

Technology: Power or Need?

In January 1989 *Time* magazine named the Earth "planet of the year". The early '60s space photographs of our bright blue and white planet helped spawn a number of ecological and environmental movements, as people were suddenly struck by the fragility of this lonely life-supporting bubble in space. Yet despite the success of movies like 2001 or Star Wars and the promise of the '60s and '70s, space exploration has failed to grip the imagination - only 3% of a sample of ordinary Brits polled by the *New Scientist* last autumn thought it "the most important scientific achievement since the war", and only weaponry development came off worse in a study of attitudes to (*New Scientist*, 2nd September 1989). All this whilst Voyager 2 was approaching Neptune and sending back marvellous pictures to grace the TV news every night, and only eight weeks after celebrating the 20th anniversary of mankind's first visit to another world - the Moon.

Perhaps we underestimate space precisely because it has become such a part of our daily lives that we don't notice it any more. Twenty five years ago, TV programmes were re-scheduled to receive pictures from the other side of the globe - today we take for granted weather forecasts showing satellite pictures of the next anti-cyclone swinging our way across the Atlantic, ring friends abroad via satellite communications, think nothing of harvest forecasts derived from Spot satellite imagery, and try to forget all the military spy satellites, the SDI technology, orbiting missile guidance

systems and the vast ring of junked space hardware floating in designated rubbish tip altitude bands.

The glamour has certainly gone out of space since the heady days of the Cold War space race, not just because of the lack of anything spectacular or new to watch on TV but because the whole enterprise, and manned space flight in particular, has been reduced to a sordid commercial enterprise - if you were daft enough to apply for a place on the Juno flight the reality of that will have been well brought home. I've never sent a "job application" form (which asked inter alia if I'd ever performed in public!) to an advertising agency before, and rather than the usual word-processed "regret to inform you...blah...high standard of candidates...blah" reply, I was sent a glossy wall poster and the opportunity to buy a selection of tacky t-shirts bearing trite slogans in which I would not have buried my worst enemy. Such is the level of interest in extra-planetary activities as we enter the 1990s.

Why should governments be allowed to squander the Earth's resources on military space hardware...?

We may not be so interested in exploring space these days, but there is still some point in exploiting its potential although the benefits are often misunderstood. Unfortunately, this is being carried out by various governments and rich multinational corporations, and very little has any obvious use - in fact most of what goes on up there has sod all to do with extending the frontiers of scientific knowledge or improving life in the global village, and quite a bit to do with facilitating that life's extinction. Most space technology, put simply, is anti-human and anti-Earth.

Much of modern technology, in space or elsewhere, is anti-human in its scale, its purposes and in the way it is used. Food production becomes a factory enterprise, thousands of workers lose their livelihoods to be replaced by electronic gadgetry, the problems of pollution and atmospheric disruption are increasing and perhaps ultimately insoluble, and

state surveillance and control powers are growing rapidly. This is because the people who control modern technology and our access to it are also fundamentally anti-human. That's why the way it's used is so unrelated to the real needs of people.

Half of all humans alive today were as yet unborn when in the 16th July 1969 Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin stepped onto the Moon. At the time, most of us with the good fortune to be living in the rich industrial states on this planet thought this was a pretty neat thing to do, but many people now clearly question why if people are so clever that they can send men to the Moon we can't get it together to solve the problems that threaten the life-sustaining processes of our own planet. The answer lies in the relationship between technology and people's lives.

Technology means the totality of the methods and mechanisms by which people exploit the natural environment, and it is the production of food and other goods from the environment by means of this technology which makes surplus and therefore wealth possible. Technological know-how has therefore always been important and often a closely guarded secret, the arcane preserve of hierarchies or of secretive craft guilds - two of the earliest sources of elite power in human societies. Thus, instead of being used for the benefit of all, technology has been utilised to produce surpluses and luxuries for the benefit of the powerful and wealthy. The pyramids of Giza were built by thousands of slaves fed on the surplus produce of serf peasants along the Nile. The Space Shuttle and Star Wars programmes are perhaps not so different from the ostentation of Amenhotep. Why should governments be allowed to squander the Earth's resources on military space hardware or unnecessary micro-gravity experiments to catch the public imagination - I mean, who cares how lentils will sprout in orbit, really? We're none of us going up there to eat them.

The mess technology and science are in, whereby people now feel threatened by technology rather than - as in Marx's day - seeing it as the great locomotive of progress, is directly related to wealth and power relationships down here on Earth. We design the stuff, produce the materials from which it is made,

make and assemble it, and run it all - but we have no say in what we make or how it is to be made, nor how it is to be used. The whole process, down to the last rivet on the launching gantry, is owned and controlled privately or through the State, by a small ruling class. People are not producing all this space weaponry and other destructive hardware because humans are basically evil or warlike, but because the States which cover the planet are competitive and jealous of their elites' privileges, encouraging violence so long as it is done in their name and encouraging human co-operation so long as it is of the sort to produce the high technology on which their power depends.

Much of modern technology, in space or elsewhere, is anti-human in its scale, its purposes and in the way it is used.

Whilst people work together to produce the scientific knowledge and technological skills needed to sustain this parasitical set up, millions of people are starving or condemned to lives of overwork, poverty and ill health because of an artificially created scarcity of available resources - once the Capitalist (or State Capitalist) system starts producing an abundance of food or any other goods, the market collapses leaving mountains of "surplus produce", waste and dumping (sometimes disguised as food aid), and a fall-off in production since the stuff can't be sold at a profit, which is all capitalism is interested in.

We must not blame technology or scientific advances for things going wrong. In itself there is nothing harmful about developing more efficient (and less ecologically harmful) ways of meeting human needs from the planet on which we live. Instead we must work to transform society and rid ourselves of the power elites who feed off our common knowledge and labour, so that the accumulated knowledge of millions of years of human evolution and existence can be shared and properly utilised to the benefit and free access of all.

Katy Andrews

Cyanide Galore

Your reporter arrived in Brighton the week canisters of potassium cyanide were washed ashore on the Sussex coast - two were found in Brighton and in consequence your reporter expected the beach to be of intense activity. He found the whole beach pretty shabbily ribboned off, with one doze security man every half a mile and lots of comic cuts posters issued by Brighton Council, with the skull and crossbones and some "keep out" notices. Except for the seagulls and two old tramps (bit like Aldgate East) your reporter had the beach all to himself and looked quizzically at the waves. The sun was hot for February and he always liked Brighton. But to the meat: the chemical was manufactured in Poole, Dorset, (that's a pretty place - I must visit it soon) by BDH and shipped to Saudi Arabia on board a United Arab Shipping Company vessel en route from Sheerness. How the chemicals were transported from Poole to Sheerness has not been disclosed. The official explanation is that sixteen canisters were washed overboard. As for the public - your reporter found little interest on the subject from the people he interviewed. However, he did find a student photographer whom he asked to send you a pretty picture of the "wish-you-were-here" type to accompany these words. He half expected to see local environmentalists with their banners and leaflets, but there were none.

As for Brighton itself - the crowds got bigger, cars and people. The game of crossing a road, the serious business of living, of keeping up appearances. "It's an ignorant lot" said the old man looking at the sea and waving a hand at the town behind him. "You interested in politics?" he asked. "Uhum", I said. "Do you know", he said, "I have forgotten all that."

HS



Copyright photograph by LISA FISHER

I just have my pension. Live quietly. I don't read the papers no more."

Each society to their own methods. Your reporter has noticed before to what excellent uses a long piece of ribbon can be put. By the ornamental fountain there was a huge hole in the road just at the busiest pedestrian crossing - nicely ribboned off. Been so for days by the looks of it.

One piece of ribbon makes a great saving for Brighton Council and improves their public image. They are seen to do something. And as a matter of crowd control - very effective.

Your reporter was told by a Brighton Council workperson that the "situation was under control". The estate agent said that house prices dropped 15% in the past year, "but environmental issues have not affected prices".

The cafe owner said his trade was down by half. The young man with the circled A on his jacket didn't know if there was an anarchist group in Brighton, sorry he couldn't help.

At the Golden Grill the young couples looked just like they did twenty years ago. In vain he looked for a mural by Johnny Upton. And the fare was £12 return (10 shillings when he first went). But then he once cycled there and back for fun. (As sub-editors always cut the last paragraphs this bit does not really matter at all.)

Imagine that the problem was ours. What would anarchists have done in the circumstances?

A small inducement: I'm offering a rare copy of a little-known work by Peter Kropotkin, for the most convincing essay on the subject.

John Rety

Equal Opportunities

I have recently become involved in equal opportunities and may in the future be more involved in its documentation. All of us, of course, feel we believe in equal opportunities, and many of us have had it drummed into us for years. Most educational sociology from the early '50s has paid lip-service to this ideology. We all believe passionately in it but nobody attempts to understand what it signifies in social and political terms nor sees how it is being operated in class terms. It is at the basis of feminism and race relations policy yet within it are the seeds of our own error. Let me explain.

Equal opportunities appears to mean we should be all treated or treat others the same so far as having opportunity for personal development and access to resources and services. That sounds fair enough. I am sure most anarchists would support this. Perhaps I should amplify this and say anarchists in their rejection of the state and capitalism reject inequality, social class, hierarchy and their effects. The problem is that almost everyone I know is passionately calling for equal opportunities for all are equally of the opinion that if equal opportunities were to be achieved they themselves would get a better job with more money, better conditions and increased status. And this is especially apparent to those in what may be loosely called the equal opportunities industry.

Real equality itself does not mean instant upward social mobility for the few but an improved situation of the many.

What is happening is that the process of equalising is being hijacked by the middle class or used by people who want to become middle class on the backs of the rest. For real equality itself does not mean instant upward social mobility for the few but an improved situation of the many.

Middle class feminists generally use equality of opportunity in this way as do middle class blacks. So we find more and more middle class people and less working class people getting access to education and the other people professions and so on. This process of entry is not at the expense of the

working class entrant. In other words feminist equal opportunities policy with, for example, demands for increased child support for middle class mums to enable better participation in the work process, does not lead to greater opportunities for all women but less equality and a more rigidly caste-like society with a more rigidified social structure. Thus the so-called equality of opportunity for some reduces the access for others because middle class-like professional and semi-professional work is finite. This greater participation for women also puts men more under female control because they will have more control over male ideology and language.

Without exception I find members of the ethnic minorities who press for equal opportunities see this primarily in terms of their own career advancement paying only lip-service to overall black development. A suggestion has for instance been made in my own authority, not only for an evening-up of the sexes at all levels including management, or perhaps especially in management, but that as the ethnic origin and colour of the teaching force does not represent its clientele so there should be an evening-up of black recruitment with more jobs and accelerated promotion for black teachers. They do not specify what they mean by black teachers apart from meaning themselves. Almost all of my students are British Asian and they are appalled at the suggestion that they are black. A suggestion that the reasons why the workforce tends to be white is due to demographic factors in that most teachers came into the workforce before it became a "black" area and it is a lifetime career, is greeted with the comment by black militants that there should be a readjustment and re-location and even the suggestion that some existing teachers should be made redundant to make way for the newer black candidates.

No indication of ethnic origins are advanced, like whether British Asian parents and pupils might prefer to be taught by Afro-Caribbean teachers simply because of skin colour and the reverse. A query as to whether the same should happen to these black teachers in the future if, say, the area went Hong Kong Chinese is ignored for the suggestion is also made that these too are "black", a factor I believe

most Chinese would strongly reject. When my British Asian students reject this notion and respond by saying they want to be taught by the best teachers not just black teachers this is ignored. They would be said here to lack political consciousness which just means they have alternative viewpoints.

Seeking to join the elite which is what, in the present context, inequality of opportunity does, is not the answer to the problem of inequality.

Opportunity implies availability, a chance to participate in a process within which there are alternative options. Equality of opportunity implies that access to some of these alternatives are being restricted to only some persons and not others and the selection procedure must be bettered or made more open. But within the existing hierarchical class structural context it does not mean an availability to all for this would require the abolition of hierarchy and an entire to higher levels than the social base. In other words, equality of opportunity within the present context means by definition the preservation of a hierarchical system of state and capitalism and the assertion of privilege, not the reverse. Instead of an implication of virtue, equal opportunity itself is anti-equality and regressive, the assertion of co-option to an elite.

Peter Neville

How much are people really worth?

About 30,000 coal miners have become the new toys of the energy industry. As many as 10,000 men a year could be sacked in the three years following electricity privatisation. This will be conditioned by what is happening to nuclear power. Now that the government has been forced by the City to withdraw the nuclear element from privatisation, all the coal-fired generating stations can be dispatched to the private sector and exploited for profit. Long-term contracts with foreign cheap coal suppliers will be transferred to the new owners. There is to be a cut-back of 15 million tonnes in orders from British Coal. As many as 18,000 jobs will go as a direct result of the first phase of electricity privatisation, which will be completed by 1991. At the end of the day the British miner will be spread-eagled at the bottom of the exploitation heap.

The balance between imported and home produced coal remains very much in favour of imports, which come from as far afield as Poland, Colombia and Australia. Exactly why we must import coal in vast quantities is a question which brings different answers, depending on political leanings. Tories allege that the miners have priced themselves out of the market. Labour claims that mining wages should be above average.

A shirt factory now squats atop thousands of tonnes of prime Welsh anthracite coal in the Swansea Valley.

Coal mines in Britain have already had most of their limbs torn off, and little is left of the original carcass. It is a sickening story. The National Coal Board was set up in 1946, and throughout its early years it operated within a close relationship to the National Union of Mineworkers. This went on until Arthur Scargill became the NUM leader. He despised the way in which the former leader, Joe Gormley, had been on buddy terms with Sir Derek Ezra, Board chairman. Scargill's uncompromising leadership eventually took the miners into the up-roar of the 1984 strike, when the government treated the year-long clamour in much the same way as they regard street riots and demonstrations - to be put down by force. In the background the privatisation plans were steaming ahead. Arthur Scargill publicly produced a list of at least 30 mines scheduled for closure. Although he shouted the facts until he was hoarse, nobody listened, let alone believed him. As soon as the strike fell apart, the pit closures commenced.

Numerous attempts are now being made at reopening some of the mines, hampered by the government restriction which decrees that a private mine cannot employ more than 30 men. In Kent, at

Equality of opportunity within the present context does not weaken the status quo but strengthens it. It is re-creating and supporting the system it claims to reject.

But careful comrades. Equal opportunities is (like feminism to some people) a sacred cow, a signification of right, virtue, hope and honour and is regarded by many as the way they will get out of the confines of home or ghetto and join the elite and at the same time do so beyond questioning and debate. Its denial by anarchists may be taken as a regressive rejection of modern thinking, especially by the left who see themselves as the next generation of rulers. By equal opportunity they will rule. What one needs to do is attack inequality and hierarchy, not perpetuating it by demanding an access which justifies its existence.

Should one not have an opportunity to develop oneself to the full? Of course. But seeking to join the elite which is what the present context of equality of opportunity does, is not the answer to the problem of inequality. Another problem is, as we all know, jobs in the people professions are more interesting and satisfying and of course better paid in the long run than most manual jobs. So many working class people, like myself, aim to get these kinds of jobs. I have never been very good at manual work, for instance. We make equality of opportunity work for us and try and use the system to our advantage. But equality of opportunity as at present practised is not the path to the new Jerusalem for all mankind (and here I mean female mankind as well as male mankind) but simply more of the same. Care has to be taken that we do not accept another link in our chains thinking we are loosening them.

Betteshanger, which closed down with less than one week's notice in 1989, the former miners are attempting to gain private enterprise support. They want to gain access to an estimated 100 million tonnes of best quality coal. City interests have turned their backs on the idea, and so the miners are setting up a workers' co-operative, funded with money from local authority pension funds. One or two mining companies may eventually join the enterprise if it gets off the ground. Elsewhere in the country, many miners are striving to re-open their former workplaces. It is uphill work, just as tough as the work they used to do underground. In the meantime, British Coal is holding out a handful of lollipops.

Pumping financial air into the deflated industrial lung is the driving force behind a capitalist economy

A shirt factory now squats atop thousands of tonnes of prime Welsh anthracite coal in the Swansea Valley. Over in Merthyr Tydfil they make cosmetics in a plant which straddles what was once the main shaft of a successful colliery, where the main seam is still virtually intact. Here and elsewhere the Coal Board is operating a dating agency between firms which are looking for skilled workers and unemployed miners. The keynote of the scheme is re-training. Unusual possibilities exist. After all, one in ten of the entire national workforce is now employed in Britain's tourism and leisure industry. The miner who once used his skills at the coal-face could find himself balancing a tray of cocktails in a new luxury hotel or stirring the custard in the kitchen. You might say that former miners are pawns.

Many of the new, incoming firms are attracted by the prefabricated box-like factories on the sites of old mines, which are offered rent free for up to five years. If they can manage to hold out for five years, they may well expand and employ even more people. Some of these companies have turned out to be fly-by-nights, setting up cheapjack operations for the sake of making a fast buck, and then deliberately going bankrupt at the end of the rent free factory arrangement. One, at least, produced sub-standard teddy bears which could not find a home even in the street markets. After licking the lollipop of wage security, the former miners have been pushed out yet again into the chilly wilderness of unemployment.

If we are pitchforked into a second period of recession - and it is forecast that it could be much more severe than the previous one - the sun will very quickly set on the so-called enterprise industries.

(continued on p.5)

*See *Marxism, Freedom and the State*, Freedom Press, £1.50.

Living & Dying in Clink

While High Street shops are wondering whatever happened to their takings in the consumer slump, crime continues to do somewhat better, although there is still cause for concern among the moguls of the Big Steal. Things are not quite as fruitful as they used to be, as the 1988 British Crime Survey — only just published — points out.

One of the most telling indicators of the health of any country is the crime rate. In comic opera Andorra, with its total police force of only 12 officers, crime is almost unknown. In the somewhat larger Britain in the third quarter of 1989 the police recorded 957,000 offences, of which 886,000 or nearly 93 per cent were crimes against property. 64,000 or nearly 7 per cent were violent crimes against the person, and 7,000 or nearly 1 per cent were other types of crime. Cutting out all the Home Office waffle, this boils down to a 30 per cent increase in crime between 1981 and 1987. Compared with other periods, claims the Home Office, this is a definite decrease. But dammit, in the last quarter of 1989 a heck of a lot of pushbikes were pinched, yet wounding and robbery — that is when they kick you in the balls and make off with your wallet while you squirm on the pavement — increased by only 11 per cent.

Even the Home Office admits that fewer of us are reporting crimes to the boys in blue while there has been a great increase in various forms of insurance. My brother-in-law works for a firm which specialises in insurance against being taken hostage. He and his associates are trying to market a slim, leatherbound volume on how to conduct yourself when abducted. Price: £200 a copy. It runs to only a few pages.

David Waddington, the chap who slid into Douglas Hurd's chair at the Home Office, believes that public confidence has to be restored. He wants prisoners to spend at least half their sentences in prison compared with the present minimum of one third.* When they come out, opines Dave, they should be subject to supervision for a period and recalled to the cells if they are naughty. Like other Tories in key government departments he also wants less work to do, and agrees with the Parole Board that fewer cases should be referred to him for a final decision when it comes to prisoners' parole. Nobody yet knows whether this will lead to more prisoners back in civvy street with electronic tags welded on their socks. About 33% of probation officers are firmly against tagging and said they would resign from the service were it to be introduced. Only 14% said they would welcome it. These facts are from a Home Office study.

British prisons are on the boil at the moment. When Jim Hennessy, Chief Inspector of Prisons, published his recent report Prisoners' Complaints, one passage said that his enquiry revealed "widespread dissatisfaction with our existing grievance procedures... for the average prisoner, the system seems complex, confusing and frustrating".

The rules regarding prisoners' letters are incredibly complicated. On the face of it, a prisoner can write to practically anybody, although there are quite different rules if he/she wants to get in touch with the European Commission of Human Rights. If you are in jug and you do this, you cannot say anything which "would jeopardise the security of a penal establishment or national security. But you can ventilate a complaint". So say the rules.

In the world league, our prisons remain the pits. In Sweden and Denmark no attempt is made to prevent complaints being aired outside. Indeed, it is expected that prisoners will complain about their conditions. In the Netherlands a selected prisoners acts as a Grievance Clerk, and it is their job to inform other inmates about procedures, help them to write their complaints, and make sure all is fair. In America, they generally have a damn good riot to clear the air, but in recent years prisoners' councils have been set up in many states, and prison staff have been ordered to be more sympathetic.

How do prisoners in British gaols regard the system? It turns out that a lot of them really prize the right to petition the Home Secretary. Within the prison service itself there is a tacit agreement that this is to be encouraged, because it takes some of

the pressure off prison staff. The fact that most of the deluded petitioners receive stereotyped replies keeps everybody happy. The prisoner at least feels that he/she has been noticed. As for forming prisoners' councils along American lines, this has been well and truly trodden on by prison officers.

The State must be abolished! In that revolution I will take part! Undermine the idea of the State; make willingness and spiritual kinship the only essentials in the case of a union — and you have the beginning of a liberty that is of some value. The changing of form of government is mere toying with degrees — a little more or a little less — folly the whole of it.

Henrik Ibsen

Society has done nothing in the last ten years — or ever! — to wrestle with crime and punishment, although academics at the Cambridge Institute of Criminology have done quite well out of Home Office grants for ignored research studies and reports. The equation is probably beyond solution. In every society there are wrongdoers, just as there are those who sit in judgement. If the fellow next door owns twenty wheelbarrows and you badly need one, you may be tempted to acquire one of his without paying for it. Swiping a loaf of bread from a starving man is more reprehensible than lifting it off a supermarket shelf and racing for the door with it stuffed up your jumper.

Locking people up is no solution. Once the cell door shuts the real conflict begins, and you can experience such depression that you want to end it all. Remand prisoners in particular are prone to mental disorder due to the uncertainties of a forthcoming trial. Suicide is often the recourse of violent offenders, and this also goes for sex offenders. What the Home Office is considering at the moment is an Inmate Watch Scheme, giving special attention to remand and other prisoners who show suicidal tendencies.

In this country we are skillful at instituting schemes and plans which are laid on top of existing flawed systems, such as housing, education and — yes, prisons. Seldom do we bother to examine the structure itself.

Buster Black

*Incidentally he is also reputed to be a pro-hanging Home Secretary — Eds

Squatting under Granny Britain's skirts

As Hitler said: "Force is the first law... struggle is the father of all things". This has an urgent appeal to the South African Conservative Party which mustered 20,000 followers carrying red and black swastikas in Pretoria only a few hours after an immaculate Nelson Mandela came confidently out of prison.

The typical male Afrikaaner is by nature a brute and a dominator, conscious of the fact that Cecil Rhodes died as recently as 1905, but in 1893-4 enjoyed a victorious year directing the suppression of the great Matabele nation. When the Dutch settler occupied centre stage after struggling into their Afrikaaner costumes while professing to be interested only in agriculture, the blacks were pushed into the wings where they were at once enslaved.

After all these sickening events it is a wonder that the black is portrayed as pugacious and even nasty, yet over the years in South Africa he has shown very little aggressiveness. In their millions they could easily have thrown out the whites and re-established their own tribal nations without any trouble at all. They certainly had every motivation both as far as diminished land holdings and a need for greater security were concerned. Yet even now they still come from their strictly defined homelands to labour for the mining companies, digging out the diamonds and the gold, apparently unable to resist having to live in rotten conditions in dusty compounds until they have saved enough money to go back to their villages. This is one of the paradoxes of South Africa.

One of the reasons why we cannot quite seem to understand it may lie in the fact that while we in the West see aggression and conflict as honourable, given a "just cause", the African does not view life in quite the same way. Anybody who has worked with black people never quite gets under their happy-go-lucky attitude towards work and life. While the white man sweats to make a buck, the black is happy to hunker down in the sun and swap jokes and gossip while the kids play around and learn nothing. It is a wonder that the African National Congress, its splinter groups and many other black organisations, ever got off the ground to establish huge membership lists. One reason for ANC popularity is that it has but one single goal — the total destruction of apartheid. Compare this with Western political parties, which are cluttered with multiple goals. The Labour Party has now constructed a haystack of aims and aspirations, while the Tory Party presents a multitude of policy lines.

now showing signs of slumping. High interest rates are presenting people with debts they cannot pay. Yet even now, with all the facts leering darkly at us, we still want to believe that industry should be maintained at the same high levels of production. In the background the financiers are hopefully watching the investment figures. They know that without the constant injection of money, the inflated production levels cannot last.

Every Friday evening in the City of London the public relations agencies which are retained by the money-raising interests send motor cycle messengers to the Sunday papers to deliver packets of inspired hints and tips on the latest industrial moves. Created by the financial interests themselves, usually on a totally speculative basis, these inspired rumours send a series of electric shocks into the markets before they open for business on Monday morning. That is how favourable trading conditions are created, often on the basis of nothing more than rumour.

If it all looks like a mess, reflect in the simplicity of Nature. The sea absorbs enormous quantities of solar energy. In the North Sea, in June, this amounted to 100 times the total electrical power generating capacity of the United Kingdom.

Chris Binney

Which brings us face to face with the question of anarchism and its desire to destroy all forms of authoritarianism and a state which relies wholly on the domination of the citizen by economic and moral means. More than ever before we have become objects of control and calculation, mere units to be moved hither and thither, exploited and finally buried.

The reason why anarchism remains a yearning rather than a reality is partly because it is in direct conflict with the basic tenet of Christianity, which prohibits the destruction of authority. A lot of people still seem to believe in God. Where the Christian bows down and obeys, the anarchist refuses to accept authority and rises up against it. In our society practically any protest is now tolerated, but when it gets out of hand the protester is either penalised by being fined under the guise of committing a breach of the peace, or else he goes to prison as a reward for his disorderly conduct. Is the anarchist deterred? In most cases, yes. He has to content himself with a fiery letter to the local paper in the hope that somebody somewhere will feel a bond of understanding.

John Benjamin

We are sensible and civilised. This is our weakness. We truly believe that we have an individual freedom which is to be cherished. So do lots of blacks in the townships of South Africa, and many of them are all for a quiet life, despite the lack of running water and basic sanitation. They are free to use the nearest tap and crap in buckets which have to be emptied, and we are free to write to the newspapers.

It is inconceivable that anything remotely like the Roman revolution could happen in Britain. Much the same belief prevailed in 1969 when Marcuse wrote his *Essay on Liberation* and declared that overthrow could happen at any moment at the hands of students and dissidents. Sartre thought so too, but he said it much earlier. At the time many people dismissed the pair of them. There was not a chance of the working classes supporting the younger and more volatile generation of students. Now, sitting here in the theatre of European events, we have just seen it happen and a frisson of encouragement ran up and down our spines. We now know that the odds that it will spread to Granny Britain are very small. Anarchists in this country can only applaud what has happened. We remain huddled together within a national atmosphere of repressive tolerance while knowing that revolution really does work.

Brainwashed, we British have become a moronic nation from childhood to adulthood, prey to merchandising in all its forms, benign when it comes to the wastage of resources, almost welcoming the carpet slipper of suppression of spirit. Existence itself is now a protected struggle in which financial rewards for work are measured, manipulated and strictly controlled within the enterprise culture. Even the idea of freedom is the subject of educational systems, as though freedom is something which has to be taught rather than being inbred. The notion of revolution in Granny Britain is put down as sickness while the recent and continuing European revolution is presented as something commendable because it overturned oppression. It all turns on definitions. Remember Angela Davis, the American academic who threw in her lot with so-called terrorists and immediately became a public enemy? She once declared: "The real criminals in this society are not all the people who populate the prisons across the state, but those people who have stolen the wealth of the world from the people".

Like Africa. Like Britain. Like everywhere — except my own workshop where freedom is the bench and the tools.

For maximum freedom of the individual

This article, which first appeared in *News from Ukraine* No. 46, 1989, as one of a series introducing representatives of various political movements existing now in Ukraine, presents the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (CAS).

The conference "Man, Freedom, Revolution", held in Zaporizhzhia with the co-operation of the political club "Sich", was put in jeopardy shortly before its beginning. The participants assembled in the city and rented the rethouse of the local university as a temporary accommodation facility, but suddenly workmen came and started mending the heating system, so the Party Committee of the university proposed to postpone the function until December.

As I was told by Dmytro Dundysh — 32, member of the CPSU, late operator at one of the city's industrial enterprises — the leadership of the regional Party organisation was obviously fearing the participants of the conference would hold their function under the yellow-and-blue banners. This kind of misgiving, by the way, testifies to the lack of knowledge of historical facts and the ideology and the attributes of non-communist teachings: the anarcho-syndicalists, who were to be in the majority at the conference, would rather assemble under the black colour. Be that as it may, the function drew participants from Zaporizhzhia, Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkiv and some other places, and it took them half a day moving from place to place in search of premises where they could gather and discuss the topics of their interest. All the dependable agreements with the administrations of the city's colleges about conference halls proved utter failures. The first session was ultimately held at the apartment of one of the Zaporizhzhian delegates.

It was only natural that those upheavals caused a certain amount of suspicion of the anarcho-syndicalists with respect to newspaper men, and, before the Kharkiv anarchists agreed to grant me an interview, I was put through something that looked like questioning. However, after the references made by the hosts of the conference, who had an opportunity to look through a few issues of *News From Ukraine* beforehand, the misunderstanding was settled.

The first interview was given by Ihor Rassoska, 24, teacher of history: "We are going to talk about the ideology of anarcho-syndicalism, as one of the varieties of anarchism. Our main concepts and the meaning of our ideology are in the very name. The word anarchy gives rise to many questions — many find it a horrible one, associating it with robbery, devastation and violence. But in real fact, the word has an absolutely different meaning — absence of government, that is, a harmonious condition of society in which every individual is free and no pressure whatsoever is applied to his personality. A mob of cut-throats is no anarchy because it uses violence. Anarchy means the maximum realisation of human freedom. This is the ideal we are striving for."

As for the term syndicalism, it implies professional, territorial and any other type of unions, without the characteristic features of parties and not aiming at usurpation of power. The only condition under which we see application of violence as the theoretically admissible is protection of people against

encroachments upon their lives and health — that is, forced defence. Our traditions are closely interwoven with the traditions started by such great anarchists as Lev Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi — people who preached non-violence."

The CAS has no distinct organisational structures. There is only an information network.

Vadym Radchenko, 23, former student of the Kharkiv Aviation College (expelled probably for his political activities, though it is impossible to prove it now). He edits the newspaper *Nabat* (alarm) issued by the CAS. According to him, Kharkiv is a major centre of anarcho-syndicalism (second only to Moscow) but nowadays there are strong-going groups in Zaporizhzhia and Cherkasy. The anarcho-syndicalist movement is based on young people "who have not yet got used to putting up with the conditions of a strictly unitary order". One of the groups operating in Kharkiv sprang up in 1978, when its members were only from 12 to 14 years of age. They have covered a road "from sheer populism through communism, to the ideology of anarchism."

In the course of my interview with Vadym Radchenko, there emerged some details about the relationships between the anarcho-syndicalists and the People's Movement of Ukraine for Restructuring. As it appeared, the split-up of the Kharkiv regional organisation of the PMU (reported in *News From Ukraine* no. 44) was not instigated by Party or Soviet bodies as many suspected:

"What happened in Kharkiv is a nasty story. The anarchists participated in the activities of the PMU organising committee from the very beginning. At the constituent conference of the Kharkiv organisation three anarchists were elected to the board and two (including myself) — delegates to the PMU Constituent Congress in Kiev."

At the Congress, in my opinion, the speakers seemed to lean towards a unitary way of thinking. I do not believe our people are ready now for introduction of such a structure, all the more so that the goal of this structure is coming to power at the next elections (at any rate this is the case in Kharkiv). And what is most dangerous about it is that, from the very beginning, it started suppressing dissident views within itself."

In the opinion of Vadym Radchenko, it is a mistake to build up the PMU as a centralised structure with its directing centre in Kiev interfering in the activities of the local organisations. Instead he would prefer to see a federation of "regional people's fronts".

What makes my interviewee suspicious about the PMU programme are the phrases about "the sovereignty of the Ukrainian nation but not the people of Ukraine", as well as the provision that the rights and freedoms of a separate individual must not run counter to the right of a nation to self-preservation and self-determination.

"That is why a week after the Constituent Congress we withdrew from the board of the Kharkiv PMU organisation and the PMU proper. Now we have in Kharkiv the organising committee of an organisation bearing the tentative name of "Kharkiv Popular Democratic Front". Sovereign Ukraine, according to Vadym Radchenko, must be a confederation of regions, not a unitary state."

Andriy Kulykov

Jamming up the government machine

People who are not wanted by the system — former psychiatric patients, the homeless, drifters and vagabonds — have labels stuck on them. There is now a label for practically every human condition. We are classification mad. The government has successfully welded millions of people into a single malleable mass.

This is done under the guise of concern, though not for the welfare and well-being of the large number of people who choose not to work or live in mortgaged or rented houses. Even the number of cardboard residences in our major cities have been counted. The only possible way of escaping classification is to find a large forest, choose a tree and live close to the earth. But no doubt somebody from the Forestry Commission will eventually come through the undergrowth and put you down as an itinerant camper in the woodland census.

Escaping the State is practically impossible unless you happen to possess a caravan or a motorhome in which you move continually round the country. This would certainly exempt you from the community charge, though not from road tax. The State would still be able to keep tabs on you, and if they wanted to intercept you, they could put out a police call and erect road blocks.

Within the EEC you can cross national boundaries at will without being halted at customs posts. On Sunday mornings the German frontier staff are busy reading their newspapers, and are irritated if you insist on showing them your passport or any other document. The frontiers of Belgium are virtually unmanned and you can flit across them unnoticed. When you return to Britain everything is quite different. You have to nervously push your way through crowds of customs officers, and by the time you have actually entered the country you begin to think that you have successfully broken into a prison camp rather than out of one.

Numerous countries guarantee the citizen freedom of movement, including Britain, where Miner's Strike demonstrators discovered their way blocked by police when they said they wanted to cross county lines. French demonstrators are quickly boxed in by riot police. In Germany they wisely keep their demonstrations small enough not to attract much attention. When freedom of movement is put to the test it becomes a hollow phrase unless it happens to be tens of thousands of migrants from Eastern Europe in search of washing machines and videos in the West.

In Britain freedom of movement is overruled by such phrases as 'public safety' and 'maintaining law and order'. The Riot Act, repealed some years ago, has been replaced by impromptu emergency measures. The police now have carte blanche to use truncheons, horse charges and riot shields. When the pantomime of having a Justice of the Peace read the Act to the mob disappeared, it enabled the police to make their own secret decisions whether to use rubber bullets, tear-gas or hobnailed boots.

Demonstration and insurrection clearly no longer work, nor have they worked since the Irish potato blight of 1846, when famine led to mass immigration and rioting. Some readers may regret that it has become foolhardy to go out on the streets in order to make a point and provoke the police into action. After all, the inevitable pattern of arrest, a charge of breaching the peace and a fine must follow.

In the last few years many angry lobbies and movements have contributed handsomely to the coffers of the State by paying fines. Others have spent time in prison at the expense of the State. All this was common enough in the earlier part of this century. It did achieve a

great deal in drawing attention to one cause or another. But in the lifetime of this government public protest has become too circumscribed, fodder for the ritualistic TV news bulletins.

Ritual protest is no good at all. What we should concentrate on is a more studied form of attack on a State in which the individual has become nothing more than a classified statistic. We cannot remain part of the coagulated mass while there is still time to use our individuality. When the individual is a self-proclaimed anarchist, it is to invite suspicion, perhaps even derision. The name has incorrect historical connotations synonymous with bomb throwing, violence, destruction. Popular emphasis falls on comic strip interpretations. The irony is that most of us are paid up pacifists.

What we should do within the community is make clear our strong objection to a government activity which is designed specifically to protect capitalism and to the dangerous cult of leadership. We should also make it clear that a way ahead could exist if the rackety institution of government were to be abolished.

The short term must consist of personal activity in which the individual can create and promote anti-government activity. We can, for instance, all become gadflies and sting chosen sections of the body politic. Simply by sending letters to MPs to tell them that the system of government — any government — is wrong will achieve nothing. A backbencher on £26,701 a year is unlikely to be impressed with the argument.

The more effective method is to select a specific government department as a target. The action becomes more effective when it comes in the form of questions which must be answered. In the case of the Department of Social Security, ask how many applicants currently rely on the Social Fund for the necessities of life. What is the average cost of running a Social Security office? How much does it cost to administer the average benefits claim?

The office of the Prime Minister is another target. Ask for the annual running costs as far as premises and salaries are concerned. Enquire about the number of people in each department. What was the phone bill last year? How many special advisors are on the staff? What do they cost?

And so on, many questions being directed at every single government department. The questions themselves have to be intelligently framed, and it is not necessary to explain why they are being asked. As tax paying citizens we are all entitled to information. A simple question and answer should not be permitted to come to an end. Supplementary questions can be raised.

The purpose of this strategy is self-evident — to exert strain upon the system. If fifty comrades were to form a syndicate and act against one government department, ensuring continuity of questioning by mail during one month, the results would be striking. If hastening letters asking for early replies were sent to add to the avalanche, the effect would be heightened. When the logjam becomes complete, a letter should be sent to the Minister in question, pointing out that his department does not seem to be functioning very efficiently.

This is a proposal for direct action. On the surface it does look pretty harmless, but apart from putting some barbs into the State machine, it could also educate us, and it may also yield some interesting information about the weaknesses of government. Quite apart from everything else, it would clearly demonstrate to government departments that even labelled and classified citizens have a voice.

K. Allen



A touch of the Gothics

As the comedian states, "German jokes are no laughing matter" and German culture from its philosophy to its art would appear to be one of gloom, doom and despair. At the end of a philosophical reading one feels a sense of acceptance by penning a formal suicide note and looking for a hook and a length of rope while every painted saint is a brute peasant and every sculptured crucified Christ a starving, bloodless, magnificently carved figure hanging from a cross in spectator sport agony. One of the earliest pieces of bronze German sculpture is the 1060 Werden crucifix with a thin geometrical Christ rejecting the world's agony.

It is said to have come from Lower Saxony and through the centuries it appears to have set the style for that subject of church religious hangings. Be it Dürer or the Flemish painter Breugel the Elder, we have a world of animal appetites and hopeless morrows and one feels, nay knows, that this has shaped German art up and into the twentieth century, be it film, novel, sculpture, stage or painting. Not the love of life of Mediterranean art or the amused tolerance of Western Europe, just a portrayal of human futility. Ours is the era that produced the nihilism of Dada and gave us Ernst, Grosz, Heartfield and the Bauhaus iron-girded brick lightless prisons to contain the workers and the furniture that, like the jokes, were never meant to amuse. One can argue, rightly, that it is the social economy that conditions its art, and in that cheerless agrarian background that gave place to a soul destroying industrialism its religion, its rejection of hope and its doom ridden culture became invisible.

After the First World War the peoples in Eastern Europe had many reasons to trade in hope for bread, and the German intelligentsia fed their misery in books, films and paintings by probing and breaking the scabs of a losing war, mass unemployment and armed political armies for all ideological demands from a hopeless, hungry people. In the

1920s the American writers went into the honourable trade of muckraking with London, Lewis and Sinclair producing their readable exposés while within Britain the writers via the Fabian Society planned "the new society".

From Germany came the one writer who found a mass audience in the West, and that was Erich Maria Remarque with his *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Thin characterisations and easy writing, it caught the sense of betrayal by those who had wished to be betrayed and for the first time the visual sights of death in battle to a peace-time cinema audience when, in 1930, Universal made a major anti-war film out of it, complete with mud, blood and severed hands hanging "on the old barbed wire". But it was Hans Fallada who caught the son's stench of the time with his two novels, *Little Man What Now?* and *He Who Eats Out of the Tin Bowl*. Isherwood had, so he told me, no strong social commitments and his *I Am a Camera* was a simple statement of fact, while the German writers and artists held a mirror up to their contemporary society.

It has been written of Fallada that he was the only major German writer not to flee Hitler's Germany for he lived out his tragic life there without hindrance from the state. He died in 1947, having been in an insane asylum for trying to murder his wife, and his last book, *The Drinker* (published by Libris, £14.95, page 282) forms the theme of that book, unpublished until 1950. Fallada was an alcoholic and a drug addict, and this book is no more than his story told through the mouth of his fictional creation Erwin Sommer. I am told by the academics that Charlotte and A. L. Lloyd have produced a worthy translation from the German and in the prose's effortless flow we get a feeling of understanding, though not sympathy. Fallada wrote his potboilers under his true name of Rudolf Ditzen, and I doubt if they have any value, but like Wells and Shaw, Remarque, Lewis, Sinclair and London, he called upon us to question that worthless society between

the major wars. In 1934 Universal filmed *Little Man What Now?* with the beautiful misty-eyed Margaret Sullivan in the lead, and the American paper *Variety* wrote of it that it was "human, homely and romantic... should get ample box office attention", which was surely the kiss of death for the dying. This was the generation that boasted of their scars and we were those who shrank in their shadows. Shaw has written to the effect that everyone condemns war yet feels guilty not to have taken part in one, for how the ancient warriors glorified it and we knew - for the wise men and women told us - that there would never be another war, and as we sat in the darkness of the cinema listening to the soundtrack of the machine guns, we knew that the grail that we sought to drink of its bitter wine had forever



In the limitations of originality the peers of my youth continue to surface upon the printed page and the gallery walls, and one welcomes the etchings of Max Klinger on view within the Goethe Institute. Klinger was a good solid academic artist but used his gift to explore new areas of the mind. Sad old Max Nordau in his soft-porn 500-page *De-generation* raged against this work and in his turn was attacked by Shaw. Twenty years before Freud produced *On the Interpretation of Dreams*, and ten years before Kraft-Ebbing had churned out his *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Klinger had etched in 1881 his ten plates of "A Glove". It is in itself no more than a series of plates on the sexual fetishism of the female glove. Innocuous in themselves in that they could illustrate a child's book until, you know, wink wink, Klinger's meaning. Klinger won, and rightly, the praise of the surrealists and in the 1960s Klinger became a cult hero within the shifting circles, yet one must question what his appeal is in 1990. A solid academic artist, he explored the dark undercurrent of the mind with an interpretation that law and the state could not fault, and if we have tears give them to Hans Fallada who, apart from trying to murder his wife, offended no-one but died a broken and physical wreck who held a mirror up to the society of his time and was ignored by the state as having offered no threat.

Arthur Moyse

How I became an anarchist

Why would I want to be an anarchist? Why, indeed, would anyone want to be an anarchist? The pay is lousy, the hours endless, and the benefits few and far between.

In fact, I've never wanted to be an anarchist. It was dropped on me - like a hammer. When I was 19, in the summer of 1969, the US government tried to draft me. It was a rude jolt.

When the notice for my draft physical arrived, I began to think seriously about my relationship to society and to the government. It was painfully obvious to me that the principle of majority rule was a sham in the United States. Corporations and the very rich had a stranglehold on the communications media and campaign financing, so no-one who didn't cater to their interests could even be heard, much less elected.

I also began to question the idea that society was represented by the government or, as some of the cruder apologists for government claimed, that society was equivalent to the state. I didn't see how that was possible, except perhaps through transubstantiation. I looked at the society I knew - the dirt roads, the junky old cars, the debris-strewn vacant lots and the old, cramped houses and shacks in my family's neighbourhood - and contrasted it with the neighbourhoods of our rulers, the senators, representatives and judges, a few miles away - manicured lawns, paved streets with sidewalks, and shiny new cars parked in front of mansions - and it was obscenely obvious to me that my "society" was not being "represented".

At the time, a popular adjunct to the society-is-the-state theme was the argument that because we lived in the US we were all bound by a "social contract" to obey the dictates of society as represented by the government. Only an idiot could have bought that argument. I had signed no contract, no-one I knew had signed such a document, so why should we be bound by a fictitious "agreement" we had never seen, much less signed?

The slogan "If you don't love it, leave it" was the cynical popular response. The irony was that if there had been anywhere to go to then I and a hell of a lot of others would have been gone in five minutes. In retrospect, the situation reminds me of the old political cartoon in which a hijacker demands of a pilot, "Take me to a free country" and the pilot replies "This is a 747 mate, not a fucking spaceship".

More fundamentally, I began to question the idea of majority rule. It seemed strange that a majority, simply because it was a majority, had the right to regulate how I lived and even to enslave me via the draft. When I looked for justifica-

tion for this odd idea I found none beyond the principle that might makes right. The hallowed concept of majority rule rested on no foundation other than naked force. I found the idea sickening. I still do.

By this time I'd decided that I was not going to let them draft me, but what was I to do? Would I dodge the draft, or would I sacrifice myself by "resisting" and going to jail. The rationale for "resistance" was very much related to the whole idea of a "social contract" advanced by state-worshippers, though with the improvement that one should follow one's conscience instead of government orders. Still, the underlying principle was that one has a "duty" to society and should be prepared to sacrifice oneself.

My key to seeing through this concept was the realisation that "society" is largely a fiction. "Society" is merely the sum of its parts - a mass of individuals with wildly disparate interests and desires. (For instance, my interests were obviously far different to the interests of the rich young men with student deferments attending Ivy League schools.) Thus talk of "the interests of society" or one's "duty" to it is pure mystification.

In the end I decided that the only "duty" individuals have is to respect each other's right to be left in peace. So, I said to hell with duty - as long as I wasn't intruding on others I had the right to do as I wanted with my life.

I came to these realisations shortly after I passed my initial physical. In desperation I wrote to a "Joe Mao" letter to the draft board telling them that I was a member of several "subversive" organisations, one of which (SDS) I actually belonged to.

Almost by return mail, I received a notice to report for a second examination in a week. I spent that week ingesting enough methedrine and LSD to put a horse in a coma. When I reported I was a shambling wreck. I also faked being a homosexual to ensure that they wouldn't take me. I succeeded. It took the shrink less than five minutes to decide that I was "unfit" for military duty. To celebrate, two weeks later I drank a large amount of beer, went back to the induction centre late at night, and pissed all over its front doors and entrance hall. (I was 19 at the time.)

I still had never heard the word anarchist used in anything other than a pejorative sense, didn't call myself one and was totally unaware that anyone, anywhere had ever reached conclusions similar to mine. It wasn't until five years later that I realised I wasn't alone.

For a short time then I had a girlfriend who was a member of the Revolutionary Union (a Maoist group) - one reason why our relationship was short-lived was that we frequently had vicious political arguments. When we parted ways, she angrily told me that I was "nothing but a goddamned anarchist". I was intrigued. I went to the public library the next day and looked in the card catalogue under "anarchism". The first book I found was Alexander Berkman's *What is Communist Anarchism?* Within minutes of picking it up I realised that she had me pegged - I most certainly was "a goddamned anarchist".

Chaz Bufe

Anarchism v Socialism

The anarchists have failed to bring about anarchism just as the social democrats have failed in their attempts to introduce socialism, but with this very significant difference: that whereas anarchists have never ceased to point out that anarchism will never be achieved by authoritarian means, socialists have insisted that the classless, libertarian society could be attained by the ballot box, by government, by states which "wither away" and pave the way for the state of affairs which we call anarchy. And socialists, since the Russian Revolution, have had countless occasions to put their theories into practice. After two world wars they have had mass opinion behind them, and they have been swept into office only to reveal themselves more concerned with playing the political game, according to the bourgeois-capitalist rules than with legislating the privileged class out of power. In Britain, for instance, a Labour Party with an overwhelming majority and sustained by a political mood (after more than five years of war and promises by the politicians of pie-in-the-sky as the fruits of the defeat of Hitlerism) which bordered, even here, on revolution, gave birth to what? Another Labour government in 1950 with an unworkable majority which led to new elections in 1951 and the overwhelming victory of Churchill and the Tory Party!

From *The Impossibilities of Social Democracy, Freedom Press, £2.*

More News from Hong Kong

Chinese anarchists have been active in Hong Kong for some fifteen years, first known as the MINUS group (minus 7 - seven years before 1984, and so on), then Godot Books, People's Theater, and so forth. They have published a number of books both in Chinese (Murray Bookchin, 'bolo'bolo, etc.) and English (*Three Essays on the New Mandarins*, reprinted by Black Rose Books), videos (such as the one on Venice 1984) and musical cassettes (by the band Black Bird). They are now involved in the support of the fight for democracy in China and in Hong Kong, organising demonstrations and street theatres and publishing an occasional paper.

Two useful addresses: Democracy Wall, Flat B, 6th Floor, 39 Sands Street, West Point, Hong Kong, and Affinity Group (also contact for Black Bird) Guo Da-Nian, PO Box 2544, Harbour Building, Hong Kong. They welcome contacts, support and visitors (and they give them a splendid reception!).

Marianne Enckell
CIRA, Beaumont 24, 1012
Lausanne, Switzerland

Not so simple

Dear Editors,
It is no easy task sorting out the intricacies of international politics. At least Simon Butler in "Free Europe? Free World?", far from slogan-shouting, demonstrated that he is no Simple Simon. Of course, if Tony Gibson has special knowledge of what deals take place in secret meetings of Heads of Governments, he should write a political commentary rather than blow raspberries.

EFC

Letters

What changes in the USSR?

Dear Editors,

After reading the US mainstream press on the new "Russian Revolution" it comes as a much needed antidote to find articles in *Freedom* that strike a sceptical tone regarding the changes occurring in the Soviet Union.

However, as I see it the informed criticality of your correspondent refers to the "reform from above" and ignores the "reform from below", the nature of which we should fully understand before we hurry to depreciate it. For while the movement from below has attained mass proportions only where it expresses a long suppressed nationalism (the miners' general strike being the sole exception, it has coincidentally animated thousands of locally active political groupings.

These associations reflect the full spectrum of political programmes from neo-Stalinism to anarchism, but in the main they have formed to agitate for specific issues. One hopes that over time they will coalesce into the force needed to bury the Soviet system.

It would seem to me that those of us who pride ourselves on our lucidity when it comes to the democratic illusions of the West are in error if we write off a society on the move. Our genuine scepticism of the aims of the "reform from above" cannot be the excuse to revive an ill-reputed determinism in social theory. Anarchists after all should be the last to condemn a new social movement to repeat all the old mistakes we in the "advanced capitalist societies" currently oppose.

B. Marszalek
PO Box 11255
Berkeley
California 94701

New Travellers

Hawkwind kicked off their winter '89 tour in Norwich on 1st December. This tour was to some extent a fundraising drive to help the Travellers Aid Trust (TAT), probably best known for running the Stonehenge Helpline during the summer solstice festival. TAT was set up in 1987 as a registered charity, reluctantly but because it was the easiest way to get anything done to help new travellers with their immediate legal problems.

TAT's aim is to make available any information and resources travellers need so as to make their own decisions and sort out their own problems. TAT grew out of a pre-existing group of new age travellers, but their advice and assistance is available to all travellers, which means anyone who adopts - temporarily or permanently, regardless of race, culture, nationality or ethnic origin - a nomadic style of life. However, most of their work is with new age travellers rather than with Tinceri (Irish travellers) or Rom (Gypsies) whose problems are not always quite the same and who can turn to the Gypsy Council, Romany Guild, ACERT, etc., for help and advice.

TAT's major area of work; sadly, is legal advice and assistance, mainly on problems with the police, evictions, land use and planning law, confiscation of vehicles, and in civil actions against the police (a series of cases relating to police violence during the Rainbow Convoy evictions is

about to come up). The major reason for setting up a group with charitable status was the need to make such advice more easily available after the bean field attack at the Stonehenge solstice, in which many people were injured and their homes wrecked by police action. This was a rather unpopular cause for most "straight" lawyers to be involved with.

TAT also advises on claiming state welfare benefits, status of travellers under the Caravan Sites Act (1968), and health care. They also offer training in first aid, useful skills and basic law. The group hopes to get a bus to get a bus to provide a mobile service, in addition to its telephone helpline work.

They also support the travellers' school, which offers an educational advice service for new age travelling families and runs a "Skool Bus" - an alternative on-the-road educational facility which has been running for three years. There is a bus equipped with a mobile classroom for mobile kids, learning materials for parents to use with their children, and a number of voluntary and low-paid teachers and helpers. Besides the Skool Bus the travellers' school also organises children's camps and festivals and has an office dealing with administration and travellers' enquiries.

The attitude to education is very informal and holistic, and involves the parents closely. Playleaders work with toddlers in a geodesic dome (the bus's annex) whilst the bus deals mainly with pre-teens, working

Talking in pubs

Dear Editors,

With the Falklands War consigned to history, and Guatemala no longer laying claim to Belize, Margaret Thatcher desperately needs a war to divert attention from her truly disastrous domestic policies, but with the poll tax has, in effect, declared war on her own people.

Whilst condemning violence and looting at town hall demos, Neil Kinnock threw out the baby of dissent with the bathwater by also condemning peaceful non-violent civil disobedience as a tactic, by urging everyone to pay the poll tax. Well, he would, wouldn't he?

It's highly amusing to see Tory backbenchers running around like headless chickens in fear of joining the dole queues they themselves have created. Sir John Stokes told the 1922 committee last week that "things have become so alarming that people are talking about politics in pubs"! Now that's really scary. Where do these people think they are... Eastern Europe?

It may not be only the Empress who is seen to have no clothes!

Peter and Marketta Dodson

Contributors wanted

Dear Comrades,

I recently wrote 30-40 letters to groups in Britain and Europe asking them to contribute to a booklet about Anarchism today. Although I have had several replies from groups on the Continent, in places such as Poland, Sweden and the Soviet Union, so far I've had only one reply from Britain. I feel this is a worthwhile project, an attempt to show that Anarchism is a modern idea, not just a 19th century philosophy. Therefore I'd be grateful if some of the many groups could write something. As I said in my letter, I

would ideally like something about the aims, history and principles of the groups, and also any other interesting articles, especially ones about the current situation in Eastern Europe. I look forward to being inundated with letters!
P. Horspool
c/Enamorats 9 3rd
Barcelona 08013
Spain

Kropotkin letters wanted

Dear Sirs,

I have been asked by Frank Cass Publishers of London and Progress Publishers of Moscow to prepare an edition of the letters of P. A. Kropotkin for publication in 1992, the 150th anniversary of his birth.

I would be most grateful for any help you might be able to give me with regard to locating Kropotkin letters, in particular by publicising the project in the pages of your journal.

Yours sincerely,
Dr John Slatter
Dept of Russian
University of Durham
Durham DH1 3JT

NEWS FROM Angel Alley

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS - If your subscription expired some time between January and 10th March, you will have received a reminder. And if you haven't yet renewed your sub this is the second and final reminder because until we hear from you we shall not send future issues of *Freedom*. We hate doing this but our budget doesn't allow us to be generous except with our time, which we give unpaid. But we have to pay the printers and the post office when we take out lovely franking machine to have another injection of £200 of postage value.

Check the label on the envelope. If there are three numbers on the bottom line, the first is our record number, the second is *Freedom*, the third *The Raven*. And to convert the numbers into dates: 73 is 13th January, 74 is 27th January, 75 is 10th February, 76 is 24th February, 77 is 10th March, 78 is 24th March. If you have renewed your subscription in the last week or so don't be alarmed if the number on the label has not yet been altered!

NON-ARRIVAL OF FREEDOM AND THE RAVEN - We have in the last few weeks received a number of complaints from subscribers who have not received the fortnightly or the quarterly. Obviously we can make mistakes (and perhaps even the computer can fail to pour out all the labels!) but somehow it would be difficult since one would have to leave the label on the sheet, but one would soon spot the fact. So we can only conclude either than they get lost in transit or as we suggested to one subscriber who wrote to say he had not received two consecutive issues of *The Raven*, that one could understand one issue getting lost but consecutive ones might indicate that somebody in his house had taken a fancy to *The Raven*. And we were right! So question your cohabitants, and if they have taken a fancy to our journals persuade them to take out a TMC £11.50, Ripley DCM £3, London NW2 NB £10, Tours CD £10, solidate our subscription list with at Cardiff AP £10, Milton Keynes DB £4, least another 500 readers to *Freedom*, and at least that number for *The Raven* if we are to break even. At the

moment we are subsidising *The Raven* out of income from the sales of *Freedom* Press titles to the tune of £1,000 per issue. The scheduled four issues for 1990 will of course be published (number 10 has been slightly delayed on the printing side, but will definitely be dispatched this month), but we will have to consider *The Raven's* future at the end of the year if there is not a significant improvement with circulation.

NEW IMPORTED BOOKS - We have just received from Charles Kerr Publications of Chicago reprints of two of their titles: Lafargue's *The Right to be Lazy* (£4.50) and the *IWW Song Book* (£2.50). The former is now issued in a very attractive edition which partly explains the increase in price, but the fluctuation of the £ sterling in the money markets has in the past weeks made a difference of nearly 15% in the price of imported books. We do our best to keep down prices but we have to fix a realistic price bearing in mind that we are the trade distributors for Charles Kerr in Chicago, Black Rose Books in Montreal, and have to allow normal discounts to booksellers. However we do pay postage in inland retail orders which nowadays is a substantial item.

DONATIONS

23rd February - 8th March

Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Troy New York DW £8, Tokyo GK £3, Cardiff AP £10, Copenhagen PH £5, Milton Keynes DB £4, Douglas PC £3.

Total = £33.00
1990 TOTAL TO DATE = £465.30

Freedom Press Overheads Fund

Troy New York DW £8, Copenhagen PH £5, Ripley DCM £3, London NW2 NB £10, Tours CD £10, solidate our subscription list with at Cardiff AP £10, Milton Keynes DB £4, least another 500 readers to *Freedom*, and at least that number for *The Raven* if we are to break even. At the

Total = £70.50
1990 TOTAL TO DATE = £291.15

14 april

THE
in2
club

21-23 albion st
bradford
10am-6pm
gig in evening

regional
anarchistbookfair

stalls
videos
food
bar

books · magazines
records · posters
t shirts · badges