wage was forty eight shillings a week in the grim thirties and working class rent was about seven, eight or nine shillings a week, and pre-bombing there was a surfeit of housing so that tenants moved at will knowing what rent they would pay.

Working class housing misery now has its roots in that after World War Two housing never became a priority so that we are now in the world of the housing black-market and it is sad that there are those damned on the road to good intentions who would seek to rationalise it. Travel across Europe sore-footed to Japan and every city has its high-rise flats. Before you raise your hands in a Pavlovian reflex action of aesthetic horror, accept that we are millions of city dwellers. Round London's Docklands and in London's Mayfair the rich live in their comfortable high-rise flats. Comrades, if it is good enough for the rich then it is good enough for me.

There is no virtue in the legal ownership of the bloody bricks. We should demand what the high-rise wealth in London's Park Lane take for granted — security, working lifts, greater interior space, security of tenure, access from the exit to public transport and the knowledge that when we close the door of our flat we are in our secure self-contained world and in that self-contained world we are free.

Arthur Moyse

Brazilian Trades Unionists get

Death Threats

ONE year ago in Brazil the railway worker Jose Ulysses Albuquerque was shot dead by the railway police.

For this reason the Confederacao Operaria Brasileira (COB) and the affiliated Union of Transport Workers organised a protest meeting in Sao Paulo on 17 February 1989.

The meeting was against the increased number of political murders in Brazil, which threaten all those who are engaged in social and union conflicts, e.g. the assault on the steel mill of Volta Redonda occupied by striking workers, when three workers were murdered.

Though the local council of Sao Paulo tried to stop the meeting with administrative measures, it still could be held with a three hour delay.

Already when preparing the meeting, death threats were received. At the meeting Leonardo Morelli, a member of the Railway Workers' League, and another participant, were threatened by an executive of the railway police, Mr Lima, at gunpoint.

The IWA secretariat has protested to the Brazilian Embassy in Bonn against these death threats and asks all sections to protest likewise to Brazilian Embassies and Consulates in their countries.

Brigitte Czyborra
press secretary for the IWA secretariat
Cologne

Liquid Assets

EITHER government departments are even less independent than we are led to suppose, or the government is amazingly lucky.

The government wants to sell off the water supply industry, but whoever buys it will have the expense of improving the quality of water, after years of restrictions on investment. Not surprisingly, there is a shortage of ready buyers.

Brewers are major users of water, and unlike many industrial users have a commercial interest in good quality water. Unfortunately, their capital is all tied up.

Lo and behold, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission suddenly notices what has been going on for eighty years, that the brewers are bumping their profits by owning the retail outlets for their product. The six major breweries are ordered to sell 22,000 tied houses, which will leave them with three billion pounds of spare capital.

ALAN ALBON

1921-1989

ALAN ALBON, who died just after Easter on his way back from a visit to New Zealand, was active for half a century in radical politics, above all as a practical man.

He came from a strongly socialist and pacifist family, and at an early age rejected party politics. His father and uncle had been imprisoned for refusing to serve in the First World War, and he and his brother were both conscientious objectors during the Second World War. He was later active in the nuclear disarmament movement, and played an important part in the Committee of 100 during the 1960s.

As a young man he settled on the land, working on farms and living in communities in several parts of England, building and converting houses, and practising rather than preaching the good life. He was soon drawn towards the anarchist movement, attended and addressed meet-

ings, and for more than thirty years contributed 'Land Notes' to the anarchist paper *Freedom*. He was an occasional member of its editorial collective, bringing to it a much-needed element of common sense. He was also a valuable worker in its premises, helping to convert an old industrial building in the East End first for a bookshop and then for a printshop.

He was green long before there was a Green Movement, repeatedly warning against the ecological and economic dangers of modern methods of agriculture and industry, and he was later a founder of the *Green Anarchist* paper. He was involved in the squatting movement, took a leading part in the City Farm movement, and ended his working life as the maintenance manager of the Patchwork housing co-operative. He spent his last years back on the land in Cornwall, where his ashes will be scattered.

Among his comrades in many different circles he was best known and most loved for his unfailing warmth and energy, for the welcome bursts of laughter and of anger punctuating his conversation, and above all for his unfailing kindness and helpfulness. Whenever something practical needed to be done, he was always there. And he was always good company, being great fun and often funny, and devoted to the great cause of cheering us all up.

He was a good friend and a generous lover, and he had several happy partners and handsome children. His heart seemed as big as his zest for life, but it let him down in the end, and his sudden death shocked everyone. More than sixty people went to his secular funeral in West London earlier this month, and a memorial meeting will be held in central London on 21 May.

Nicolas Walter

ALAN and I were very close when we were young and more recently we took part in various activities together, including demonstrations! His death on 30 March was a shock, but evidently he had made new friends and met a daughter, in New Zealand. Alan had a most open and generous personality. His circle of friends was wide and varied, including many Spaniards.

Our parents were politically active, and listening to discussions and meetings soon led to a distrust of party politics. At school Alan was militant and gave the Headmaster of Edmonton County School a hard time. This was in the 1930s, when there were millions of unemployed and an Empire on which 'the sun never set and the wages never rose'. After leaving school Alan worked in an office for a very short

time; since then he has been his own man.

After staying at various communities, including The Barn House at Brockweir on the Wye, Alan found a piece of land at Daisy Green in Suffolk, where he had a smallholding and built a house, single-handed. During his life, Alan was involved in most kinds of farming. He contributed the Land Notes column to *Freedom* for 37 years, the last being from New Zealand. He helped to start the City Farms, so that urban dwellers could learn a little about agriculture. Finally, he helped develop the organic farm at Keveral in Cornwall.

Alan was also a builder, experienced in all aspects including the peculiar system by which architects ruin our towns. Perhaps his biggest job was the conversion of two Martello towers to houses but there

are also many anarchists and friends for whom he worked or gave good advice.

Before retiring in 1986 he was maintenance manager for the Patchwork Housing Association.

The most important activity for Alan was promoting Peace, anarchism, and his views on housing, agriculture, and social organisation. He was especially convincing in personal discussion, and took part in demonstrations and non-violent direct action. Being on the solid side, he was difficult to move! His appreciation of the connections between the lack of decent housing, the misuse of land, and governmental systems was farsighted, and during his life the interest in, and support for, his his causes has increased steadily year by year.

Norman Albon

IN COMMON with most people it is difficult to articulate exactly what one feels at the sudden loss of a close friend. One could, of course, revert to the usual platitudes such occasions engender, however, in this case they would be totally inappropriate. One definite feature that characterised Alan was a down-to-earth honesty and a refreshing lack of phoney-

ness. He had no poses, no acts to perform, just being himself, take it or leave it. He was a doer rather than a thinker, with that natural ability to survive.

Alan was born in Edmonton, London, in 1921. His formative years within a Quaker family concerned with pacifism (his father was a CO in the First World War) and the injustices of the capitalist

system proved to be the major influences that determined his political identification in adult life. He was an ardent supporter of the youth section of the ILP and spent the war years in a community in the Wye Valley. Being in agriculture, a deferred occupation, he avoided conscription into the army. One can assume that had he been conscripted he would have

followed his father's footsteps. In 1945 he met Joan Carter at a PPU meeting, the relationship blossomed and they married in 1947. Characteristic of his ever-bubbling enthusiasm, though with little building experience, he and Joan set about building their own home in Suffolk and, in spite of post-war shortages, they managed to complete the bungalow to begin married life on two acres and a great deal of hope.

I first met Alan in 1950 at a London Anarchist Group meeting in a pub just off Leicester Square. A colonial, recently off a South African farm, I had come to London to see the hub of the British Empire. Exploring London in those days provided a never-ending source of interest and the remnant of that 'spirit of community' that the common dangers of the war had created were still very much in evidence. A friend having arrived some time earlier to the great metropolis induced me to accompany him on a Sunday evening to hear 'a great political orator'. The meeting, held in the upstairs room of a pub, introduced me to the rudiments of anarchism by none other than the great Philip Sansom, laying down the principles as only the great Philip Sansom can. The inevitable drinks after the meeting found me seated at the same table as Alan. We discovered our common interest in land and agriculture and cemented a friendship that lasted for forty years. His other great interest, I soon found out, was community living, and these two themes became much the fabric of his life.

The post-war years produced a great deal of idealistic rhetoric, even from government ministers, and though one assumes people did not really believe that the millennium was around the corner, the atmosphere suggested that something new was in the offing. One of the effects of this euphoria was the spawning of new communities. Young people with the vision of a more egalitarian society found numerous associations of various sizes and persuasions. In 1954 Alan and Joan, with Derek Eastman, formed 'Communitas' based on the writings of the American thinker Paul Goodman. Ten adults and four children decamped for Macaroni Wood near Lechlade in Gloucestershire. An ex-army base with ample buildings and a sympathetic landlord, it seemed an ideal foundation for a grand project. Armed with the work of Wilhelm Reich and A. S. Neill, interspersed with anarchist ideology, 'Communitas' became a kind of focal point for the part of the anarchist movement. Alan, as a kind of liaison officer, participated in that great debate that had risen within the ranks as to whether communities as such were nothing more than ivory towers divorced from the real

struggle of educating the working class to recognise its inevitable and historic role. The pages of *Freedom* of that period were littered with sense and nonsense on that particular subject.

It required a great deal of insight and knowledge to distil the works of Reich and Neill without turning it into dogma and takes an even greater amount of wisdom to apply the ideas to daily life. Communitas collapsed in 1958, not because the principles were questioned, but foundered in a clash of personality as how to apply them. Alan left in 1958 to manage a farm in Buxted, Sussex, for the Labour MP Platts-Mills. Once again around him grew a community of six adults and three children and one or two friends, and produced a loose association with some things in common.

Alan was a man of prodigious strength and quiet determination and would often absorb criticism without taking offence. The Buxted community lasted until 1962, whereupon he took on the job of managing a farm on the outskirts of Hailsham, Sussex. His close association with the anarchist movement in London enabled him to arrange a summer school on the farm with apportioned work schedules for the comrades to get their hands dirty. A considerable amount of hilarity ensued watching one of the academics learning to milk a cow (poor cow). After three years the farm was sold and Alan, once again at a loose end, became the milkman for the owner of Glynleigh Farm three miles further down the road.

Felicity Crump, the owner, also from a Quaker background, was an ardent supporter of CND. The '60s being the heyday of the Committee of 100, Alan participated in numerous demonstrations and was arrested on a number of occasions. In 1965 my wife and I joined Alan and Ann and the rudiments of a community again began to emerge. Eight adults plus two neighbours with seven children between them were involved in a number of communal activities while maintaining family independence. Some lessons from the past had been learned. We looked after the chickens, milked the cows, and cultivated an acre of vegetable garden, but retained our individual incomes which were earned outside the confines of the community. In many ways Glynleigh Farm had great potential, and I think we were all rather sorry when through circumstances beyond our control it broke up in 1970.

Alan went off to London to do house maintenance for a housing association and finished up working for the charity Patchwork. His interest in the land, even in London, found its expression in helping to pioneer the concept of 'town farms'. Though the project itself was

conducted on a very minor scale, it nevertheless became a source of joy and interest to kids in London who could now get close enough to actually touch a goat or sheep instead of just reading about them in story books. Alan was always far more articulate in print than in verbalising a concept, and many articles on the land and its use have graced the pages of *Freedom* since 1958. A mixture of good sense, idealism, and an intimate knowledge of the land itself made his articles eminently readable. In other circumstances this might have turned him into an excellent organic farmer, but he lacked the sharp edge that success in economic terms requires in a competitive and money-orientated society. He fathered six children to which he would hastily add 'that I know of'. He took early retirement and departed for Cornwall to reside on a smallholding owned by Patchwork, where he was reunited with Ann. His enthusiasm, even in his last years while suffering indifferent health, was unabated — still making plans for setting up a community once again. As an aside, he also built a wind generator at the place, which earned him a respectable article in *Country Living*, photo and all. He was always anxious to get things done and his innovations, sometimes to the alarm and consternation of his friends, were at times quite surprising. To convert a Martello Tower for use as a home he used dynamite, something no other builder would contemplate, but he did the job to everyone's amazement, if not relief.

I have written about the more salient episodes in his life, but a lot more took place in between. If one is not a history maker in any particular field, how does one evaluate a person's life and contribution. He was never an establishment man so one can hardly apply establishment yardsticks. His sartorial elegance now has a mythology built around him. I have seen him in trousers with enough apertures for the wind passing through to drive a clipper around Cape Horn, and as far as his hats were concerned he was a firm believer in Heinz — 57 varieties at least. Yet by being himself and identifying with the causes he made his own, he contributed to that very necessary alternative to the status quo. Without dissension and protest there would have been very little social progress in history, and at some stage in people's lives they do have to decide which ranks they choose to belong to. He didn't make history but he certainly left his personal scratch on it. It takes courage to plunge into a life devoid of the trappings of modern economic security, and his lifestyle proved that he had the needed courage to plough his own furrow, sometimes against considerable odds. It was also sometimes said that he was insensitive in

some situations, but I feel that it wasn't so much a lack of sensitivity as such but rather that 'doers' are impelled to act rather than think too much about the action — in the process some might have been hurt or offended.

Alan had gone to New Zealand to visit a daughter he had never seen, and judging by the postcards was having a whale of a time. On his return he collapsed at Heathrow Airport, and died the same day.

The reader will no doubt have come to the conclusion that I have recorded mostly his positive activities. In the forty years that I have known him I can vouchsafe three things without fear of contradiction — he never had any money, he never acquired a halo and he never sprouted wings. His failures and disagreements were often obscured to himself by that fathomless enthusiasm and optimism.

He sat comfortably in his own garden of ideas that many of his contemporaries had long ago abandoned. Even in his disagreements with people he was totally devoid of rancour or vindictiveness. It was evident at his cremation that everyone present had come to say an intimate and personal farewell.

I will allow myself the luxury of one platitude, which happens to be true: he will be remembered by all those who knew him, friend or foe alike, with a great deal of affection. What better epitaph for any man. **SF**

ALAN ALBON was always there when he was needed.

When Freedom Press launched the Aldgate print shop, he was there to put up partitions, build the darkroom and move the boiler — a feat of plumbing ingenuity that became more a work of art than a central heating system.

Our very own Pompidou Centre in our very own printshop, courtesy of Alan Albon, and it worked — just like Aldgate Press.

Now along with all his other friends we mourn his loss and will miss him. But more than that, we will remember all the work he put into helping us out in the very beginning.

Just as we will remember the wild originality of his spelling and the deep concern for the human condition and the environment expressed in his contributions to *Freedom* magazine when we were involved together in the editorial collective, his baked potatoes with garlic that looked like woodlice but tasted like a dream, and his very bizarre collection of woolly hats.

Most of all we'll never forget our friend and comrade, Alan Albon.

Love Steve, Dave and Aldgate Press



Alan Albon with the New Zealand Native Kowhai Tree which he planted in a New Zealand garden, a few days before his death in London. An English tree has since been planted to his memory, in the same garden.

NICOLAS, Norman, Sam Fanaroff, and the comrades of Aldgate Press have more or less said it all. I became aware of the existence of Alan Albon some time after the war (like me, he had been working on the land) when I began to hear of this anarchist who was building his own house way out in Suffolk. He lived in a caravan, worked on a farm, and in the evenings and at weekends he built the house from foundation to roof, complete with plumbing, electric wiring, sewage, the lot, all with his own hands.

As Nicolas says, he was green before there was a Green Movement. He was also alert to the implications of nuclear power before most of us latched on to more than the dangers of nuclear war. He

dragged me along to a lecture by an eminent nuclear physicist who had seen the light and was warning of the effects of having Britain peppered with nuclear power stations, bristling with armed guards and security forces, and the insidious spread of authoritarianism this would generate.

Most of his life *was* practical application of anarchism, as far as is possible in an authoritarian world, but he would always be there on demos — in Grosvenor Square on Vietnam, at Greenham Common, and on one occasion I shall never forget, when he came rushing up to me in a crowd at the Marham missile base in Norfolk, rubbing his hands with glee and saying, 'I've made all the

arrangements; Ann and the kids are alright and I'm going to get myself arrested!' Unhappily, we were both thrown back over the wire like unwanted minnows, since the Committee of 100 tactic was to get as many arrested as possible, and the RAF wasn't playing the game.

Alan did his best to live out his principles, and his commitment to organic farming made him give up vegetarianism when he realised the importance of animals on the farm. At a recent book sale in Suffolk, several visitors came up to the Freedom Press stand and said that the first thing they turned to in this paper was the 'Land Notes'. Sadly, we now have a situation vacant . . .

Philip Sansom

I AM the daughter Alan came to meet in New Zealand. I am writing to say how sad and shocked I am about his death. I know what a loss it will be for you. For me it was important and amazing to meet him. I'd spent years searching. Then to find him and discover we had much the same politics if for different reasons; if political views are handed out with your genes I got my share. I discovered we looked vaguely alike, especially from the back my friends said, and now I know where my short legs and short sight came

from, and maybe even my love of trees and potatoes.

Alan had such a great holiday. I don't think he expected it would be like that, that we would travel through most of New Zealand. He took a helicopter to the tops of glaciers, went down one of New Zealand's longest rivers in a jet-boat, went in a tiny plane to the South Island; we were absolute tourists. But that did not stop him seeing the not-so-nice parts of this country: the racism, the awful wreck of land erosion, over-farming, Maori land

issues. He met lots of different people involved in all these things, and in the peace movement. Amazing how he soaked up facts, books, ideas.

A huge sadness for me is losing him so soon after finding him, that a friendship started cannot develop. The time here was very special.

He said his holiday was 'stupendous', and I feel so sad he wasn't able to share the time he had here with you all. He was so excited about getting back to tell all.

Nina Mariette

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

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A NEW 'FREEDOM'
FEATURE

LAND NOTES

We are very pleased to introduce below the first contribution of what we hope will be a regular feature in FREEDOM. Our contributor is well known in our movement for his consistent advocacy of communal living and his attempts to put his ideas into practice (as well as appearing briefly in the second (ITV) appearance of anarchists on television in this country).

Alan Albon is a farmer with many years experience behind him of work on smallholdings and larger farms—usually in responsible capacities. We feel sure that his 'Land Notes' will be of interest to all our readers and that they will deal with matters of special concern to those in country districts or engaged in rural industries.

IT is a significant feature of progressive and left wing thought that the relevance of agriculture, and its place in the social arrangements of society are largely ignored. The Marxist tendency that regards industrialism and the industrial workers as the *avant garde* or spearhead of a revolution has also to some extent effected the libertarian movement. In spite of this there has always been a trend of agrarian influence running through the movement.

In countries in similar circumstances to India, where the standard of living is precariously balanced at about the subsistence level, it is inevitable that the need to secure an effective and efficient agriculture is constantly evident. It is in India that, significantly, a most revolutionary movement is gathering strength and support. The Vinoba Bhave movement is revolutionary in its attitude to land ownership and its methods of agricultural organisation cut right across the socialist flavoured tendencies.

In this country since the war, agriculture has become a more important part of the general economy than at any time since the industrial revolution, except the durations of the two world wars. Agricultural production is 68% above the pre-war level and this increased production is largely absorbed by the increased standard of living. It does not seem to be the Government's intention to allow agriculture to become a derelict industry, as the agricultural community has become a valuable market for large industrial undertakings and the home market has become a basis for a considerable export market for agricultural machinery and chemicals. As the more backward countries proceed with their agricultural development this market is likely to expand for some time. The position of

agriculture in Britain is fairly sound but no doubt in the event of a slump the industry would grass down large areas of arable land and return to dog and stick farming.

Like every other activity within capitalist society, where useful activity is geared to the sterile task of making money, the fundamental needs and purposes of the activity suffer as a result. In spite of the fact that total world agricultural production does not meet the needs of the population, United States farmers are paid not to farm, and the ships that could carry this excessive production to where it is needed rust in the estuaries. In Britain there is a campaign to persuade the population to absorb the surplus milk quite regardless of whether the product is suitable to be a significant part of adult diet. Grass production is most suitable to British conditions and the by-products of this crop are the most important sector in the industry.

Although the agricultural population is relatively small it occupies a strategic position *vis-a-vis* the relative position of the political parties. The main parties are evenly balanced and marginal constituencies often contain a large agricultural element. The agricultural element however continues to regard the overtures of the political parties with suspicion, and one of the main agricultural journals concluded after studying the programmes of the three political parties on agriculture that there was very little to choose between them. The editorial then went on to say that the industry would be very foolish to rely on the promises of the political parties and should pin more faith in the efficiency of their industry and, its marketing organisation in maintaining the industry in a

healthy condition.

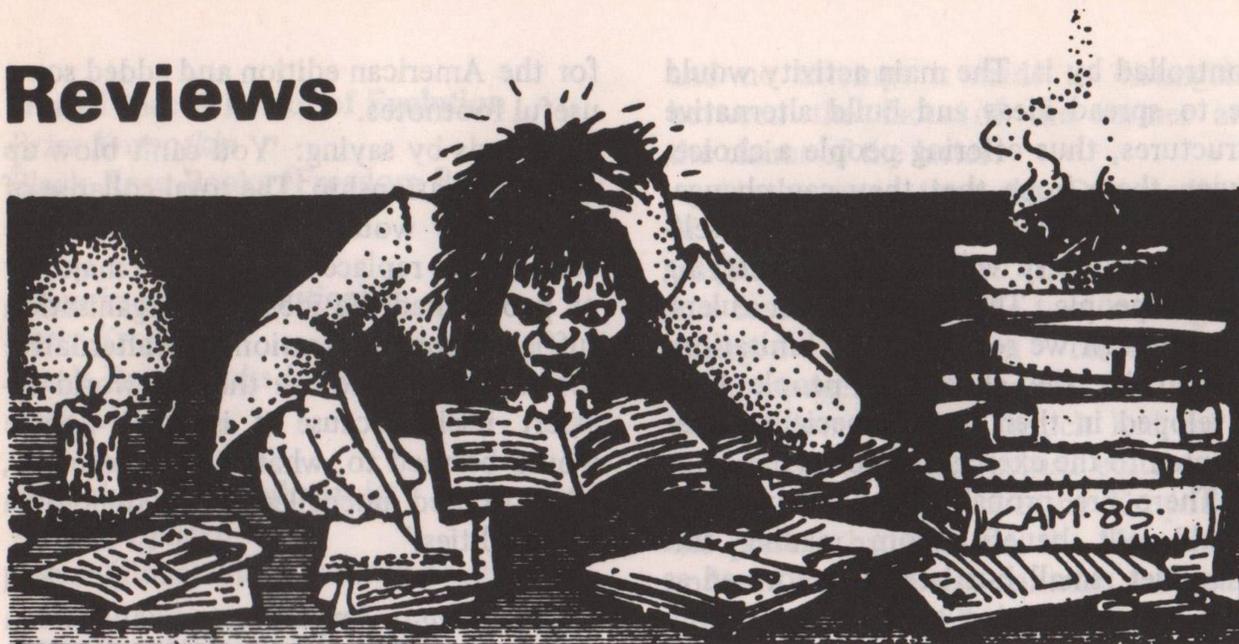
There is of course the conflict of interests of the small farmers that rely on the labour power of their families and those who are concerned mainly in the management of large farms with employed labour and highly mechanised activities. The labour force on the land tends to become smaller with the more mechanically-minded operative tending to replace those with some of the older skills and generally commanding a higher wage than the minimum. Older workers on arable farms particularly are gradually being pushed right out of the industry. Production tends to become more intensive, as in the broiler industry when thousands of chickens are turned out every twelve weeks on an extremely small margin of profit—a similar activity to mass industrial production. Whether this type of activity produces a valuable article of foodstuff is another matter, but such operations require large capital outlay only possible for larger units.

Following the general pattern of capitalist development, the smaller farmer finds himself in an increasingly onerous position in which good husbandry is not necessarily synonymous with success in the financial sense. The opportunity that mechanisation has presented to remove the need for excessive toil in agricultural operations is harnessed to the futility of a monetary system which could more quickly destroy the very basis of fertility upon which food production is based.

Not many Anarchists I think are engaged on work in connection with agriculture. Therefore the writer hopes that these notes, to be written when rain or sunset stops work outside, will present an aspect of life that is not often represented in the paper.

ALAN ALBON.

Reviews



Bourgeois Influences on Anarchism *Luigi Fabbri translated by Chaz Bufe* Acrata Press £1.00

ONE GETS used to odd-sounding titles on anarchist publications after a while, but I must admit to being stumped when I first saw this one. However, the title is well explained in the introduction by Chantal Lopez and Omar Cortes, who rightly describe the pamphlet as 'indispensable in avoiding present-day distortions of anarchist thought'.

Bourgeois ideas have influenced anarchists in various ways: one is by what Fabbri calls 'decadent' literature, which idealises the most anti-social forms of 'heroic' individual rebellion for ostensibly aesthetic reasons. In his day it was the continual occurrence of terrorist acts between 1880 and 1894 (especially from 1891) which, he shows, coincided with a flourishing period of sensationalist literature, almost all written by non-anarchists, glorifying violent 'anarchist' actions, and whose language 'was truly an instigation to propaganda by the deed'. These publications, which both nourished and fed off the acts themselves in a kind of vicious circle, gave the unmistakable impression that anarchism equals violence. In fact, says Fabbri, the importance attached to acts of violence or rebellion is a result of accepting the bourgeois belief that the importance of 'great men' and rulers as opposed to that of society as a whole. This attitude leads on naturally to the elevation of actions over goals. Those who glorified anti-social acts were 'above all, artists and writers educated in the school of Nietzsche (who was never an anarchist) who look upon all actions, however tragic or sublime they might be, solely from an aesthetic point of view and disregard concepts such as good and bad, useful and harmful'. He points out that all political movements without exception have used terrorism at times when they've found themselves in the forefront of opposition to dominant political institutions.

This thoughtful and penetrating analysis shows how the bourgeoisie — or middle-class if you prefer — have a

particular concept of anarchists and anarchism which, although completely false for the most part, is taken at face value by some would-be anarchists and adopted as the true definition. Rather than taking the trouble to find out what anarchism really means by talking at length with other anarchists and by careful study of anarchist literature, says Fabbri, they are content to have their supposed new-found ideas defined for them by people who form the very backbone of the oppressive and exploitative system which anarchism seeks to abolish. Since the interests of the bourgeoisie naturally lie in denigrating, not promoting, anarchism, it is not uncommon to see anarchists described as hopeless utopians and irresponsible, if not terrorists, murderers and thieves who indulge in personal abuse and lies rather than rational argument, and believe in violence, chaos and unbridled promiscuity. Thus shallow, romantic individuals often, but not always new to anarchism, sometimes indulge in precisely this kind of behaviour: either in the mistaken belief that it truly represents anarchism or perhaps because, having seen things condemned in the mass media by their conservative opponents they perversely think that whatever their enemies decry must by definition be good. Such an idea is evidently absurd, but the influence such people can have on other individuals and the harm that has been and can be done to the prospects of progress for anarchism far outweigh their small numbers. For as Fabbri says, the anarchist movement does sometimes attract '... the most exaggeratedly impressionable types and, at the same time the most empty-headed and frivolous types, persons who are not repelled by the absurd, but who, on the contrary, engage in it. They are attracted to projects and ideas precisely because they are absurd; and so anarchism comes to be known precisely for the illogical character and ridiculousness which ignorance and bourgeois calumny have attributed to anarchist doctrines.' Although Fabbri was writing in the early part of the century, not much has changed: look in the review columns of the press where one of the

most frequent adjectives used to describe plays or films which are ridiculous or farcical is 'anarchic'.

He was no pacifist, believing that violence was sometimes necessary to defend the person or revolutionary gains, but he considered most violence unnecessary and counter-productive: 'Anarchy is the negation of violence, and its final object is peace among human beings'. In the last section he also argues strongly against the use of violent and abusive language in polemics and propaganda, showing how it deters people from listening to the arguments.

Despite our arrival at the opposite end of the century from Fabbri, the probability of coming across the sort of person he describes in or on the fringes of the anarchist movement, not to mention the lies continually churned out by the establishment which are in large part responsible for their behaviour, means that the ideas expressed in this pamphlet remain very relevant. There's a lot more in it, and any slightly dated information (mainly in the area of developments in mass media) has been put into a modern context in the introduction. Sam Dolgoff contributes a short biographical note.

KM

You Can't Blow Up a Social Relationship: The Anarchist Case Against Terrorism

Anonymous
Acrata Press, £1.00

WHEN I read this pamphlet I couldn't help wondering what a difference it would have made to the fortunes and development of the anarchist movement if it had been available at the end of the last century to those who Fabbri writes about. In fact it makes an excellent companion to Fabbri's pamphlet, treating a similar question from a different point of view, addressing the issue of urban and rural guerrillas in both developed and developing countries. Not that the state escapes without criticism in respect of terrorism: 'the most brutal and ruthless agent of terror now, as throughout human history, is the ruling class.' Examples they quote include those of several (US backed) Latin American states, Britain in Aden and Northern Ireland, France in Algeria, the USSR, Israel and Kampuchea. And we could add the USA in Nicaragua, Libya and Grenada.

Indeed, as Noam Chomsky continually reminds us, 'the term "terrorism" came into use at the end of the eighteenth century, primarily referring to violent acts of governments designed to ensure popular submission. That concept is plainly of little benefit to the practitioners of state terrorism who, holding power, are in a position to control the system of thought and expression. The original sense has therefore been abandoned and

the term "terrorism" has come to be applied mainly to "retail terrorism" by individuals or groups. Whereas the term was once applied to emperors who molest their own subjects and the world, it is now restricted to thieves who molest the powerful.'[1]

Unlike some revolutionaries, however, the author's recognition of the state monopoly of wholesale terrorism does not trap them into excusing the killing and maiming carried out by vanguardist guerrilla groups. They show convincingly that terrorism destroys politics and with it any chance of advancing radical social change. This is for several reasons:

1. Means and ends are inextricably linked: '... foul means, far from being justified by distant ends, merely provide a guarantee that the ends achieved will be horrible'.

2. Guerrillaism nearly always fails, leading to worse repression, thus making it more difficult to organise and spread ideas.

3. Even when 'successful' it only produces an authoritarian regime.

4. Guerrilla warfare relies for much of its impact on the capitalist media, which turns their actions into spectacles and everyone else into spectators. This not only perpetuates the division between leaders and followers but also allows the media to frighten the public into the 'protective' arms of the state.

In making their case the writers do not indulge in vague generalisations, but make a careful analysis of some of the most well known terrorist and guerrilla groups, their psychology and practice, including the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the MIL in Spain and the Red Army Faction in West Germany. Regarding the latter they quote from an ex-member of the June 2nd Movement, Bommi Baumann, whose book provides a fascinating insight into the psychology of his group.[2] The anarchist movement has much to live down from its association with terrorism as described by Fabbri, and a constructive way forward, say the authors here, is to minimise violence by emphasising the politics. They don't say that violence is always avoidable: 'Libertarians look at history and at the ruling classes of the world and conclude that a libertarian movement will face state violence and armed struggle will be necessary in response ... but the aim here would not be to carry out exemplary clashes with the military but to protect the political infrastructure to enable the spreading of ideas to continue'. Any armed struggle would mean some people getting killed and they admit that 'violence threatens humanism'. But anarchists should consciously preserve their humanity in such circumstances by ensuring that any armed struggle is no more than an extension of the political movement, and

controlled by it. The main activity would be to spread ideas and build alternative structures, thus offering people a choice, giving them hope that they can change, by 'extending our confidence that a self-managed society will be more satisfying for all people. This includes our rulers, even though we recognise the limitations created by the characters people have developed in their lives, especially those adapted to the exercise of power.'

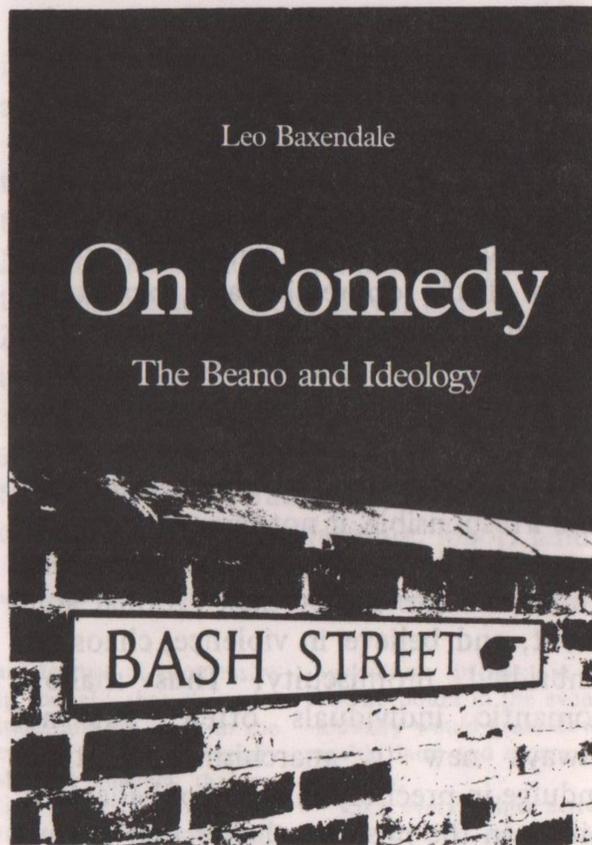
There are probably few people who would not benefit from reading this pamphlet, small but perfectly formed as it is and containing as it does so many well thought out observations. Two introductions have been added to the Australian original, one by the Anarchist Communist Federation and one by Chaz Bufo who has made some minor changes

for the American edition and added some useful footnotes.

It ends by saying: 'You can't blow up a social relationship. The total collapse of this society would provide no guarantee about what replaced it. Unless a majority of people had the ideas and organisation sufficient for the creation of an alternative society, we would see the old world reassert itself because it is what people would be used to, what they believed in, what existed unchallenged in their own personalities.'

KM

1. *Pirates and Emperors*, available from Freedom Press Bookshop, £7.95, post free.
2. *How it all Began* available from Freedom Press Bookshop, £6.00 post free.



On Comedy: The Beano and Ideology

Leo Baxendale

Reaper Books, £5.00

A LARGE part of this book discusses the *Arena* television show 'The Dandy-Beano Story' (5 January 1988), and is essential reading for anyone studying how toffee-nosed critics approach popular art.

The programme asserted that comic characters are always rewarded by a feed. Perhaps the compilers were remembering their own comic-reading days in the 1930s. In the 2,000 or more pages drawn by Leo Baxendale of his creations The Bash Street Kids, Minnie the Minx, Little Plum, and all the rest, there is not one instance of food given as a reward.

Nevertheless, A. N. Wilson's voice on the *Arena* programme intoned 'The great reward in these papers is always a feed' over a picture of the Bash Street Kids tucking into pies, and 'Whether you're human or animal you always get a free feed at the end' over a picture of Minnie the Minx about to scoff an enormous cake.

The Kids drawing came from an episode where they fail in a pigeon post business and cut their losses by making pigeon pies. The Minnie picture shows her cheating in a 'guess the weight of the cake' competition. The *Arena* researchers were consulting bound volumes of the *Beano*, so they cannot have mistaken the meaning of the pictures. Evidently they were seeking illustrations for a script settled prior to any research, and failing to find fair evidence they simply resorted to lies.

There were other such misrepresentations. Baxendale exposes them all, with exact details.

The rest of the book is mostly about Baxendale's working methods, physical and mental. 2,000 pages in nine years is a huge output by any standard. By the standard of comic invention and rich drawing which Baxendale achieved, it is an astonishing output (one page of Little Plum includes 173 grinning bears in the first frame and 67 bears — not a photocopy but a different drawing — in the last frame). It is fascinating to learn how he did it.

Unfortunately there are no reproductions. Thompson's of Dundee, who own the copyright of all the *Beano* drawings, very rarely permit their use elsewhere (what a pity that *Arena*, given such rare permission, wasted it). If copyright law still exists in the year 2100 the copyright on Baxendale's work will probably have lapsed, and someone may publish the masterpieces in the same volume as the master's commentary. Meanwhile, serious scholars must use the book in conjunction with a collection of old comics, such as the one in the British Library newspaper section, which Baxendale used.

For the general reader, Baxendale's words are good enough to stand on their own. And there is one illustration, a splendid new drawing of 'insouciance in the face of ultimate power'.

Donald Room

Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution

Peter Kropotkin

Black Rose Books (Freedom Press paperback £10.50)

Memoirs of a Revolutionist

Peter Kropotkin

Black Rose Books (Freedom Press paperback £10.50)

Memoirs of a Revolutionist

Peter Kropotkin

Dover (Constable paperback £8.95)

PETER KROPOTKIN is still far and away the best-known anarchist theorist, and the one whose writings continue to reappear in new editions. Black Rose Books, the Canadian libertarian publishers associated with *Our Generation* magazine, have just begun an ambitious collected edition of his works with new introductions by George Woodcock, the Canadian libertarian writer.

Their edition of *Mutual Aid* is a slightly enlarged reproduction taken (without acknowledgement) from the American edition which was published in 1955 by Extending Horizons and subsequently reprinted in paperback by Porter Sargent. As well as the text, it contains T. H. Huxley's article of 1888 which prompted Kropotkin to write the book and Kropotkin's preface to the 1914 edition. The only change has been the clumsy substitution for the original 12-page foreword by Ashley Montagu of a new 18-page introduction by Woodcock. This is well written but not very well informed either about the scientific background to Kropotkin's work or about subsequent developments in the field, and no attempt is made to distinguish between the genuinely scientific aspects of Kropotkin's work and the politically motivated rhetoric. The Black Rose edition is really no better than the Extending Horizons one which was widely available for 30 years, and it is twice as expensive as the Freedom Press one which was published two years ago and which includes John Hewetson's introductory essay and a bibliographical preface.

Their edition of *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* is a slightly enlarged reproduction taken (with acknowledgement) from the one-volume second British edition of 1906, which had lost the original index and most of the illustrations of the two-volume first edition of 1899. As well as the text, it contains Kropotkin's note to the 1899 edition and his preface to the 1906 edition. The only change has been the substitution for Georg Brandes's original 8-page introduction of a new 8-page introduction by Woodcock. This again is well written but not very well informed about the considerable problems of Kropotkin's life and autobiography,

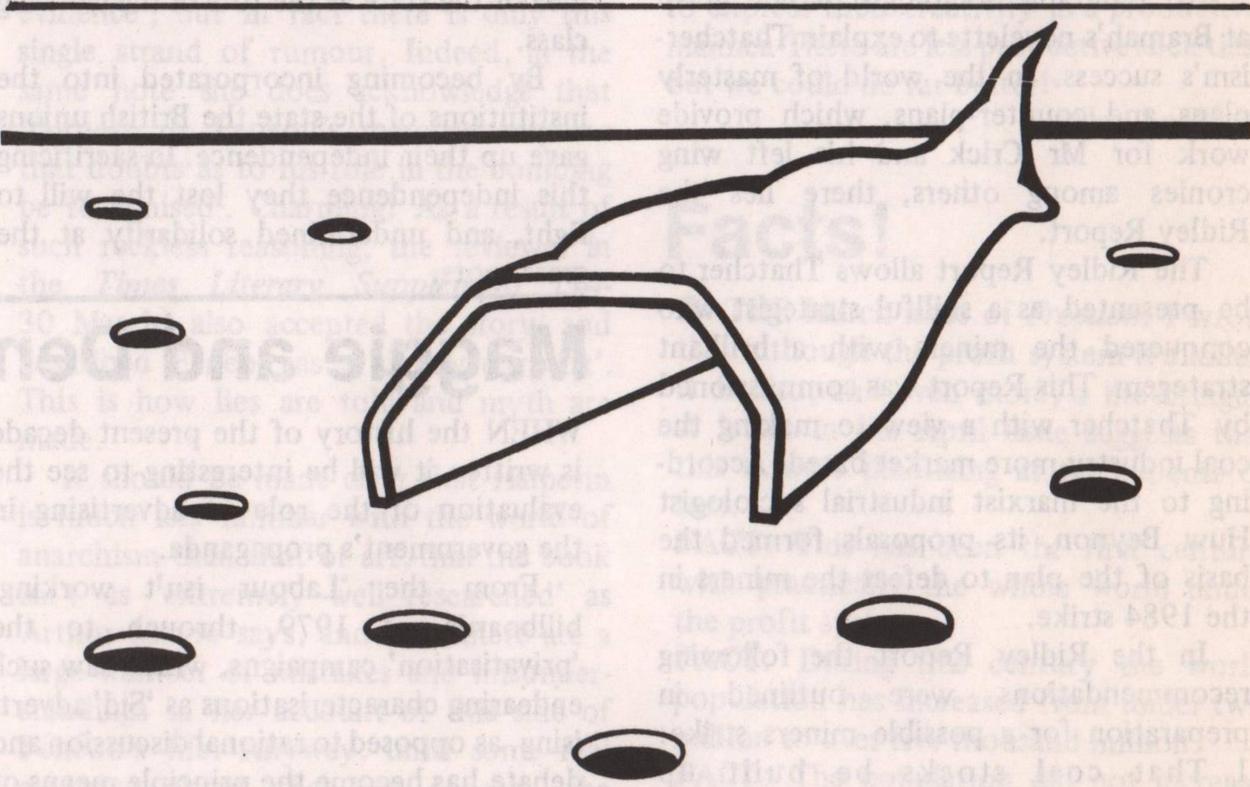
and no attempt is made to distinguish between the facts of the former and the claims of the latter.

At the same time the Dover edition of *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, which was first published in 1971, has reappeared in a revised edition. The text is a slightly enlarged reproduction taken (with acknowledgement) from the first American edition of 1899, which had minor differences from the British editions. As well as the original note by Kropotkin, the preface by Brandes, the illustrations and the index, it also contains a 17-page introduction and 38 pages of notes by Nicolas Walter, slightly revised for this edition, with the addition of a short note on publications since 1971. This detailed editorial material, which gives the basic general background of the book and much detailed information about its

contents, adds considerably to the size and value of the Dover edition, yet it is a little cheaper than the Black Rose one. There is also the recent Cresset Library edition (reviewed here in July 1988) which is still cheaper, but this is an unaltered reprint of the substantially abridged Anchor edition of 1962.

It will be interesting to see further volumes in the Black Rose Kropotkin, but it is to be hoped that they will be better value. It would surely be better to take advantage of new editions by adding really informative introductions. We understand that there are also other new editions of at least some Kropotkin books on the way, and we look forward to anything which encourages anyone to take anarchist ideas seriously.

MH



John W. Welton: Drawings and Paintings
Crawshaw Gallery, 180 Westbourne Grove,
London W11.

'John Welton is the youngest exhibitor by far, and as befits one destined to survive the longest if nature follows its course, the most intransigent. Everything cuts, pierces, bites, entraps. The simplest objects metamorphose into weapons. Dogs as stupid as machines salivate in every corner. Welton contemplates a future which, if the portents are correct, offers little reassurance. He doesn't panic, he warns.' — *George Melly (notes for a recent group exhibition)*

'John Welton is an artist who never stops tampering with things. His paintings abound with animate and inanimate images that feast on each other with an animal fascination in a to-and-fro between the power to disturb and the power to provoke.' — *Conroy Maddox*

'In his more recent paintings, a red river flows through aquariums. All hands in deck are unable to arrest the flux, nailed

and padlocked as they are to the hulls on their ships, not knowing how to scuttle them once and for all. The only solution, suggested in one of John's poems, is that their gloves slash their wrists . . .' — *Michel Remy*

An exhibition of 34 paintings and 20 drawings by a member of the surrealist group here in London. John has a long association with surrealism going back to 1973, regularly showing work in England and in group exhibitions throughout the world.

Repeated throughout his work are images of broken fragments of objects, people, animals; jagged and sharp edged — indeed the very cutting edge of dreams. Images of violence are persistent throughout his work, hardly surprising in a world that attempts to crush anything that is poetic and liberating.

For those who believe that surrealism long since died, a visit to this exhibition by a friend and fellow conspirator will prove that the ideas and surrealist movement is alive and well.

Francis Wright

THATCHERISM

continued from front page

Thatcher is concerned. After the miner's strike Ian McGregor, the Chairman of British Coal, was reported as saying he wished the strike had gone on longer, declaring: 'people are now discovering the price of insubordination and insurrection. And boy, are we going to make it stick.'

Their success is not in doubt. John McIlroy, a marxist writer on trade unions, has recently claimed: 'Thatcherism still holds the stage and the future of trade unionism remains uncertain and insecure.'

Theory Merchants

No reputable sociologist would grasp at Bramah's novelette to explain Thatcherism's success. In the world of masterly plans and counter-plans, which provide work for Mr Crick and his left wing cronies among others, there lies the Ridley Report.

The Ridley Report allows Thatcher to be presented as a skillful strategist who conquered the miners with a brilliant strategem. This Report was commissioned by Thatcher with a view to making the coal industry more market based. According to the marxist industrial sociologist Huw Beynon, its proposals formed the basis of the plan to defeat the miners in the 1984 strike.

In the Ridley Report the following recommendations were outlined in preparation for a possible miners strike:

1. That coal stocks be built up substantially.
2. Contingency plans be made for the movement of coal around the country.
3. Transport companies to be encouraged to employ non-union drivers.
4. That provision be made for the establishment of a National Police Centre to co-ordinate regional police forces.
5. For legislation to be enacted to make secondary picketing unlawful, and for the recovery of damages from trade union funds.
6. That social security benefits to strikers' families be strictly defined.

No doubt such plans are important, and in retrospect they may be elevated into master strokes. Yet it would not have worked if the solidarity of the British labour movement had been real and substantial. The outcome of any great social event is bound to be the consequence of a more complicated combination of conditions than the enactment of a single plan by a single individual.

The issue goes much deeper than the question of heroic leadership or the manipulation of a plan. Anarcho-

syndicalists should consider the extent to which the British labour movement has inflicted wounds upon itself for decades. By cuddling up to governments throughout the 1950s, '60s and '70s: serving on committees of state; presiding on industrial tribunals; and participating at all levels in the machinery of the corporate state, the trade unions prepared the ground for Thatcherism.

This is not a question of cowardice or treason by the union bosses, so much as a philosophical flaw corrupting the trade unions at all levels. It is a flaw which finds a place in the Fabian Labourist tradition of seeing the state as a benefactor, as much as in the marxist idea of the state as the tool of the working class.

By becoming incorporated into the institutions of the state the British unions gave up their independence. In sacrificing this independence they lost the will to fight, and undermined solidarity at the grass roots.

Maggie and Dennis Inc

WHEN the history of the present decade is written it will be interesting to see the evaluation of the role of advertising in the government's propaganda.

From the 'Labour isn't working' billboards of 1979, through to the 'privatisation' campaigns, which saw such endearing characterisations as 'Sid' advertising, as opposed to rational discussion and debate has become the principle means of persuading us of the 'inherent wisdom' of government policy.

The latest offering in this line popped through my letterbox this morning - a flashy little brochure from the Severn-Trent Water Authority, addressing us as 'customers' and referring to itself as 'one of Britain's biggest businesses'. Kropotkin apparently used to view such services as water, street lighting, libraries, refuse disposal, etc., as evidence of the coming society where everything could be administered on free-communistic lines, people may have smiled at this but he did have a point.

Mrs Thatcher, on the other hand, sees them as no more than yet another chance to make a quick buck for her friends in the City at our expense. The state of our water in public hands is far from satisfactory. Soluble nitrates above agreed safe levels, lead and other heavy metals are slowly poisoning us all. In private hands, with profit the controlling and guiding principles, what further delights await us?

But be assured, for according to the advertising everything is okay, and we all

live in the best of all advertised and privatised worlds.

Thatcher's greatness has depended upon a weakness of will and solidarity in the British labour movement. To appreciate this is to grasp how the unions were toppled by Thatcher, one at a time, after 1979: the moment of their maximum material and numerical strength. The Thatcherists fought and won a guerrilla war against a huge TUC foe which lacked spirit.

Some socialist intellectuals now see the state as part of the problem, and Mr Crick proposes 'a revival of the old decentralist tradition of British and French socialism as against both the Leninist and Fabian reliance on the state'. They will have a tough time persuading the trade union barons, because their impulse is still towards corporatism, and treading the corridors of state power.

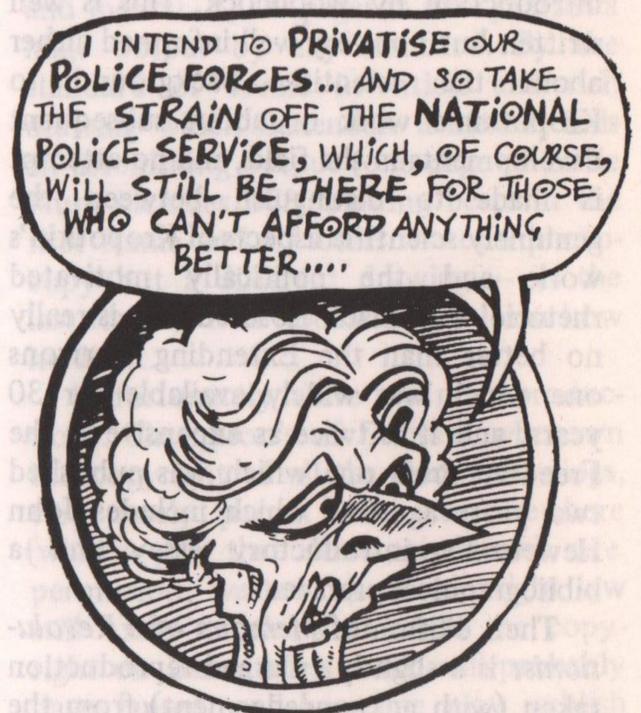
As for Thatcher, she has had a long run, and for this reason she will be elevated to greatness by those historians who ascribe social events to the will of leaders and heroes. But she would do well to remember Napoleon's warning: 'From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step'.

Brian Bamford

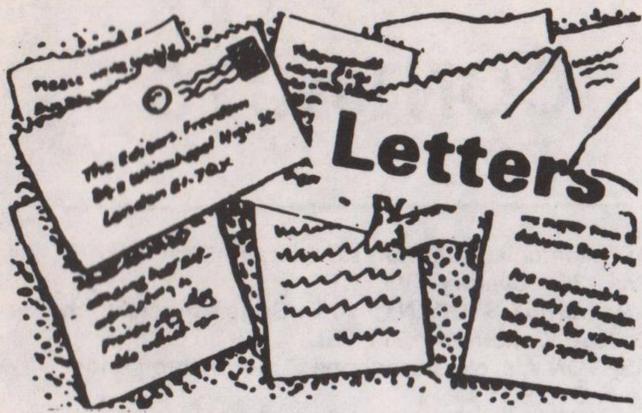
live in the best of all advertised and privatised worlds.

As I write another leaflet has landed on my doorstep - do you want to buy a slightly used ozone layer.

JPS



The Home Office is to study the feasibility of a 'voluntary' system of identity cards. This is said to be to defuse Conservative backbench pressure for a compulsory scheme. The police are said to see 'few' advantages in voluntary cards, which seems realistic. Meanwhile, with cards for social security and compulsory cards for football supporters and electronic tagging experiments for petty offenders and so on, the whole question will eventually become a matter of realism itself, much tidier to have just one card.



Poll Tax

WHEN I wrote my article on the Community Charge it was intended to be provocative, even, as a friend said, mischievous. I was trying, as I have tried before, to de-contextualise anarchist thinking from welfare statism, apparently an uphill task.

Of course we are, as anarchists, opposed to the state and capitalism and should reject all their works, but we live in the real world as it is, not in a utopian future, and to achieve an anarchist revolution we must work within existing society towards that end. Therefore we must examine existing institutional practices to see if we can improve them and we must weigh between alternative policies because some are clearly better and fairer than others.

The left, having itself absorbed the liberal-inspired welfare-statist thinking, appears to be setting the agenda, not only for opposition to Thatcherism, but for the anarchist future. I know times are hard, comrades, and we appear to be losing all our gains of the last eighty years; but most of these, although apparently better than the past, were themselves only a compromise solution set up in the interests of capitalism and its authoritarian structures. They were never that good that they could not be radically improved.

So things they are a-changing, in relation to the new restructured needs of capitalism. Realise this. Accept this as a reality in the here and now, but this is not part of the future we want to see. Now is the time to get together and work out a genuine alternative, which we can then present to the public. Do not let the movements of the left, most of all the Labour Party, cloud your vision. We have the ideology. Let us now start to build the structures we see necessary.

Peter Neville

Félix Fénéon

ARTHUR MOYSE, reviewing Joan Ungersma Halperin's book *Félix Fénéon* (April), accepts without question her statement that Fénéon was the perpetrator of the bomb at the Foyot Restaurant in Paris on 4 April 1894.

It is true that he was suspected of this by the police at the time, but he was

never accused of it, let alone tried for it, as Arthur Moyse says; and the only evidence against Fénéon is that he told the wife of his former comrade Alexandre Cohen about it 'when he was old' or 'in his later years', according to what their friend André Salmon hinted in a book and told yet another friend many years later, according to the author of this new book.

This sort of hearsay evidence at several removes after several decades surely isn't good enough to convict even a dead anarchist for terrorism, especially in an anarchist paper. It is true that Halperin is very definite about the matter in her text, and even makes it the subject of a fanciful 'Preview' at the beginning of the book. In a long note she claims that 'the attribution of the Foyot bomb to Fénéon is based on an accumulation of evidence', but in fact there is only this single strand of rumour. Indeed, in the same note she does acknowledge that 'fairness to Fénéon's memory requires that doubts as to his role in the bombing be recognised'. Charming! As a result of such reckless reasoning, the reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* (24-30 March) also accepted the story, and described Fénéon as a 'dandy-terrorist'. This is how lies are told and myth are made.

It should be made clear that Halperin is much less familiar with the world of anarchism than that of art, that the book isn't as 'extremely well researched' as Arthur Moyse says, and that there are a large number of mistakes and misunderstandings in her account of this side of Fénéon's life. Anyway, until some real evidence about the case appears, the verdict should at least remain *Not Proven*.
NW

Crowd Control

ON SUNDAY 16 April I went to a demonstration in Brussels against NATO. On the way, it was good to see the windmills at Zeebrugge producing non-violent electricity. The turn-out for the demo was stupendous, at a rapid calculation more than 100,000; so many that it took us two hours to start marching and the wide streets were full. As the police did not appear near the march (presumably too busy stopping traffic), all went smoothly.

The *Grauniad* next day had only a few lines and 20,000 demonstrators. But we were only trying to stop military idiots from wasting resources and killing a lot of people.

The main story in the English press was a contrasting story of 'crowd control, people herded into pens by authority so that football companies and the media can make lots of money. Shades of 1914!

NA

Capitalism

THERE has been a spate of letters recently which attribute to capitalism the most enormous growth of population that the world has experienced since the industrial revolution. What nonsense is this? Any increase in the material wealth of the world as a whole is a result of science — not capitalism. With a more equitable distribution of wealth, and better education for the poor, we could be far wealthier than we are. The hundred million slaves and the billions of poor who actually pay for our wealth would be infinitely more productive if they were allowed to work according to the standard of their ability.

The only advantage of capitalism is that it occasionally allows an individual to express their creativity in a productive manner. There are less productive societies, but we could do far better!

Alex Lockton

Facts!

IN THE March issue of *Freedom* I wrote that although the profit system is a killer, it is also, and even more, a life-bringer. A letter in the April issue suggests that this favours theorising at the expense of fact.

FACT: This has been the first century with practically the whole world under the profit system.

FACT: During this century the world population has increased from under two million to over five thousand million.

FACT: The population did not increase at this rate during any previous century.

These same facts constitute a reply also to the main theme of another letter in the April issue. The profit system, capitalism, the State — they are different aspects of the same thing — now present more immediate threats to humanity than do the forces of nature. This comes from their unbalanced, incontrollable success, the increase of population without adequate provision for maintenance of the new lives being one instance of this.

George Walford

Whoops!

IN MY article in the April *Freedom* ('Religion and Responsibility') the word 'impotence' should be 'omnipotence' (your Freudian slip, not mine).

On the letters page, H. I. Jones says, 'the highly developed capitalist countries are immensely more productive than any . . . socialist society.' I believe this may not be the case in East Germany, which appears to be overtaking Britain.

Johnny Yen

ZINES

DURING THE past couple of decades an exciting development in publishing has taken place, almost unnoticed by the publishing establishment.

Our comrade Dave will review zines in *Freedom* from time to time. We hope there will be an emphasis on those with an anarchist content, but the column is not restricted to them. The zines movement is a real movement of people acting for themselves, and we celebrate it as such.

Please send review copies of your zines direct to Dave. His address is the same as that of *Eat Shit!* in the list.

Remember always send an sae (an A5 envelope usually fits the bill).

Today in Ireland (10p) A5. Various articles and opinions about 'the troubles' in Ireland: c/o Lee, 14 Cambridge Avenue, Rowanfield, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 8DQ.

Dying for a Fag (12p) A5. Covering all aspects of smoking and the tobacco industry: c/o John, Greenbank, East Pennard, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 6RJ.

Warzine (free or donation). News and information sheet put out by the Warzone collective: c/o Box 184, Belfast BT1.

UK Resist (free or donation). Opinions and news plus dates of demos and gigs around the UK: c/o Box 3, Isleworth, Middlesex.

Rasin' Hell no. 19 (20p) A5. A large letters and review section, stuff on Troops Out Movement and poll tax, interviews with Toxic Ephix, Scraps

and Christ on Parade: c/o Box 32, 52 Call Lane, Leeds, West Yorkshire.

Eat Shit! no. 1 (25p benefit) A5. Articles by Crass, Chumbawamba and Maximum Security. Interviews with The Madding Crowd, Peaceville and Doom, plus stuff on poll tax, sexism and more: c/o Dave, Box A, 1 Penn Lea Court, Penn Lea Road, Bath.

Resistance Network no. 1 (donation) A5. London co-op's greenhouse effect, Israel, interview with Life Cycle plus poems, etc. c/o Bob, 2 Falconer Place, Leominster, Herefordshire HI26 8AP.

Incendiary no. 1 (25p) A5. Articles on the ALF, Apathy, contacts, plus in-depth political interviews with Chumbawamba, Oi Pollio and Political Asylum: c/o Boomtown Books, 167 King Street, Aberdeen.

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Chemical Warfare no. 3 (50p) A5. Sixty pages of hardcore band interviews, reviews, letters and graphics, available from the above address.

Maximum rock n roll no. 67 (£2.50) A4ish. This is I suppose the big one - letters, reviews, ads, articles, world news, scene reports from around the world and interviews. Monthly publication in Europe: MRR, c/o PO Box 59, London N22.

Bald Cactus no. 1 (10p) A5. Reviews, recipes, Apostles Karma Sutra, Throbs and some good articles: c/o Andy, Flat 6, 34b Leeds Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

CONTACTS

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BANGOR A Collective, c/o UNCW SU, Deiniol Road, Bangor, Gwynedd

BAR Bulletin of Anarchist Research, c/o T.V. Cahill, Dept of Politics, Univ of Lancaster LA1 4YF

BRACKNELL A's, Box 21, 17 Chatham St, Reading RG1 7JF

BRISTOL Drowned Rat, Box 010, Full Marks Bookshop, 37 Stokes Croft, Bristol

BURNLEY A's, 2 Quarrybank, Burnley

CAMBRIDGE Box A, c/o Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir Street, Cambridge

CHRISTIAN A's, Pinch of Salt, c/o Peter Lumsden, 23d South Villas, London NW1

CLASS WAR, PO Box 467, London E5 8BE

COVENTRY Group, PO Box 125, CV3 5QT (don't mention anarchist on envelope)

DAM Direct Action Movement, PO Box 19, Wythenshaw PDO, Manchester M22 7JJ.

DERBYSHIRE A's, Jon (0773) 827513

DURHAM A's, c/o DSU, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham

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ESSEX Martyn Everett, 11 Gibson Gardens, Saffron Walden, Essex

FAP Federation of Anarcho-Pacifists, c/o John Hill 28b Clifton Road, Ilford, Essex

GLASGOW A's, Box PH30, c/o Changes, 340 West Princes Street, Glasgow G4 9HE

HASTINGS A's, c/o Hastings Free Press, 14 Lower Park Road, Hastings, E. Sussex

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LIB ED Libertarian Education Collective, The Cottage, The Green, Leire LE17 5HL

LIVERPOOL A's, PO Box 110, Liverpool L69
Liverpool University Anarchist Group, c/o SU, 2 Bedford St North, Liverpool L7 7BD

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MANCHESTER Anarchists, c/o Raven, Room 6, 75 Piccadilly, M1 2BU

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