

## CIRCUSES— Not Much Bread

WHAT marvellous people the Romans were! Probably the people who live in Roma today think they still are, but of course, for the rest of us plebeians, it is the glories that *were* Rome that turn us on. That Caligula, for example! And Nero — first-rate fiddler, he. Eat your heart out, Stephane Grappelly!

Nor were other Italian provinces, in other times, less brilliant. Machiavelli spelt out the principles, or lack of them, for the proper, or at least the actual, art of government — the Borgias practised them, and, *inter alia*, as they were always saying, gave us the one and only woman Pope. And that must be good.

Brilliant or no, however, it is the Romans we must thank for establishing the solid foundations of government: Roman Law, the basis of our very own legal system to this day (the *habeas corpus* could well have meant something else in Caligula's day ... or maybe not!) and the simple, basic principles upon which tyranny through the ages has been built.

Sorry, sorry, we didn't mean to write 'tyranny', we meant...er...something like 'government by consent', like what every good radical libertarian socialist is now saying is what is wanted in Brixton. Where were we? Oh, yes — basic principles of government by consent, then.

We do not actually have at our fingertips the name of whichever Latin genius first coined the phrase 'Divide and Rule' — but isn't it a good one! Been worked to death since Roman times, of course, but still very much alive in our very own modern trade unions etc. By a sleight of hand that Machiavelli would have been proud to have isolated and explained, our trade unions ('Our' trade unions? What does he mean?) have used a word that means 'bringing together' to cover an operation that effectively tears apart. If ever there was an organisation which guards its own privilege by the seditious division of the people who pay for its upkeep, it is surely the trade union movement, in Britain. And America. And the Soviet Union. And, we are prepared to place a modest wager, in Timbuktoo as well.

And when that mould was broken, as it was, briefly, in Spain, who but the Social Democrats and the Communists and the Fascists, smashed the unity of a people who would not be governed? So hold your breath, as you watch Poland today.

Thank you Romans, they all say, for 'Divide and Rule'.

And what was that other great tenet of government that came down to us from the Imperial City?

Why, of course you remember: 'Bread and Circuses'. For this, we are proud to say that we do know who first said it. *Juvenal*, that's who. No, not Juvenile, you Plebeian Britannicus, but Juvenal, AD60-130. See what you learn by reading FREEDOM from front to back?

Limit the Roman people's anxious longings, said Juvenal, 'to two things only — bread, and the games of the circus.'

Now here's a funny thing, as Max Miller might have said, but right now, at the very time we are writing, what should be going on up and down the length and breadth of our freedom-loving land, but a whole series of circuses. Trapeze artistes, bare faced liars — sorry, sorry, *bare backed riders* — jumping through hoops, noble lions, tamed and toothless; elephants balancing on one leg; acrobatic motion passers and jugglers of resolutions; strong men lifting block votes in one hand, whilst not knowing what the other doeth ... and at the end, the Ringmaster sees us off, and the band played on, and on, and on.

Then — and both Barnum and Bailey would have been proud of this — no sooner did the first circus come to an end; no sooner was the big top folded and the starry-eyed children sleepily sent home, but — on again came the clowns in another three-ringed circus, nationwide, from North to South! The very latest in sensational claptrap from the Hooray Harries and the Lord George Brown look-alikes. Sensational somersaults and belly-flops from a great height, through flaming hoops into buckets of water, every sensational anti-climax in the history of political skullduggery!!

Legerdemain before your very eyes! Now you see it, now you don't. Sharp-



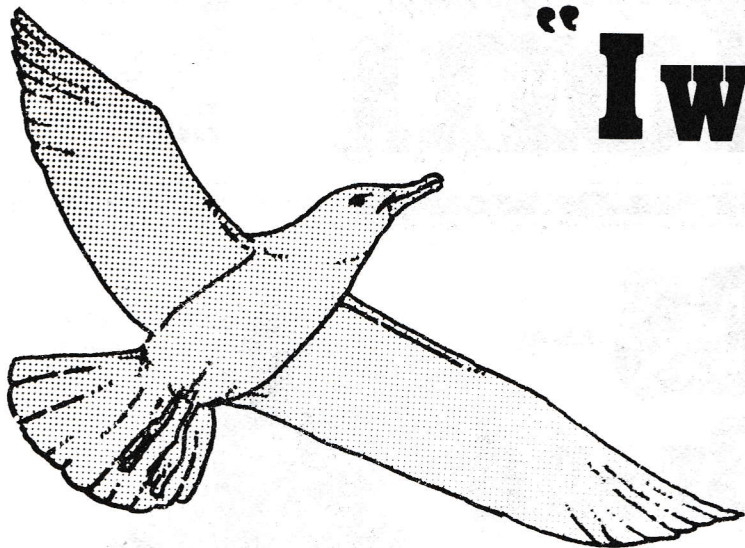
*'These two  
were found  
stealing cake!'*

shooters hit the centre every time — only to find there's nothing there! Roll up, roll up! Stand up and be counted while we throw knives at you! Boomerangs stab you in the back when you're not looking! Ride a zebra through the Race Relations Act and you can swear that black is white and it'll be all right on the night.

The Islington Rope Trick, over and over again — man climbs rope, vanishes, and reappears in another party looking just like the first party. Party of the first part, says the lawyer, falling off his seat. 'And this is what you do', says Jimmy Young: 'Take one man — sorry, sorry, er — person, take one vote if you can buy one, add one bloody great pinch of salt, roly-poly it altogether now and hurl it into the air. It's probably come to earth you know not where, because you never see it again. Gone!'

*Continued on page 3.*





# “I want my freedom back”

LIVORNO, ITALY

JULY 13th, one year after their arrest, saw the conclusion of the trial against 15 people accused of 'terrorist acts', amongst whom were two comrades, Monica Giorgi and the lawyer Gabriele Fuga. 7 of the defendants were acquitted, including Gabriele. The others, however, were sentenced to a total of 38 years in jail. The longest sentence was given to Monica, 12 years and 8 months, followed by 3 years of probation.

Monica had been active in the anarchist movement between 1970 and 1978, involved in Solidarity campaigns for political prisoners and other social and political activities in support of the movement. During the trial, which lasted two months, all the evidence presented against her was easily shown to be inconsistent and based entirely on the contradictory statements made by two false witnesses, which confirmed her statement that she was obviously given a 'political' sentence. The length of this has not only surprised and shocked the anarchist movement and far left groups in Livorno but even the straight press and media. A few days after the verdict, Monica, shocked, and weakened by lack of food was moved to the maximum security jail in Messina, Sicily

(the other end of Italy), without her family or her solicitor being informed.

Here follows the statement she made before the jury retired to consider its verdict:

*'Since 1975 my political activities, in the propagation of libertarian and egalitarian ideas, have been checked and consistently followed by the police and the law in Livorno and the surrounding area. This in itself should be enough to show that it is incredible that someone could have thought of approaching me to plan an action such as I am accused of. A second point, which my defence didn't stress enough, is that, despite the suspicions and inquisition against me over an attempted kidnapping I have continued to lead my normal lifestyle, apart from political activities, for reasons which I have made obvious. But I didn't try to run or hide myself, I continued in my work-study-sport, showing just how unreal these charges brought against me are. I have never been a member of an armed gang — I have taken part in debates and political discussions on the social problems of our times, always publicly. I have taught how harmful exploitation and oppression are, using reason, with passionate arguments and revolutionary controversy which are not illegal acts!*

*I have never terrorized anybody, instead I have been continuously threatened in many different ways, it is I that have been terrorized and recently, with attacks against me and my family. I have not planned nor conceived of attempting a kidnapping. Instead I have been kidnapped for more than a year in so called preventive custody. It is I that have been locked away in a hole a few square yards in area, an incredible restriction in comparison with my usual 6 hours a day of professional sport. It is I that have been locked in a cage like a wild animal, which is not wild, as the cage would have you believe.*

*I have not wounded anyone, neither with guns nor actions or words. Instead I have been wounded deeply, in my dignity, by means of these false accusations, humiliated by these attacks, suspicions and criminalisation.*

*I have never robbed anyone of anything. Instead I have been robbed of everything, of my emotions, of my feelings, of human relationships, of my experience and my existence.*

*I have been robbed of my right to live. I want my freedom back.'*

Taken from A. Rivista Anarchica  
Translation by GABRIELLA

## National Mobilisation

HULL ANARCHIST GROUP/  
DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT

THE anti-nukes movement is one in which traditionally, anarchist activity has been high. The committee of 100 acted as a focus for us to put theory into practice and to show that our method worked; it also rejected 'pressure group' tactics in favour of using DIRECT ACTION and civil disobedience to pursue disarmament.

If CND is not to end up the same as the initial campaign, it's obvious that there's a need for a similar group/organisation. The CND demonstration on 24th Oct 1981 gives us a chance both to get DIRECT ACTION activity going, and to show the strength of the anarchist move-

ment nationally. We would like to see:-

1) A unified anarchist contingent on the march (meeting at a pre-arranged venue) with some ideas of what to do as a mass or as small group activities.

2) Some form of common leaflet/propaganda stressing direct action, even if this is produced locally rather than centrally.

3) Some way of showing people we are anarchists and not just innocent demo fodder/SWPers/Labour etc. So bring flags, banners, etc.....

UNITY IS STRENGTH..... We need to organise NOW if we are to be effective. Get in touch with Hull Anarchists at:- 23 Hutt St, Spring Bank, Hull, HU3 1QL.

## CND Demo

**Saturday 24th October  
Starts Victoria Embankment  
(East of Charing Cross)  
Assemble approx 10am.  
Rally at Hyde Park 4pm,  
after march, 'events', etc.**

**Freedom sellers wanted!  
Contact 01-247 9249.  
Anarchists bring flags  
Contact Hull Anarchists.**



# PATRICIA GIAMBI

To be deported for possession of anarchist literature

WE want to bring your attention to the case of Patricia Giambi, which arises out of the events which took place in Brixton on April 11th. Her story began, like many others, on Saturday April 11th when she was caught up in a police charge near her Brixton home and charged with having an offensive weapon and of using threatening behaviour and words. Here again her situation was similar to hundreds of others, police accusations resting on contradictory elements of identification in what was a crowd situation in a narrow unlit street.

It did not take police long to single her out for special treatment however when they discovered she was living in the same house as someone on whom they had a political file and who was also arrested that evening. From that moment on there has been a deliberate and unconcealed attempt to single out these two women and frame them in the role of outside agitators in an event which has been widely recognised as a popular uprising against survival conditions and police provocation. The role attributed to Patricia, prompted by her Italian nationality, is that of the imperative 'foreign link' — an Italian one to boot — where police, through the organs of the daily press, have made repeated references and innuendos re Red Brigades, international terror links and so on.

As an EEC citizen, she left her local government post for a year, using her full rights of mobility in this country as laid down in the Treaty of Rome, to find employment here and to study the English language. Language difficulties and ever increasing unemployment made it difficult for her to find work, but she was eventually engaged as a cleaner in a local hospital, where she worked six mornings a week. She has gained an intermediate English certificate at Westminster College which she has attended since January.

Over the past few months, since her arrest in April, she has appeared in court on numerous occasions, and while on bail

was granted her passport to go to Italy to visit her sick father. She returned early in September to face trial, and now finds herself serving a sentence of 28 days in Holloway, and on completion of this faces deportation. This as a result of being found guilty of threatening behaviour under Section 5 of the Public Order Act.

Upon conviction police presented the magistrate with an album of enlarged colour prints of the study of the flat where Patricia was living. They had been taken during a raid following her arrest and showed bookshelves containing, among others, books dealing with anarchist theory and history which are freely available in libraries and bookshops. These, plus a photograph of a poster in the same room with the slogan (in Italian) *Bread, love and struggle*, were taken as being conclusive evidence that she was a national security risk, so justifying the deportation order. Patricia made no attempt to conceal her interest in anarchism which, as far as she knew, was not illegal in this country.

When the deportation order was contested by her barrister Ian McDonald, police overtly reinterpreted EEC law by saying that she was not a bona fide worker (this expression does not appear in the act), or student, and therefore could benefit from no rights. She has been working for over four months and studying at Westminster College in the evenings. She was also at one time part of a libertarian book collective and worked voluntarily one afternoon per week. This was distorted by police and presented as further evidence as to why she should be deported.

She is appealing against sentence and in the meantime we feel her case should be brought to the widest public attention as it sets an ominous precedent.

## FRIENDS OF PATRICIA GIAMBI

c/o 121 Books  
121 Raiton Road  
Herne Hill  
London SE24

# Circuses

Continued from page 1.

Two cheers for the sinister doctor and his late bride. They're tunnelling their way to France, leading three million unemployed like the Pied Piper of Hamelin and the lost children of the land of Israel. Chosen people?

Chosen for what? Must we be the spectators and the participants in our own deception? Must we be forever the fall guys and dolls for the professional ponces and their professional circuses? Cruelty to animals and human animals alike!

And, dear readers (come on, wake up!) there's more to come. Madam Margaret and her crystal balls is gonna ride those white horses till the sows come home. Round and round we go, straight ahead for damnation. Soaring interest rates and no safety net for the daring little lame ducks. Cruising on Trident, she's the Big Top, folks, and doesn't care who dies of starvation — self-inflicted or in the great cause of monetarism, the thrill is the same. Just so long as the audience keeps on paying to come in, and paying, and paying.

So put your hands together, folks, for Golden Maggie, the Iron Maiden. It's easier then for her to slip the handcuffs on while she revives our memories of the Great Houdini — and escapes, once again. Curses!

JUSTIN

## FOOTNOTE:

Juvenal was good for another quotation, usually used out of context. We'll give it to you straight and you can make what you like of it:

*'Pone seram, prohibe.' Sed quis custodiet ipsos Custodes?*

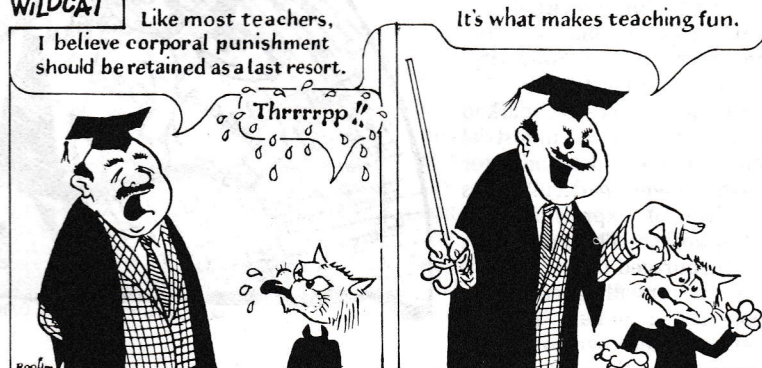
*Cauta est et ab illis incipit uxor.*

*'Put on a lock! Keep her in confinement!'* But who is to guard the guards themselves? Your wife is as cunning as you, and begins with them. —*Satires.*

## A SINCERE REQUEST

A DISTRIBUTION need a lockable cupboard or cabinet urgently. Anyone who has one they would be willing to donate please contact A Distribution at the Autonomy Centre.

## WILDCAT



## A HEADMASTER COMMENTS:

I see nothing witty or satirical in this concoction. Differences of opinion I respect, but to suggest that teachers enjoy beating children is a puerile slander. Experienced teachers do not enjoy anything. As opponents of authoritarianism you ought to be opposing the prohibition of corporal punishment at the whim of local education authorities, in gross violation of children's rights.

We had corporal punishment at my old school, and it made me what I am. Come out the boy who sniggered. I will not have sniggering.



# Syndicalist Upsurge in Poland

THE Kremlin's recent warning to the Polish Communist Party (PUWP) to suppress the free trade union 'Solidarity', accused the Union of 'anti-Sovietism' among other heresies. It is astounding when one considers the monumental irony of this charge being levelled at 'Solidarity'. In the past few months the Union has openly expressed support for the grass-roots movement for workers' self-management, particularly as a system of direct workers' control in industry may solve Poland's economic crisis, brought about by rigid Communist centralisation, planning and mismanagement. It is this very call for genuine workers' control that has particularly annoyed and alarmed the Kremlin. In Russia the Soviets were originally factory councils created by workers during the revolution, and could have laid the foundations for workers' self-management but for the growing Bolshevik dictatorship. After their coup d'état the Communists forcibly took over the Soviets, terminated their autonomy and transformed them into Bolshevik-dominated tools for controlling the workforce, and this has been their nature ever since. In labelling the Polish workers' attempts to establish authentic control in industry as 'anti-Sovietism', the Communists have again revealed their paranoia about genuine workers' democracy anywhere in their domain. Once again the Kremlin is camouflaging its dictatorship over the proletariat behind a facade of 'Sovietism', and it expects its surrogate Polish Communist Party to stamp out any authentic Soviet-type workers' organisations.

## Historical Sketch

Workers' self-management is absent in Poland as the ruling Communist Party, and its policy-making apparatus, makes all important decisions and establishes production 'plans' to which individual enterprises in all sectors of the economy have to conform. All factories and mines are strictly controlled by the Party organisation, represented by enterprise managers and 'factory councils'. Prior to 'Solidarity' the role of trade unions was primarily to ensure the managers' control of the workforce at the workplace.

Workers attempts to establish industrial democracy, by at least taking part in decision-making and enterprise management, were effectively stifled in the past, either through infiltration and disruption of genuine workers' organisations or by more direct and sometimes violent means. Throughout 1956 workers' councils were founded in numerous Polish factories; there were approximately 4,600 of them by the end of 1957. (1) They replaced

the Party-appointed directors with elected representatives, and in many instances ejected Communist-controlled factory committees. Gomuka, the Communist Party leader, realised that decentralisation of economic planning weakened Party control of factories and threatened the Communists' monopoly of power. The workers councils were therefore soon subverted by Party agents who sought to and succeeded in transforming them into transmission belts for Party decisions. Eventually the councils were formally subordinated to Communist hierarchical control and codes of labour discipline.

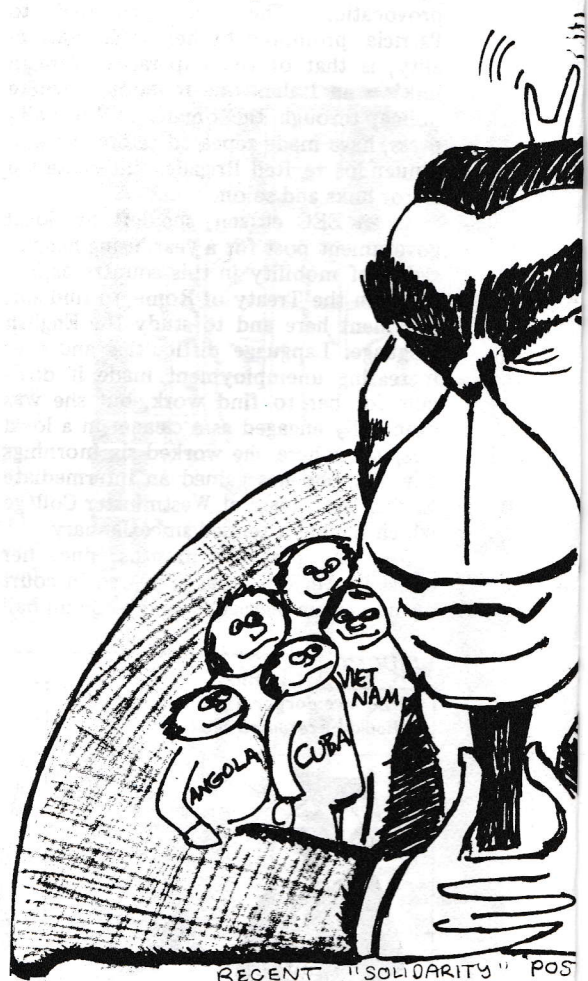
In May 1958 the government established the so-called Self-Management Conference (KSR), through which Communist Party decisions were made binding on the factory councils and the official trade unions. Workers councils were effectively suppressed and lost any self-managing characteristics they had attained during the Polish 'October'. They became puppet organisations merely responsible for implementing KSR decisions and 'mobilising' workers for allotted production targets, set by the State. (2) Since the 1950's the demands of Polish workers for greater democratic control of industry have been stifled. Any manifestations of workers power, such as the demonstrations of 1970 and 1976, were brutally crushed by the authorities, and failed to lead to a re-creation of independent workers councils.

## 'Solidarity' and Self-Management

In the summer of 1980 a nationwide workers movement created the independent, self-governing trade union 'Solidarity'. The Union is simultaneously a trade union and a social movement. It provides a forum for the expression of opinions and the formulation of alternative social and economic policies, which could not be publicly voiced prior to the establishment of this mass movement. The Unions wide-ranging demands for justice and economic reform have included proposals for industrial democracy, economic (and by implication, political) decentralisation, and self-management for industrial and agricultural enterprises, in line with the Gdansk agreements signed by 'Solidarity' and the government in August 1980.

'Solidarity's' immense successes sparked off a widespread interest in industrial democracy and growing demands for workers self-management, particularly as the barrier of fear of expressing such policies had been broken. This grass-roots trend has been encouraged by the government's inability and unwillingness to reform the economy, stimulate productivity and undermine their own control of the working population.

Earlier this year Founding Committees of Workers' Self-Management were set up in 17 major Polish factories. They aim to function independently from State or Party-controlled organisations. Through federation into a regional and eventually a national structure, they want to fully participate in managing the economy at the point of production. A national conference of this 'Network' movement, consisting of local 'Solidarity' chapters, was held on June 23rd. It was attended by representatives from over 1,000 plants, including the 'Lenin' shipyard in Gdansk and the 'Ursus' engineering works in Warsaw. This growing movement is attracting an increasing number of workers throughout the country. (3) In line with pressures and demands from the mass of workers, 'Solidarity's' National Coordinating Committee (KKP) recently expressed its full backing for workers self-management in its Resolution on Employees Councils. The Union has called on all its chapters in industrial plants to 'support the idea of an authentic workers' self-management' in order to





help solve the continuing crisis in industrial production.

'Consultation centres' have been established where a programme of economic reforms, including proposals for genuine self-management, are being formulated by Union members. 'Network' itself has produced a detailed project for Employees Self-Management, whereby the 'enterprise is administered by the workforce by means of the organs of employees self-management' (Article 10.1). (4) As an important first step in the process of workers control 'Solidarity' wants top plant managers to be freely appointed by workers councils. To avoid outright confrontation with the authorities, the Union recently suggested a compromise arrangement for the time being, whereby the government should have the right to veto the workers selections for management.

#### The Communist Attitude to Workers' Control

The Polish government recently proposed its own version of the future of self-management in the country, in effect merely a modification of its previous policies. Parliament is in the process of drafting relevant Bills which may in practice try to deny 'Solidarity's' insistence

on the workers right to select and control factory management. Simultaneously, the authorities accuse 'Network' of challenging State power. The Union has strong reservations about the extent and genuineness of the Party's proposals for industrial democracy. This is not surprising if account is taken of previous Communist reactions to democratic workers councils, and their ideological opposition to self-management.

According to two recent secret documents of the Communist Party's Central Committee's Social-Industrial Department (brought to light in August), the authorities intend to mount a powerful campaign against workers demands for self-management. (5) Their aim is to forbid, and if this fails, to prevent 'the trade union organisation from conducting harmful activities directed against the Party and the socialist state'. The Party reveals its profound fear of workers control by stating that the 'statute of the founding committees of workers' self-management are quite unacceptable to a marxist-leninist party'. The Party feels it is 'imperative to undertake immediately a politico-organisational counter-offensive' because self-management is diametrically opposed to the principles of Marxism-Leninism. As a result the Central Committee will conduct 'an extensive press, radio and TV campaign criticizing the views of Solidarity extremists', where 'materials on the anarcho-syndicalist deviation will be urgently distributed to regional committees who in turn will distribute them to basic party organisations. Material will be made available on the contradictions between the views of anarcho-syndicalists and marxist-leninists concerning economic reforms'.

In line with Communist Party policy Parliament rejected 'Solidarity's' demand for a national referendum on workers' rights to choose factory managers. The Polish authorities have in the past always successfully intervened to contain or transmute pressures for democratic control of industry into harmless and short-lived experiments which fail to challenge the Party's monopolistic control of the economy. 'Solidarity' is fully aware of the government's past record and their limited proposals for self-management. At its first National Congress (stage one) the Union stated that 'the authorities, terrified by the prospect of developing and consolidating self-governments, are trying to destroy them in the bud, depriving them of the right to manage the establishments, particularly the right to nominate and dismiss managers. This is done under the pretext of protecting national and state property, in reality in the name of the selfish interests of the party-state apparatus.' (6)

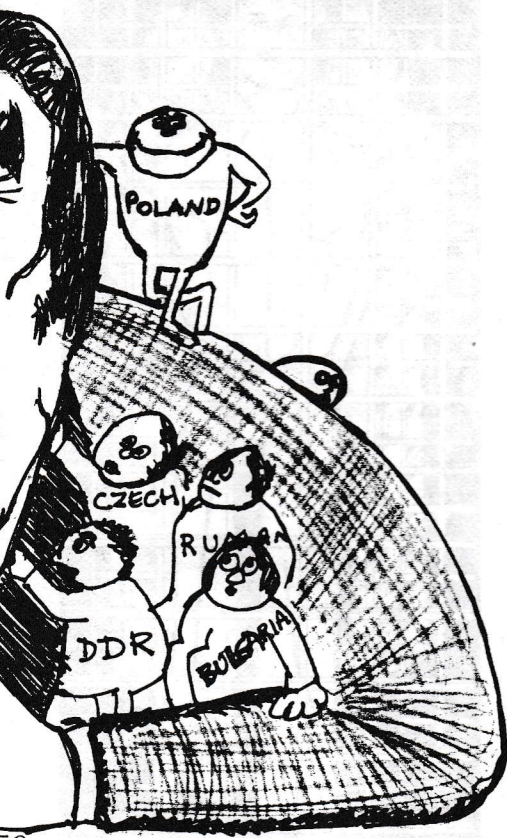
The workers, through 'Solidarity', may have to make tactical compromises with government proposals in order to avoid bloodshed and maintain some sort of

dialogue, but the Union now seems committed to genuine workers' control of industry. In the long run, it is now clear, for changes in industrial and economic relations to be acceptable to a large proportion of the workforce they have to be effective, thorough and lasting. Self-management and workers control must become a concrete goal and not just a legal concept hiding the Party's dictatorship. It must accompany other fundamental economic reforms to save Poland from its current desperate crisis.

#### Syndicalism vs. Leninism

Workers' self-management and industrial democracy constitutes a system where workers do not merely legally own, but actually manage the means of production at their disposal; a fundamental condition of syndicalism. In such a system workers councils (formed of workers in the factory or mine in question) decide openly and democratically about the quantity and variety of industrial production, taking local and national needs into full account. Workers councils also control the purchase and distribution of products, the development of the industry and the distribution of income and other benefits. The fundamental principle of self-management and syndicalism, is the creation of manageable work groups where all members directly participate in decisions about production, and build a regional and national structure of workers assemblies from the bottom. The latter must balance the interests of different regions and industrial plants and assure equal allocation of all necessary goods and services. Such a system is far from being realised anywhere in the world, but we must recognise and learn from instances where positive moves towards syndicalism are being made — of these cases Poland offers the most promising current example.

In a system where political opposition groups are outlawed and suppressed, the independent self-governing trade union 'Solidarity' has become the spearhead of the labour movement in Poland. Through the Unions achievements Polish workers have realised their economic and political strength. Many are now trying to lay the foundations for a thorough reorganisation of society, starting at one of its most basic sectors — the sphere of production. By demanding industrial democracy and organising their own councils, workers are aiming for economic and political decentralisation. This would form an important step towards workers control in industry and local control of production and distribution, coordinated nationally by a federation of industrial and regional workers organisations. These far-reaching proposals may be embryonic and experimental, but they could provide Poland not only with a more rational and efficient economic system than the highly





centralised Leninist monstrosity, but would ensure genuine political equality through direct democratic participation in decision making on important policies.

Authentic self-management would embrace industrial, agricultural, intellectual and office workers, as society frees itself from the costly burden of supporting a destructive and inefficient State and Party apparatus. Leninism (the principle and practice of a one-party state), and by implication Marxism (which provides Leninism with absolute theoretical justification), is an outdated and regressive political and economic system. In Poland, as elsewhere in the Communist world, it has not only proved itself to be oppressive and terroristic but also grossly incompetent and corrupt. However, one would be unimaginative to assume that the only alternative to Leninism would be a multi-party, 'liberal democracy', where power lies in the hands of various vested interests who can best manipulate the system. One has only to examine the Polish workers struggle over the past year to realise that, but for the reactionaries of right and left, whether Russian or Polish, anarcho-sindicalism, as a social, economic and political reality, could flourish in Poland. We must fully support the workers of Poland, they are struggling for their freedom and yours!

JAN

#### References

- (1) For information on workers' councils in Poland look at (among others):- Francois Fejto (1977) *A History of the People's Democracies*, M K Dziejowski (1977) *Poland in the 20th century*, and Chris Harman (1974) *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe*.
- (2) This is discussed by Szymon Jakubowicz (1981) 'Solidarnosc' a Samorząd Robotniczy.
- (3) For detailed examples of grass-roots formation of Self-Management Committees consult the Agencja Prasowa 'Solidarnosc', particularly No 29 (10-12th August 1981), and the Information Centre for Polish Affairs (UK), Bulletin No 13/81, 3rd September 1981.
- (4) Taken from 'Network's' Project for the Public Enterprise Bill (Article 10.1), published in Polish Solidarity Campaign Newsletter No 3, September 1981, P 6.
- (5) The two Communist Party documents are entitled:- 'A Note on the existence of a Network of ISTU 'Solidarity' chapters' and 'Information'. The text is available from the Information Centre for Polish Affairs (UK), Bulletin No 11/81, August 1981.
- (6) Taken from the Resolution on Self-Management, 9th September. Text available from the Information Centre for Polish Affairs (UK), No 14/81, 18th September 1981.

# NEWS FROM IRELAND

THERE has been, ever since the blanket protest and hunger strikes began, a concentration of attention and concern on the H-Blocks of Long Kesh. What has lacked priority are the conditions of prisoners in Armagh.

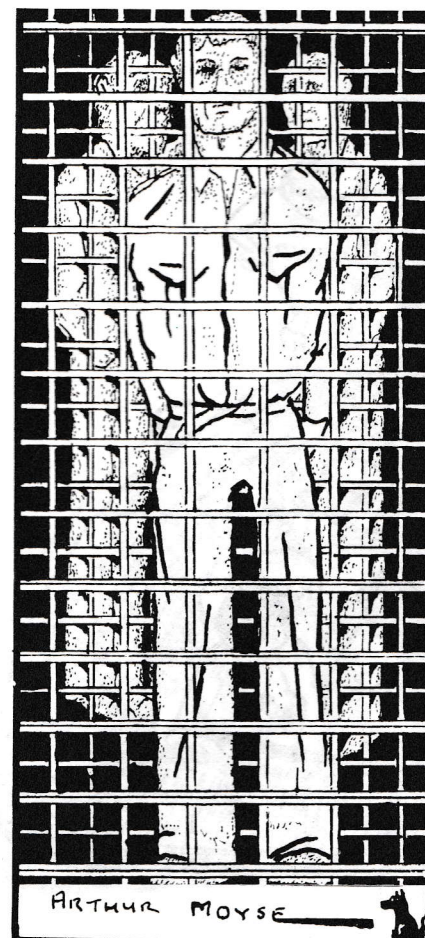
Prisoners in the Cages (termed 'special category' prisoners) are deeply affected by what is happening both inside and outside these infamous jails, and they tend to be forgotten in the intensity of campaigns which do not seem to involve them directly. They are imprisoned, many of them for very long periods of time, as a result of acts of political resistance, within a deeply sectarian regime that interests itself more in processes of revenge and punishment than in a mouthed intent of reform and rehabilitation. Such concepts, from the mouths of politicians, are truly unreal, no matter how often officials will throw smoke screens about 'modern conditions.. amongst the finest in Europe', in an attempt to delude both media and public into a false and incomplete awareness. What has been well documented by radical commentators to date, are the facts regarding torture, beatings, intimidation, and the many concerted attempts made to break the spirit of a largely youthful and revolutionary prison population. One aspect of existence in the Cages, which is not unique to this prison, but which merits attention nevertheless, is the degree to which prisoners suffer malnourishment as a result of a thoughtless and corrupt system which produces stodgy mass rather than nutritious food.

Adequate nutrition is a basic human need -- it is essential for physical and mental well-being. Its denial, within a system which makes claims of rehabilitation, is a major contribution to discontent and ill-health. Within an overall situation, here in Northern Ireland, of political and social oppression, riddled with corruption and sectarian malice, it is one more weapon in the hands of a state which seeks to subdue and repress revolutionary resistance. A prisoner in Armagh was denied a special diet when suffering a duodenal ulcer. There is no doubt that here, and in the Cages of Long Kesh, inadequate food is a major talking point and is the cause of demoralisation, discontent and illness. It is not possible for prisoners to create a radical change in diet (say, for example, from meat-eating to vegetarian) and although parcels of foodstuffs from outside are received, the general situation is one of complete inadequacy and repression.

Some of the food offered is adequate in itself, but is consistently ruined by over-steaming, and there is much waste. Large amounts of money are spent on desserts which are often inedible and which lie untouched. Sauces are also provided which give little nourishment and which are also rejected and contribute to the waste. Dieticians are employed by the prison authorities to work out a regimen, but this is based on caloric values and not on nutrients. As a result of the waste, the poor quality of the food, and the inattention to the fundamental importance of nutrition, many prisoners suffer digestive disorders and allied illnesses which in turn necessitate treatment by expensive medicines -- all in a climate of government policy which demands widespread cuts in public expenditure!

Much can be achieved from outside the prisons to provide information and access to resources which could enable prisoners to resist this particular form of deprivation and denial of such a basic human need.

ANN





# LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LET

## MACHIAVELLIANISM

Dear FREEDOM,

Kevin Doyle can not see any contradiction between his realisation that 'workers of both religious communities are being screwed' and his unqualified support for the 'violent confrontation between those who desire freedom and the reactionaries who don't'. We are left to presume that the Roman Catholics constitute the former, that their interpretation of freedom is the correct one and that Protestants must therefore be 'fair game'. What could be simpler, less revolutionary and as reactionary and devious a piece of Machiavellianism as would be becoming in a Fianna Fail TD? If we feel obliged to support the so-called 'revolutionary heart' of the IRA because we have such little courage and imagination of our own, then we'll still be waiting for anarchy when the Provos and the clergy form a fascist coalition government.

The struggle to separate Church and State is a prerequisite for even a very compromised freedom of choice.

While many are beaver away to this end in the Republic, despite the odds, can an anarchist assume moral superiority while maintaining an attachment to 'Irish unity' that owes less to reason than to sentiment? I support the argument of the Dublin based 'Socialists Against Nationalism' which has as its declared aim the 'breaking up of the nationalist and Catholic-sectarian political consensus in the Republic which aggravates communal division in Northern Ireland while restricting democracy down South'. Less romantic I agree — but I suggest it has a lot more to do with freedom.

ALAN TAIT

Huddersfield

## SOFT ON COMMUNISM?

FREEDOM makes me wonder. So much of it seems to have nothing to do with what I think of as anarchism which is the struggle against state control. The complete supremacy of the state exists in our times above all in the Soviet Union and its satellites, and I am therefore constantly surprised by the lack of coverage of events in Russia (except for the odd article on Bakunin or Makhno). I am sure that the total suppression of individual liberty in the name (let us not forget) of the brotherhood of man, over such a vast area of the globe, will come to be regarded as the most significant phenomenon of this century. Yet FREEDOM has very little to say about it.

Instead it joins in the hackneyed chorus of anti-Americanism which permeates the British labour and trade union movement and most of the bourgeois establishment as well (except for Mrs Thatcher and a few of her cronies). The Times, Observer and Guardian are a part of the chorus. In

a word it is fashionable.

Your front page cartoon, for instance, could easily have graced the front page of Pravda. And to imply, as your leading article did, that any American worker (or even the poorest unemployed black) looks enviously at the struggling Polish worker is just plain silly — not one of them would willingly change places with them.

The events in Poland are of enormous importance for anarchists above all. For the first time within communism an entire working class has tried to set up an organisation independent of the state. So far they have gained little — a very limited freedom to publish (which the government will crush as soon as it can) and freedom from work on Saturdays, which they took for themselves and which the Solidarity leaders are now trying to persuade them to yield up.

But the very fact that they dared to do even this much has been sufficient to surround the country with thousands of Russian troops, rockets, planes, battle-ships and god knows what. It is a truly amazing spectacle and an awesome testimony to the fear which the prospect of a free working class strikes in the stony heart of the communist bosses.

They are attempting to split Solidarity and may succeed but nothing can erase the memory of what has already happened. Meantime Russia has extended credits to Poland and hopes to see Solidarity crushed. Western capitalism is also loaning money and is just as anxious to keep the lid on Poland. A stable communist regime is for them infinitely preferable to an unpredictable workers' republic.

And who has been to the fore in aiding the Solidarity union — not the miserable Soviet-loving TUC but the much maligned American unions. People who are interested in the real America and not in journalistic rubbish about Reagan should read the AFL/CIO publications on the question. They make inspiring reading.

Let us remember when we speak of America that this is still a comparatively young country — with traditions that are founded in the struggle for liberty. The American working class has not yet been tamed as it has in Europe and in this fact lies some hope.

Solzhenitzyn has said that the West will be a pushover for communism and I think he is right. It is generally accepted on all sides now that America is the 'big devil' and Russia the hard-done-by country only concerned with defending itself (in spite of its surrogate armies trying to establish Marxist governments here, there and everywhere).

Yes I know all about El Salvador but if you protest at this atrocity in the States you will get 15 years in a gulag.

Where is the outcry in the West against the invasion of Afghanistan? Remember the anti-Vietnam war demos? But Afghanistan gets an admiring delegation of Labour MP's and otherwise a deafening silence. It is reported that school age boys

are being press-ganged on the streets of Kabul for the 'loyal' Afghan army (and shot if they try to escape). Meantime dead Russian soldiers are being shipped back home in ever increasing numbers.

There is mounting opposition in Russia to the invasion of Afghanistan. Those who can disappear to avoid conscription — but of course any open opposition to the war inside Russia is met with the most dire penalties.

Meantime endless anti-nuclear 'peace' propaganda flows from the state organs, slavishly supported by the Western peace movements, but this is strictly for the innocents or those who have a vested interest in supporting all things Russian (these include a large number of Labour MPs). You will find no word of criticism of Russia from the peace loving CND or END and in fact one gets the impression that the 'left' favours the invasion as bringing the benefits of Marxism to a backward country.

When the invasion of Poland looked imminent the British Foreign Secretary jumped in with both feet and assured the Russian government that Britain would take no action against it — and there was not a murmur from the British left or the 'peace' movement.

So some invasions are OK — particularly if they are Russian.

All these events surely raise big questions for discussion by anarchists.

Meantime I trust we have the sense to realise that in the American worker we have a potential ally who has not yet forgotten the meaning of the word 'freedom'

J LAWRENCE

London SE5

## FRAGMENTED

Dear Comrades,

It is an oft-repeated but true statement that anarchy today is a very fragmented, splintered movement. There are quite a large number of groups spread over the globe, but what they lack is organisation. Now I know that many comrades throw their hands up in horror at the mention of that word because they mistakenly see it as inevitably implying authority. But surely, the type of person who reads FREEDOM or is in some sort of anarchist group would be sufficiently on guard against the spectre of authority. And besides, the type of body I envisage would act only as a 'clearing house' for information, news, ideas and debate.

The advocates of individualism would do well to remember that only after a process of organisation have any of the great breakthroughs in anarchy occurred: Spain in the thirties and France, '68 are two examples that spring to mind.

I would welcome any letters on this matter.

Love and peace,  
CLIFF M POXON.



# FREEDOMCONTACTS

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#### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Research and Resources Centre for Libertarian Politics and Alternative Life-Styles, 7/355 Northmore Ave, Lyneham, ACT 2602.

#### NEW SOUTH WALES

Sydney Anarcho-Syndicalists, Jura Books Collective, 417 King St, Newtown, NSW 2042.

#### QUEENSLAND

Libertarian Socialist Organisation, PO Box 268, Mount Gravatt, Central 4122.  
Self-Management Organisation, PO Box 332, North Quay.

#### VICTORIA

La Trobe Libertarian Socialists, c/o SRG, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic 3083.  
Monash Anarchist Society, c/o Monash University, Clayton, 3168 Melbourne.  
Libertarian Workers for a Self Managed Society, PO Box 20, Parkville 3052.  
Treason, Box 37, Brunswick East, Victoria, 3057.  
Chummy Fleming Bookshop, 26 Regent Arcade, 210 Toorak Rd, South Yarra (Libertarian Workers shop).

#### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Freedom Collective, PO Box 14, Mount Hawthorn 6016.  
Libertarian Resource Centre, PO Box 203, Fremantle 6160.

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c/o 34 Kennedy St, Launceston 7250.

#### NEW ZEALAND

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PO Box 22, 607 Christchurch.  
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Open Road, Box 6135, Station G, Vancouver BC.  
Wintergreen/AR, PO Box 1294, Kitchener, Ontario, N2G 4G8.  
Black Cat Press, PO Box 11261, Edmonton, Alberta.

#### USA

#### ARIZONA

Malicious Hooligans (anti-nuclear) 1110 W 2nd St, Tempe, AZ 85281.

#### CALIFORNIA

Autonomia, PO Box 1751, San Francisco, CA 94101.  
Libertarian Anarchist Coffee-house, meets last Sunday each month at Cafe Commons, 3161 Mission St, San Francisco.

#### MISSOURI

Columbia Anarchist League, PO Box 380, Columbia, Missouri 65201.

#### NEW YORK

Libertarian Book Club, Box 842, GPO New York, NY 10012.  
SRAF/Freespace Alternative U, 339 Lafayette St, New York City, NY 10012.

#### TEXAS

Houston SRAF, South Post Oak Station, PO Box 35253, Houston TX 77035.

#### MINNESOTA

Soil of Liberty, Box 7056 Powderhorn Station, Minneapolis, Minn 55407.

## WESTERN EUROPE

### FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Schwarzer Gockler (Black Cock-  
ere), c/o A. Muller, Postfach  
4528, 7500 Karlsruhe.  
Graswurzel (Grass roots) c/o W  
Hertle, Grozerschippsee 28, 21  
Hamburg 90.  
Schwarzer Faden (Black Thread)  
Obere Wiebermarktstr 3, 741  
Reutlinge Libertad Verlag, 6br  
Schmuck, Postfach 153, 1000  
Berlin 44.

### AUSTRIA

Liberte, Postfach 86, 1033 Wien.  
Monte Verita, Neustiftgasse 33,  
1070 Wien.

### FRANCE

Federation anarchiste francaise,  
3 Ternaux, 75011, Paris (Groups  
throughout France).  
Union Anarchiste, 9 rue de l'  
Ange, 63000 Clermont Ferrand.

### ITALY

Autogestione, Casella Postale  
17127, 1-20100 Milano.  
Gruppo Hem Day, Giovanni Tra-  
pani, CP6130, Roma-Prati.

### BELGIUM

Revolutionair Anarchisties Kol-  
lektief (RAK), Oudborg 47, 9000  
Gent.

### HOLLAND

De Vrije, Postbus 6103, Gronin-  
gen.  
Anarchistiese Boekhandel Slager-  
zicht (Anarchist Bookshop), Folk-  
ingestraat 10, Groningen.

### DENMARK

Aarhus: Regnbuen Anarkist Bog-  
cafe, Mejlgaade 48, 8000 Aarhus.  
Rainbow Anarchists of the Free  
City of Christiana, c/o Allan  
Anarchos, Tinghuset, Fristaden  
Christiana, 1407 Copenhagen.  
Anarkistisk Bogcafe, Rosenborg-  
gade 12, 1130 Kobenhavn K.  
Tel (01) - 12 26 82.

### NORWAY

ANORG, Hoxtvett, 31B, 1431  
As. (Publish 'Folkebladet' 4 times  
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Syndikalist Forum, Tenstiernas  
Gata 51, 11631 Stockholm.  
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41302 Gothenburg (tel 031  
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## AUTONOMY CENTRE EVENTS

FOR OCTOBER 1981

Fri 9 Oct:	Debate: Is revo- lutionary violence ever justified?	Sat 31 Oct:	Halloween event. Live music, drink!!! £1.50 non-members, £1 members.
Sat 10 Oct:	Knock out darts, or knock out chess. 30p en- trance. Genuine cash prizes!!!	<p><b>Notes</b> Last month's events met with mixed success. You came along in droves to the party, but seemed pretty unimpressed with the selec- tion of films. Debates attracted a hard core of people hoping for blood, but drop in times were a bit bleak for the people opening up the centre. There's now drink available at all times so there's no excuse for going to the pub in- stead. We're also hiring a pool table and Vince will challenge anyone interested to a game any Friday. This month has fewer events planned than last, mainly because we're running out of ideas. Ideas, particularly money- raising ones are desperately needed.</p> <p>Autonomy Centre 01 Warehouse Metropolitan Wharf Wapping Wall London E1 Tel 481 - 3537</p>	
Wed 14 Oct:	Drop in between 2.30-5.30pm.		
Thurs 15 Oct:	Drop in after 7 pm.		
Fri 16 Oct:	Drop in after 2 pm.		
Sat 17 Oct:	Drop in after 6.30pm.		
Wed 21 Oct:	Drop in between 2.30-5.30pm.		
Thurs 22 Oct:	A Distribution mailout.		
Fri 23 Oct:	Drop in after 2 pm.		
Sat 24 Oct:	Drop in after 6.30pm.		
Wed 28 Oct:	Drop in between 2.30-5.30pm.		
Thurs 29 Oct:	Drop in after 7 pm.		
Fri 30 Oct:	Drop in after 2 pm.		

## EDINBURGH CONFERENCE

WE have now fixed a date and venue for the conference. The date is to be the 7th and 8th November. The venue is the Carlton Centre, Montgomery Street, Edinburgh. Here is a provisional agenda for the two days. Please get back to us with your comments on it soon.

### SATURDAY

11.30 - 1.30 Lunch  
1.30 - ? What's been happening this year in Scotland — reports from groups.  
What might happen next year — Scottish co-ordination.  
5.00 Dinner  
7.00 Open film — 'Blow for Blow' — Fictional reconstruction of occupation by women of a French textile factory.

Not forgetting the compulsory Saturday night social! BYOB and have a good time.

### SUNDAY

11.00 - 12.00 Practical workshops.  
1. Co-ops  
2. Working with the unemployed.  
3. Community newspapers.  
12.00 Lunch and reports on workshops.  
1.00 - 2.00 Discussion/tactical workshops.  
1. Fascism and racism — what's the connection? monitoring fascist and racist activity in our areas — how do we work to counter this?  
2. Sexual politics.  
3. Anti-nuclear -pro alternative? -what tactics should we use?  
2.30 Reports on workshops.  
3.00 SLF — its function, has it got one? co-ordination, newsletter.

At night there will be a play 'Gotcha' by Barry Keefe for and by Edinburgh Anarchists and any one else who wants to stay

Accommodation is available (bring a sleeping bag). Try and let us know if you'll be coming, and if you need creche facilities, accomodation etc. Anything discussed, and food provided. Also there will be a bookstall and creche.

Also it would be appreciated if you could contribute some money to our costs, the venue itself is £15 and the film £25. Any small sum will be gratefully accepted.

All communications to:  
Box 1921, c/o First of May, 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh.



# **Anarchist Review** **Freedom**

10 October 1981 Vol 42, No 20

## **Autonomy Centre**

WE think it is fair now to claim that London's Autonomy Centre is established and should be supported as a permanent venue for Londoners and visitors alike.

A tremendous amount of work has been put into turning an old dockside warehouse into a brightly-lit meeting place, and the comrades and friends who have contributed work and money into creating this badly-needed centre are to be warmly congratulated.

A housewarming party for members and guests on Friday, 18th September was well-attended and went off in great spirit with a real live group and Tony Allen for cabaret. A continuing programme of debates, film shows and other events is taking shape. Every alternative Thursday evening

Thursday when FREEDOM is despatched to our readers) the A Distribution Collective, which now has its office on the premises, carries out its complicated task of despatching a wide variety of anarchist literature from many sources to bookshops around the country.

Like the A Distribution Collective, the Autonomy Centre is already bringing together individuals and groups who hitherto had little contact with each other, even though we may have been working in neighbouring areas of London. And that can't be bad.

Apart from the working party, the Centre is open on Thursday evenings — and on Fridays and Saturday evenings as well, with some activity organised, or not as the case may be.

Last Friday, 25th September, a debate on Feminism was held, proposed by Iris Mills, opposed by Carol Saunders, and followed by a lively discussion. We have been lucky enough to get the texts of the opening contributions — and feel they open up areas of argument well worth following up. Let's have your contributions on the subject of:

## **FEMINISM: DISARMED? INDULGENT? INTROVERTED?**

It has become normal for people in these debates to begin by criticising the title of the debate — and I won't be the first to break this tradition.

What I take exception to in the title is the word 'disarmed' because I don't believe feminism was ever armed in the first place. It always was, is now, and will remain, 'unarmed'. The demands of the women's movement have never had revolutionary implications; they have never posed threats to either the state or capitalist society and therefore it is a mistake to think of it as a once revolutionary force now diluted by reformism.

It is precisely because of the women's movement rationale itself that it could never be revolutionary. Its professed aim has been to put women on an equal footing with men, to explain oppression in terms of sex instead of class. This analysis was wrong on both counts. By presupposing that men, as a sex, call all the shots and are more privileged in all respects, feminists risk losing sight of the fact that men in this society are themselves subject to discrimination and oppression based on class. The desire to be equal to men seems ridiculous to me, for who could want to be equal to slaves?

Of course many feminists recognise this and try to get round it by claiming that women's demands, if implemented, would revolutionise society. They say that once a deep and thorough-going realignment of the sexes takes place, once the psychological barriers which divide men from women are removed, society in its present form would be radically altered. Patriarchy, so the argument runs, is the source of oppression, preceding the development of classes and capitalism; and the consequence of its demise would be a free and equal society.



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## **INSIDE: Bakunin on Violence... page 11**



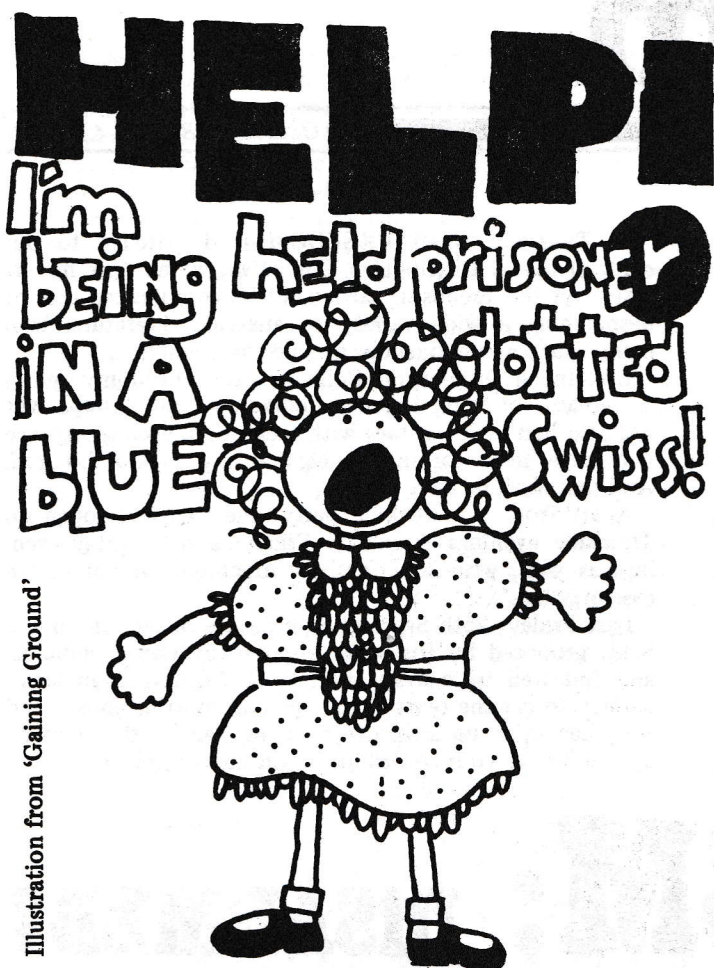


Illustration from 'Gaining Ground'

The second mistake is to treat 'freedom' as quantitative. Human freedom is not divisible, degrees of oppression are not real criteria with which to analyse society. It is immaterial whether patriarchy preceded class development. Oppression is based on class and I believe that the men and women of one class must unite and fight the men and women of the ruling class. To say, as Astrid Proli did, that she knew she would get justice because the judge hearing her case was a woman, is dangerous. It is dangerous because it promotes a myth — the myth of sisterhood. As if all women, despite their class, have something fundamentally in common, because they share the same kind of sex organs.

The myth of sisterhood works against revolutionaries in two ways. It separates men from women. You all know of 'women only' meetings. Surely our concern is to bring people together not to erect still more barriers. The 'woman is superior' syndrome is not something I am exaggerating for tonight — it is plainly visible in *Spare Rib* among the contributors who state that they hate their male children — at six months old! It's horrendous.

The worst aspect of the 'myth of sisterhood' is that it leads directly to women's issues alone and undermines the solidarity so important to a revolutionary movement and neglects a class analysis. Thus women's demands have been channeled into projects like the First Womens National Bank of New York, which allows men to have accounts but not to become shareholders. The logic behind this seems to be that self-managed oppression and exploitation is better. It also indicates the identification of women's rights with women careerists and professionals. There is no demand for revolution — just a demand that within the framework of this economic and social system women get a fair deal. Big deal!

Of course it is true that within the women's movement there are those women who call themselves revolutionaries, whose rationale appears to be that they recognise that women will never achieve anything other than a superficial equality unless society undergoes a revolutionary change. They say however that they prefer to work with women

only, because they feel dominated among men. I can understand that to a point but no problem was ever solved by ignoring it. If some men are domineering towards women they should be confronted by the fact — it's no use going away and hoping that in your absence the man or men in question will come to their senses. Anyway some women feel dominated by other women — what do they do then? Form a sub-group of submissive women only?

Some women use the 'degrees' of oppression argument as an explanation for their work in the women's movement. The point of the argument being that you should work with the most oppressed. For example Kate Millet says that in the United States white women are more oppressed than black males. I'm not sure how points are allocated but I suppose that a black working class unmarried mother who's a lesbian must get the highest score.

Demands for free abortion, better day care facilities and so on are important only in so far as they make life today that much easier — in much the same way as demands for prison reform in the way of more association, longer visits and the like, makes prison life a little easier. But these reforms should be left to the liberals; they don't come to grips with the basic problem in society. For women who feel themselves to be revolutionaries it is important that they see past these reforms and concern themselves with more fundamental issues. When someone says 'I'm an anarchist-feminist' to me that's like saying 'I'm a vegetarian who doesn't eat meat'. To me anarchism stands for the individual liberation of each human being.

For the reasons I've given I don't believe that feminism was ever 'armed' in the sense that it ever provided a revolutionary challenge to the state. But is it also 'introverted' and 'indulgent'? Briefly then:

A glance at some of the feminist fiction around is, I think, a fair indication of the concerns of the women's movement. Pick, say, Marge Piercy's books, *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *Vida*. It seems odd that feminists who are allegedly concerned with destroying the current sexual stereotypes are setting up new ones, and have books full of 'beautiful' people. Piercy's heroines are all very physically attractive — to men. Moreover the men themselves conform to the same old model: handsome, strong and athletic. Indeed in *Vida* it is the slightly feminine man who betrays the heroine.

Also, for some ridiculous reason, cats play an important role — they supposedly represent the female image. Is that supposed to be soft and fluffy? While dogs are despised, the reason for which I haven't quite grasped, but apparently dogs are more masculine.

I think that this type of fiction which reflects feminist issues shows them to be introverted and indulgent in the same way as conferences on orgasm are. By all means talk about these things with your friends, male and female — or with strangers if you will. But don't try to give them a political expression or use them as examples of political oppression of women by men.

Finally I want to acknowledge some benefit from the feminist movement — simply that it has done something to change the nature of relationships between men and women; with developments in technology that give us effective contraception, for example, relationships were bound to evolve. But anarchists have to go further — it is not possible to have 'free' relationships in an unfree society. We can work towards it, true, but we can never attain it until we have a free society in which to develop properly. I maintain that human beings and human relationships cannot be free until the oppression of the state and capital is destroyed and a classless society is created. Nothing less will do.

IRIS MILLS

'THE REPLY' on page 15



# Bakunin on Violence:

## a letter to Sergei Nechayev

June 2 1870

LORCARNO  
SWITZERLAND

DEAR FRIEND,

I now address you and, through you, your and our Committee. I trust that you have now reached a safe place where, free from petty squabbles and cares, you can quietly consider your own and our common situation, the situation of our common cause.

Let us begin by admitting that our first campaign which started in 1869 is lost and we are beaten. Beaten because of two main causes; first—the people, who we had every right to hope would rise, did not rise. It appears that its cup of suffering, the measure of its patience, has not yet overflowed. Apparently no self-confidence, no faith in its rights and its power, has yet kindled within it, and there were not enough men acting in common and dispersed throughout Russia capable of arousing this confidence. Second cause: our organization was found wanting both in quality and quantity of its members and in its structure. That is why we were defeated and lost much strength and many valuable people.

This is an undisputable fact which we ought to realize without equivocation in order to make it a point of departure for further deliberations and deeds.

You, and doubtless your friends as well, had realized it long before you spoke to me about it. In fact one could say that you never spoke to me about it and I had to guess it for myself from many obvious contradictions in your talk and finally to convince myself by reference to the general state of affairs which spoke so clearly that it was impossible to hide it even from uninitiated friends. You more than half realized it when you visited me in Locarno. But nevertheless you spoke to me with complete assurance and in the most positive manner about the imminence of the inevitable revolt. You deceived me, while I, suspecting, or feeling instinctively the presence of *deceit*, consciously and systematically refused to believe it. You continued to speak and act as if you told me nothing but the truth. Had you shown me the real state of affairs during your stay in Locarno, as regards both the people and the organization, I would have written my appeal to the officers in the same spirit but in different words. This would have been better for me, for you and, most important, for the cause. I would not have spoken to them about the impending rising.

I am not angry with you and I do not reproach you, knowing that if you lie or hide the truth, you do it without self-interest and only because you consider it useful to the cause. I, and all of us, love you sincerely and have a great respect for you because we have never met a man more unselfish and devoted to the cause than you are.

But neither love nor respect can prevent me telling you frankly that the system of deceit, which is increasingly becoming your sole system, your main weapon and means, is fatal to the cause itself.

But before trying, and I hope succeeding, in proving this to you, I must say a few words about my attitude to you and



Bakunin as a young man

to your Committee<sup>1</sup> and will try to explain why, in spite of all forebodings and rational or instinctive doubts which increasingly forewarned me about the truth of your words, up to my last visit to Geneva<sup>2</sup> I spoke and acted as if I believed them unreservedly.

It might be said that I have been separated from Russia for *thirty years*. From 1840 to 1851 I was abroad, first with a passport, then as an *émigré*. In 1851, after a two-year imprisonment in Saxon and Austrian fortresses I was extradited to the Russian government which held me prisoner for another six years, first in the Alexeev ravelin of the Peter and Paul Fortress, then in Schlüsselburg. In 1857 I was sent to Siberia and spent two years in western and two in eastern Siberia. In 1861 I fled from Siberia and since then, obviously, I have not returned to Russia. Therefore in the last thirty years I have only lived four years (nine years ago) from 1857 to 1861 in freedom in Russia, *i.e.* in Siberia. This of course gave me the opportunity of getting to know the Russian people better, the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, the merchants (specifically Siberian merchants), but not the revolutionary youth. In my time there were no other political exiles in Siberia, except a few Decembrists and Poles. True, I knew *also* the four *Petrashkevtsy*: Petrashevsky himself, Lvov and Tol,<sup>3</sup> but these people represented only a sort of transition from the Decembrists to the real youth—they were doctrinaire, bookish socialists, Fourierists and pedagogues. I do not know the real youth in whom I believe, this classless class, this hopeless phalanx of the people's revolution about whom I have written several times and only now gradually begin to learn.

The majority of Russians who came to London to do homage to Alexander Herzen<sup>4</sup> were either respectable people, or writers or liberally and democratically inclined officers. The first serious Russian revolutionary was Potebnya;<sup>5</sup> the second was you. I shall not speak about Utin<sup>6</sup> and the other G



grants. Thus, before I met you, the real Russian revolutionary youth remained for me *terra incognita*.

I did not need much time to understand your earnestness and to believe you. I was convinced and still remain convinced that even if you were few, you represent a serious undertaking, the only serious revolutionary movement in Russia. Having been convinced of this, I said to myself that my duty lay in helping you with all my power and means and in allying myself as much as possible with your Russian cause. This decision was all the easier for me because your programme, at least during the last year, not only resembled but was identical with my programme, worked out on the basis of the total experience of a rather long political life. Let us define in a few lines this programme on the basis of which we were completely united last year and from which you seem now to be departing to a considerable extent, but to which I, on my side, have remained faithful to a degree which would oblige me to break all intimate political relations with you, if your convictions and your, or your friends', departure from it were completely final.

The programme can be clearly expressed in a few words: total destruction of the framework of state and law and of the whole of the so-called bourgeois civilization by a spontaneous people's revolution invisibly led, not by an official dictatorship, but by a nameless and collective one, composed of those in favour of total people's liberation from all oppression, firmly united in a secret society and always and everywhere acting in support of a common aim and in accordance with a common programme.

Such was the ideal and such was the plan on the basis of which I joined you and gave you my hand in order to realize it. You know yourself how faithful I remained to the promise of the union which I recognized. You know how much faith I had in you, having once convinced myself of your earnestness and of the similarity in our revolutionary programmes. I did not ask who your friends were, nor how many. I did not check your strength; I took your word.

Did I believe out of weakness, out of blindness, or because of stupidity? You know yourself that this is not so. You know very well that I was never given to blind faith. That even last year when we talked alone together, and once at Ogarev's and in his presence, I told you clearly that we ought not to believe you as you were quite capable of lying when you thought that a lie might be useful to the cause. We thus had no other guarantee of the truth of your words but your obvious sincerity and undoubted devotion to the cause. This was an important guarantee which, however, did not save you from mistakes and us from blunders if we follow you blindly.

Despite this conviction of which I spoke to you several times, I stayed in contact with you and helped you everywhere and as much as I could. Do you want to know why I did it?

Firstly, because, up to your departure from Geneva for Russia, our programmes were truly identical. I was convinced of this not only by our daily conversations, but by the fact that all my writings, conceived and printed while you were here, evoked in you a sympathetic response precisely on the points which most clearly expressed our common programme and because your writings, printed last year, bore the same character.

Secondly, because acknowledging your real and indefatigable strength, devotion, passion and power of thought, I considered you, and still consider you, capable of uniting around yourself real forces, not for your own sake but for the cause. I said to myself and to Ogarev that if they are not yet united, they will necessarily be so shortly.

Thirdly, because of all the Russian people whom I knew I considered you the most capable of carrying out this enterprise and I said to myself and to Ogarev that there was no point in waiting for another man, that we were both old and unlikely to meet another man more dedicated and more able than you. That is why, if we want to be allied with the Russian cause, we must be allied with you and with no one else. We do not know your Committee, or your Society, and can form an opinion about them only through you. If you are in earnest,

why should your present and future friends not be in earnest too? Your earnestness was for me a guarantee—that, on the one hand you would not admit worthless people to your company and, on the other, that you will not remain alone and will attempt to create a collective force.

You have, it is true, a weak point which astounded me from the first days of our acquaintance and to which, I confess, I did not attach sufficient importance. This is your inexperience, your ignorance of life and people and, associated with this, a fanaticism bordering on mysticism. Your ignorance of the social conditions, customs, morals, ideas and usual feelings of the so-called educated world renders you even now incapable of successful action in this environment even with a view to its destruction. You do not know as yet how to acquire influence and power within it, which is bound to lead to inevitable blunders every time the needs of the cause bring you in contact with it. This was clearly demonstrated in your ill-fated attempt to publish *Kolokol* (*The Bell*) in impossible conditions. But we shall talk about *Kolokol* later.<sup>9</sup> This ignorance of men leads to inevitable blunders. You demand too much and expect too much from people, giving them tasks beyond their strength in the belief that all people must be filled with the same passion which animates you. At the same time you do not believe in them, and consequently you do not take into consideration the passion which is aroused within them, their orientation, their independently honest devotion to your aim. You try to subdue them, frighten them, to tie them down by external controls which mostly prove to be inadequate, so that once they get into your hands they can never tear themselves free.<sup>9</sup> And at the same time they do escape, and will continue to escape as long as you do not change your behaviour towards them, while you do not look within them for the main reason for joining you. Do you remember how cross you were when I called you an *Abrek*?<sup>10</sup> and your catechism a catechism of *Abreks*? You said that all men should be such, that a complete renunciation of self, of all personal wishes, pleasures, feelings, affections and ties, should be a normal, natural, everyday condition of everybody without exception. You wished, and still wish, to make your own selfless cruelty, your own truly extreme fanaticism, into a rule of common life.<sup>11</sup> You wish for an absurdity, an impossibility, a total negation of nature, man, and society. This wish is fatal because it forces you to spend your strength in vain, always shooting to miss. No man, however strong he is, and no society, however perfect its discipline and however powerful its organization, can conquer nature. Only religious fanatics and ascetics could try to conquer it—that is why I was not very surprised, or surprised for long, when I recognized in you a certain mystical, pantheistic idealism. In connection with your characteristic orientation this seemed to me completely obvious, but completely absurd. Yes, dear friend, you are not a materialist like us sinners, but an idealist, a prophet like a monk of the Revolution,<sup>12</sup> your hero should not be Babeuf, not even Marat, but some sort of Savonarola. According to your way of thinking, you are nearer to the Jesuits than to us. You are a fanatic. This is your enormous and peculiar strength. But at the same time this is your blindness, and blindness is a great and fatal weakness; blind energy errs and stumbles, and the more powerful it is, the more inevitable and serious are the blunders. You suffer from an enormous lack of the critical sense without which it is impossible to evaluate people and situations, and to reconcile means with ends.

All this I understood and realized last year. But for me all this was balanced in your favour by two considerations. Firstly, I recognized (and still recognize) in you a great and, one might say, perfectly pure force, free of any admixture of self-love or vanity, such as I had never met in any Russian. Secondly, I told and still tell myself that you are still young and whole-hearted, and being without personal egoistical whims and self-delusions you cannot long remain on the wrong path and under a delusion which is fatal to the cause. I am still convinced of this.

Finally, I clearly saw and felt that you were far from having full confidence in me and in many respects attempted to use



me as a means to immediate aims which were unknown to me. But this did not bother me at all.

Firstly, I liked your silence about the people involved in your organization, and the conviction that in such movements even the most trusted people should know only as much as is *practically* necessary for the success of their particular enterprise. You will do me the justice of admitting that I never asked you indiscreet questions. Even if you had, contrary to your duty, given me some names, I should not have known the people to whom these names belonged.<sup>13</sup> I would have had to judge them on your word, and I believed and believe in you. Composed of people like you who have earned your total trust, the Committee, should, I think, be equally trusted by us.

The question is: Did your organization really exist, or were you only going to create it somehow or other? If it did exist, was it large, did it at least represent an embryo of power, or did this all exist only as a hope? Did our holy of holies, the Committee itself, exist in the shape you described and with the undoubted unity of forces for life or death—or were you only going to create it? In a word, were you the only representative of a quite respectable individual power, or of a collective power already in existence? And if the society and the Central Committee really existed, and assuming the participation in it (particularly in the Committee) of only true, firm, fanatically devoted and selfless people like you, still another question arises: Was, and is, there in it sufficient common sense and knowledge, sufficient theoretical training and ability to understand the conditions and relationships of the Russian people and classes to make the revolutionary Committee effective to cover the whole of Russian life and penetrate all social strata with a really powerful organization? The sincerity of the cause depends on the fervent energy of the participants, its success on their common sense and knowledge.

In order to discover this both as regards actual and potential development, *i.e.* in the spirit of your movement, I asked you many questions and I must confess that your replies did not satisfy me in the least. However much you wriggled and dodged, you told me, in spite of yourself, that your society was still numerically insignificant and lacked funds. It had as yet very little common sense, knowledge and skill. But the Committee is created by you and certainly from people like you, among whom you are one of the best and most determined. You are the creator and, up to now, leader of the society. All this, dear friend, I understood and learned last year. But this did not in any way prevent me from joining you, recognizing in you an intelligent and passionately devoted activist of a sort which is rare, and being certain that you had managed to find at least a few people like you and unite with them. Also I was, and still am, certain that with experience and sincere and wisdom aspiration you would soon achieve that knowledge, tireless and skill without which no success is possible. And as I did not, and do not now, suppose that there can exist in Russia in addition to your group another group as much in earnest as yours, I decided, in spite of everything, to remain united with you.

I did not hold it against you that you always tried to exaggerate your strength to me. This is an objective, often useful and sometimes bold gesture of all conspirators. It is true that I saw your attempts to deceive me as a proof of your as yet insufficient knowledge of people. It seemed to me that from our talks you ought to have understood that in order to attract me there was no need to furnish proof of an already existing and organized power, but only proof of an unbending and reasonable determination to create such a power. I also understood that you were appearing before me as if you were an envoy of an existing and fairly powerful organization. Thus, it seemed to you, you put yourself into a position to present your conditions as emanating from great power, while you actually appeared before me as a person who was in the process of collecting strength. You should have talked to me as an equal, person to person, and submit for my [approval] your programme and [plan] of action.<sup>14</sup>

But this did not enter into your calculations. You were too fanatically devoted to your plan and your programme to



"Lockout" (drawing by Théophile Steinlen, signed "Petit Pierre")

subject them to criticism by anyone. And secondly you did not have enough faith in my devotion to the cause, in my understanding of it, to show me the cause as it really was. You were sceptical about all *émigrés*, and you were right. About me you were probably less sceptical than about others, because I gave you too many proofs of my readiness to serve the cause without any personal demands or vainglorious calculations. But you still considered me as an invalid whose counsels and knowledge might sometimes be useful, but no more; whose participation in your fervent efforts would have been superfluous and even harmful. I saw this very well but it did not offend me. You knew this could not prompt me to break with you. It was not my business to prove to you that I was not such a hopelessly unfit case for an ardent, a real movement as you thought. I left it (and leave it) to time and your own experience to convince you of the contrary.

*(Here Bakunin digresses to complain bitterly about certain people in Russia who slandered him about living in luxury at the expense of others, when in fact he lived frugally, in poor health and was forced to devote some time and labour to the support of his wife and children.)*

At the same time I saw and felt very keenly that in approaching me not as an equal, not as a trusting person or a trustworthy one, you considered me, according to your system and obeying so to say the logic of necessity, a three-quarters blind but experienced instrument for the cause and used my name and my activity as a means. Thus, in fact, lacking the power which you pretended to have, you used my name in order to create power in Russia. So that many people do in fact think that I stand at the head of a secret society about which, as you are aware, I know nothing.

Should I have allowed my name to be used as a means of propaganda and in order to attract people into an organization whose plans and immediate aims were three-quarters unknown to me? Without hesitation I reply in the affirmative, yes, I could and should. Here are my reasons:

Firstly, I was always convinced that the Russian Revolutionary Committee could and should act only within Russia, and it is an absurdity to lead the Russian revolution from abroad.

If you and your friends remained abroad for a long time, I should have proclaimed you incapable of remaining members of the Committee. If you become *émigrés*, you will have, as I have had, to accept orders, as far as any Russian movement is concerned, from the undisputed leadership of a new Committee in Russia recognized by you on the basis of mutually discussed programmes and plans; while you yourself would have to create a Russian Committee Abroad for inde-



management of all Russian relations, activities, individuals and groups abroad, in full agreement with the views of the Russian Committee, but with suitable autonomy in the choice of men and methods of action and, most important, in complete agreement with the International Union. In such a case I would demand, as my duty and right, full membership of this Russian Committee Abroad, which I did, by the way, in my last letter to the Committee and to you,<sup>1</sup> recognizing the fact that the Russian Committee must be within Russia itself. Obviously I did not wish, nor was I able, to return to Russia, and so do not desire to be a member of that. I got to know its programme and the general aims of its activity through you. I was in full agreement with you and expressed my readiness and my firm resolution to help and serve it by all means available to me. Since you considered my name useful for attracting new people into your organization, I gave you my name. I knew that it would be used for the cause and our common programme and that your character was a guarantee of this, and was not afraid that, as a consequence of mistakes and blunders, I might be generally condemned—I am used to insults.

However, you remember that last summer we agreed that all Russian efforts and persons abroad should be known to me, and nothing that was done or undertaken abroad should be done without my knowledge and consent. This was an essential condition. Firstly, because I know the world abroad much better than any of you and, secondly, because a blind and dependent solidarity with you in actions and publications abroad might conflict with my duties and rights as a member of the International Union. This condition, as we shall see, was not carried out by you and if it is not going to be carried out completely, I shall be forced to break off all intimate political relations with you.

To begin with, my views are different in that they do not acknowledge the usefulness, or even the possibility, of any revolution except a spontaneous or a people's social revolution. I am deeply convinced that any other revolution is dishonest, harmful, and spells death to liberty and the people. It dooms them to new penury and new slavery. But the main point is that any other revolution has now become impossible and unattainable. Centralization and civilization; railways, the telegraph, new arms and new military organization; in general the techniques of administration, i.e., the science of systematic enslavement and exploitation of the masses of the people; and the science and suppression of people's and all other riots, carefully worked out, tested by experiment and perfected in

the last seventy-five years of contemporary history—all this has at present armed the state with such enormous power that all contrived secret conspiracies and non-popular attempts, sudden attacks, surprises and coups—are bound to be shattered against it. It can only be conquered by a spontaneous people's revolution.

Thus the sole aim of a secret society must be, not the creation of an artificial power outside the people, but the rousing, uniting and organizing of the spontaneous power of the people; therefore, the only possible, the only real revolutionary army is not outside the people, it is the people itself. It is impossible to arouse the people artificially. People's revolutions are born from the course of events, or from historical currents which, continuously and usually slowly, flow underground and unseen within the popular strata, increasingly embracing, penetrating, and undermining them, until they emerge from the ground and their turbulent waters break all barriers and destroy everything that impedes their course.

Such a revolution cannot be artificially induced. It is even impossible to hasten it, although I have no doubt that an efficient and intelligent organization can facilitate the explosion. There are historical periods when revolutions are simply impossible; there are other periods when they are inevitable. In which of the two periods are we today? I am deeply convinced that we are in a period of a general, inevitable popular revolution. I will refrain from proving the truth of this conviction because this will lead me too far. Furthermore, it is unnecessary for me to prove it as I address a man and people who, I think, fully share this conviction. I maintain that a popular social revolution is inevitable everywhere within Europe as a whole. Will it catch fire soon and where first? In Russia, or in France, or elsewhere in the West? Nobody can foretell. Perhaps it will blaze up in a year's time, or even earlier, or perhaps in ten or twenty years. This does not matter, and the people who intend to serve it honestly, do not serve for their own pleasure. All secret societies who wish to be really useful to it must, first of all, renounce all nervousness, all impatience. They must not sleep; on the contrary, they must be as ready as possible every minute of the time, alert and always capable of seizing every opportunity. But, at the same time, they must be harnessed and organized, not with a view to an imminent rising, but aiming at long and patient underground work, taking as an example your friends the Jesuit Fathers.

(To be continued)

1. The Central Committee of Narodnaya Rasprava (Peoples' Vengeance)

2. The visit referred to was in May 1870 when Bakunin met German Lopatin whose information about Nechayev's personality and activity evidently had an influence on Bakunin.

3. Mikhail Vasilievich Butashevich-Petrashkevsky (1821-66) organized a socialist discussion group in St Petersburg in the 1840's. He, along with Lvov, an officer and scientist and Tol, a literary man, were arrested in 1849 and sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. Also arrested in connection with this group was Dostoevsky whose character of Peter Verhovensky in *The Possessed* was based on Nechayev.

4. Alexander Herzen (1812-1870) major Russian socialist theorist who edited *Kolokol* (The Bell) lived in European exile from 1847.

5. Andrey Afanasievich Potebnya (1838-63) was a member of a revolutionary organization of Russian officers in Poland who took part in 1863 Polish uprising.

6. Nikolay Isaakovich Utin (1841-83), a Marxist and founder of Russian section of the 1st International, edited *Narodnoe Delo* (The People's Cause) 1868-70. Later, he renounced all political activity and was able to return from exile.

7. Nikolay Platonovich Ogarev (1813-77), a co-editor of *Kolokol* with his lifelong friend Herzen, was a friend and fellow-exile of Bakunin.

8. Nechayev had attempted to restart publication of *The Bell* earlier that year.

9. Vera Zasulich, the populist revolutionary described Nechayev as a man whose outstanding attributes were hatred and contempt.

10. 'Abrek': a Caucasian mountaineer who had sworn an oath of revenge or was outlawed from his clan. Literally, someone who acts fiercely with a sense of despair.

11. These convictions of Nechayev are incorporated into Catechism of a Revolutionist.

12. Camus also interpreted Nechayev's character in this way, as: 'He made himself the cruel monk of a desperate revolution.....' (The Rebel, Part III.)

13. Other evidence suggests that Bakunin did know some of the names and he mentions one of them, Pryzhov, later in the letter.

14. Illegible in original manuscript.

15. This letter is lost.

16. Part of the original text missing.



# THE REPLY...

In my part of London, feminists have a centre where women meet to talk, learn and plan protests. It's widely used, even by traditionally isolated immigrant women.

The centre is open to any woman who wants to drop in — with or without her kids. Its events are well-publicised and attended. It makes its rooms available to any women who want to make use of them.

The women don't confine their activities to the centre either. They've reclaimed the night, drawing attention to the fact that the last year has seen 15 rapes on a single road in the area. They've supported local women who've been unfairly sacked. I could go on, but let's just say they've generally been alert to local issues as they affect women and they've responded to them.

What about local anarchists then? While the women are out protesting, both of us are here in Wapping participating in debates on feminism. It seems to me that if any group of people can be accused of being disarmed, self-indulgent and introverted, it's us. Anarchists.

I only bring this up for one reason. To point out that it's ridiculous to analyse a set of ideas only to end up rejecting its proponents. But it seems to me this is exactly what this motion is trying to do. 'Disarmed', 'indulgent', 'introverted' — they're not adjectives you'd normally apply to ideas. They're words you'd normally apply to people.

Well, if you like, I could give a critique of *Guardian* Women's Page readers, of separatists, or of party-building feminists as well as the next anarchist. But I am not interested in the failings of feminists, I am interested in the potential of feminism.

Before I go on to look at whether feminism can be described as disarmed, etc, I'll have to define what I mean by feminism.

Anarchists have always used the slogan 'Smash what oppresses you'. This isn't just meant to encourage people to fight back, it's also intended to get people to identify the sources of their own personal exploitation. I would define feminism as being the set of ideas that identifies and fights the exploitation of women.

The trouble is I know that not everyone here believes that women are exploited and some of the people who do think women are exploited don't think that feminism is necessary to sort it out. I think it's important for me to answer these points first.

Are women exploited? Class struggle theories tell me I'm oppressed as a worker. The economic system uses my labour and pays me back a fraction of its real value. It fixes markets, determines demand and supply. It can only do so because it has dispossessed me of the means of production. This, I am told, is the source of all my oppression.

Anarchist class struggle theories throw in a critique of the state. They show the real nature of governments, armies, the police. They show that I am bullied and dictated to for the benefit of others and prove that when authority is based on anything other than respect, it is really tyranny.

In these theories my oppression is said to come equally from the institutions of capitalism and the state.

Now I apologise for being self-indulgent, but I always test theories against my own personal experience. As far as work goes, I know I'm exploited financially and I also know that the job I do is of absolutely no value to anyone except that it makes a profit for two shareholders.

At the same time, friends of mine are put in prison; the army kills people like me in Northern Ireland, the police wander the streets of London picking up whoever they want. And I have no way of changing any of this. OK, so I recognise the truth of class struggle theories.

But how do they explain why my pregnant workmate goes home every night to start a second day's work cooking, cleaning, shopping and washing clothes for her boyfriend? How does it explain why women I know are stuck at home with kids, isolated and financially dependent? Why can't class analysis explain rape? Or why women have been deliberately alienated from their own sexuality? Or why in the Middle East women's genitals are deliberately and painfully mutilated?

Anarchist class theory answers the question 'Who profits?' always by referring to capitalists or political leaders. But how do they benefit from female circumcision? What value is there in crippling women physically, emotionally and intellectually? The daily humiliations of being a woman just can't simply be explained in terms of a profit and loss account for capitalism.

There is a difference in the way women are treated by society. There are whole areas of struggle that class theory neither identifies nor fights. What is there in class theory to show that the oppression of women would be ended with the destruction of capitalism? How do the class theorists expect to change deep-rooted attitudes, without ever thinking about what they are and who they affect?

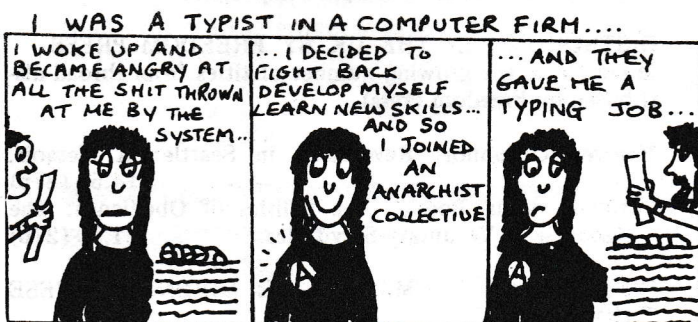
Whenever I've asked about this I've been told that it is 'more important' to win the revolution first. My answer to that is — I want to know what the revolution's for before I'll be part of it. I suspect — no, I know — that class struggle theories don't really mean that much to the person left holding the baby. Her perception of oppression may be very different from a male worker's — and it's equally as valid.

So, do we need feminism? Yes, we do. Firstly, without it we lack any kind of analysis of the particular problems faced by women. We need this analysis if we are going to transform society. If we are serious about being anti-authoritarians we have to get to the root of patriarchal authority. Feminist ideas have included important insights which we can't afford to ignore.

Secondly, as anarchists we believe that only the oppressed can fight their own oppressors. That's why our slogan is 'smash what oppresses you' — not 'vote for us and we'll get rid of what oppresses you'. I think the reason why some anarchists deny the existence of the women's struggle is because it creates uncomfortable problems. If we're going to be consistent we have to accept that women have to fight for themselves and that at least part of that struggle will be directed against men in general, not just against leaders.

I think my third reason for believing we need feminism is probably the most important. The 'reclaim the night' marches; the action of women against films making profits out of violence to women; the protests about the curfews imposed in the north during the search for the Yorkshire Ripper; the campaigns to release women in prison for murdering husbands who battered them — all of these have been angry, assertive protests, bringing women together in a way anarchism has failed to do. And this brings me back to answering the motion, because it's being suggested that feminism, not anarchism, is introverted and disarmed.

I find this quite ironic. If I had thought about it for a long time I couldn't have come up with two better adjectives to describe the condition of women in this society.





What is more likely to make someone introverted than the way women are conditioned to be dependent, home-based people, sacrificing themselves to a man and a family? Women aren't expected to think; they're supposed to be irrational when they do, they are ridiculed when they show anger or try to fight back. A lifetime of expecting no-one to take your problems seriously is disarming. And if you are isolated at home you're unlikely to find out that other women share your frustration and desire to fight back.

For many women, feminism represents their first contact with revolutionary ideas and more important their first contact with people who will help them overcome their tendency to be introverted and disarmed. Not all of those who call themselves feminists achieve this. But a lot do. And if *all* feminism was about the strengthening of individual women, I would argue that it is neither introverted nor disarmed.

But this is not all that feminism is about, because essentially it is a collective struggle confronting the system with demands which cannot be met. Yes, some of the demands made by women can and are being met. But the imperative of feminism is revolutionary because, as Emma Goldman put it, 'true emancipation begins neither at the polls nor in courts.'

When women demand liberation they are not asking for the chance to be exploited in the same ways and to the same degree as men. They are talking about revolution. This is hardly 'disarmed'. It may be that not all feminists understand the logic of feminism, but as I've said already, I don't

accept that you can judge ideas just by-looking at the people who claim to support them. The point is that to achieve the liberation of women there has to be revolution and any set of ideas which leads to this conclusion is the opposite of being disarmed.

Feminism isn't introverted either. It is true that it is centered on only one aspect of the struggle. But then so are class struggle theories. The point is that only women can win this aspect — because men are part of the problem — and neither class nor sex struggles can succeed in isolation from each other. Class struggle anarchists are always pointing to the Spanish example, but I've never heard them refer to the fact that the Spanish women felt the need for their own groups even at the height of the revolution. Or to the fact that the women had to work hard to be accepted as being an important part of the fight. The existence of feminism will force these issues into the open now and in the future. I don't think that's being introverted.

I've left the question of self-indulgence till last deliberately, because it seems to me to be a particularly odd criticism of feminism. Feminism does make demands that are personal and emotional, as well as demands of theory and action and I suppose this is why it is being called 'self-indulgent'. But presumably the alternative being proposed is to ignore the personal aspects of revolution in favour of a rather unhealthy obsession with self sacrifice. Personally, I don't hold with puritanism in sex, politics, or sexual politics. Is it self-indulgent to want freedom? I think that's revolutionary!

CAROL SAUNDERS

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