

# FREEDOM

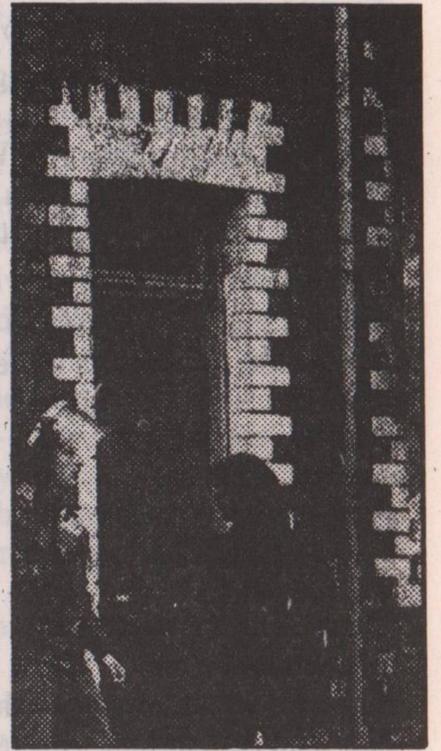
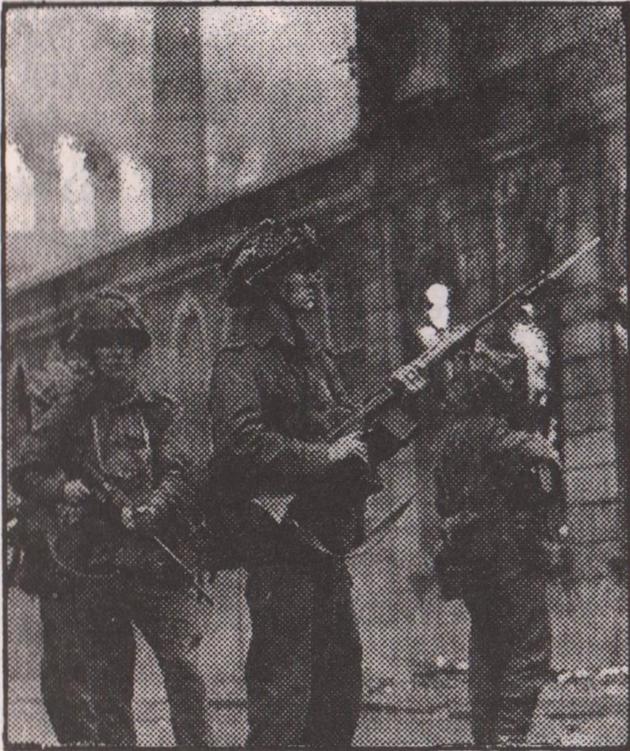
50p

ANARCHIST MAGAZINE

Volume 50 Number 9 September 1989 50p

## IRELAND

### 400 years of English occupation



**August 16, 1969: buildings burn in battle-torn Belfast 1971: the night of internment, Belfast**

**1989: Business as usual in Belfast**

ON 14 AUGUST the Irish edition of the *Daily Mirror* published a photograph produced by the British army public relations department, of Miss United Kingdom standing with two soldiers on a Derry street, smiling prettily and holding aloft a plastic baton round launcher. Less than a week earlier, a fifteen-year-old Derry civilian had been killed by a plastic baton launched by such a soldier from such a weapon. This neatly symbolises the contempt in which an occupying army holds a subject population.

Ireland, a part of the English empire for more than 400 years, was not the first colony to win independence, but in the earlier cases of the USA and the 'British Dominions', it was the colonial settlers who set up independent regimes. Ireland was the first case where independence from England was won by people who thought of themselves as the conquered natives.

Most newly-independent countries have 'minority tribes', with reason to fear that when the imperial power withdraws they will be persecuted by the majority. Usually they are left to their fate, but in Ireland they were used as a pretext for keeping a bit of the country under continuing British rule. Becoming the majority

in this remaining bit, the 'Unionists' began the systematic oppression of their 'Nationalist neighbours. This is the background, greatly simplified, of the current troubles.

The British army went to Northern Ireland in 1969 to protect the Nationalists (who are British citizens whatever their preference) but stayed to side with the Unionists and try to 'crush the IRA'; a job they are unlikely to achieve because the IRA are in fact ordinary people in arms, with widespread support among the large, oppressed minority.

This is not to suggest that anarchists have anything in common with the IRA. Ordinary people in arms overthrew the oppressive Shah of Iran, installed an oppressive hierarchy, and volunteered in their thousands for the suicidal militia. Ordinary people, full of resentment at the oppression which followed their defeat in the first world war, brought the Nazis to power. The furthest you can get from an anarchist opinion is to hold that persons have no importance except in their contribution to 'The People', and the IRA have shown, notably in the hunger strike campaign, that they come very close to this. The fact that they have the support of the oppressed does not change the fact that they are keen authoritarians, who

would be oppressors themselves if ever they got into power.

The tribal conflict in Northern Ireland would cease if people were to stop thinking in tribal terms and see themselves as persons in their own right (or even as fellow members of the human species or the working class). This is the kind of obvious statement you expect to find in an anarchist paper, but does it lead on to anything we can do to ease the conflict now, without waiting for a fundamental change of attitude?

We think it does. We can join in the agitation for the withdrawal of British troops, which is not the root cause of tribal thinking but an important aggravating factor. Soldiers provide a useful target for the IRA, and the soldiers' misdirected retaliations increase resentment against their presence and enhance Nationalist enthusiasm. The outrages of Nationalist paramilitaries in turn increase the tribal feelings of Unionists, supplying support for Unionist paramilitaries and a political base for dangerous tribal ranters.

The departure of troops would not solve the problems, but it would make the problems easier to solve. Troops out now!

more on Ireland pages 8 and 9

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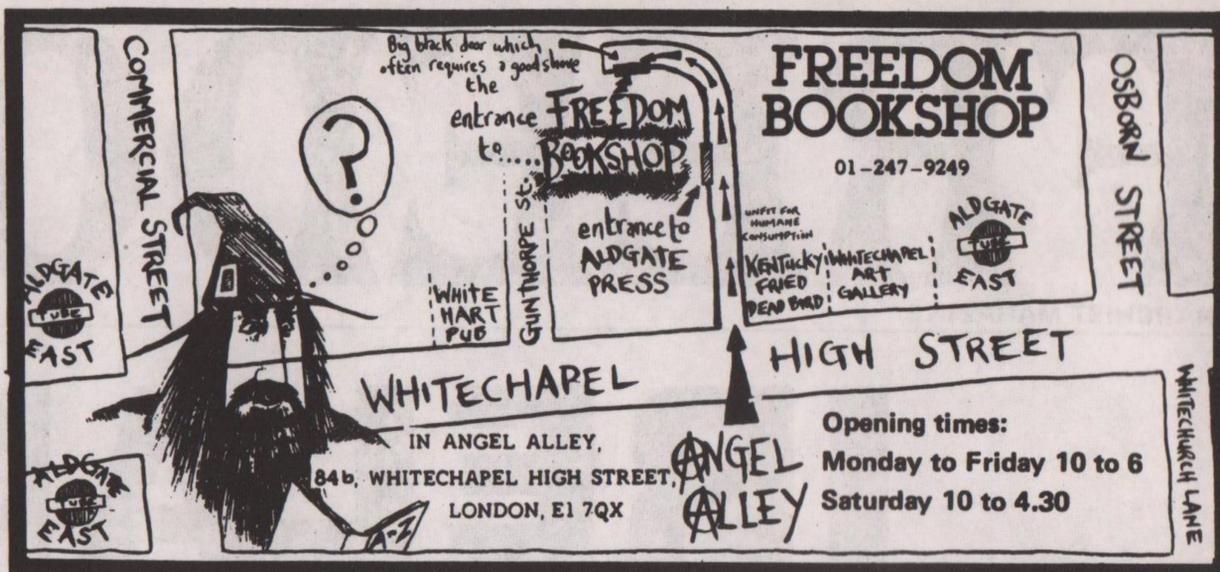
published by Freedom Press (in Angel Alley)  
84b Whitechapel High Street  
London E1 7QX

typeset by Mum's the Word

printed by Aldgate Press London E1 7QX

distributed to shops by A Distribution

ISSN 00 16-0504



## Book signing at Freedom Bookshop

### SONG OF ANARCHY

by John Rety

This is a pre-publication signing by John, who was one of the editors of *Freedom* in the '60s. The signing is on Wednesday 4th October between 2.00pm and 7.00pm, followed by a sojourn to the second nearest pub.

John would be pleased to read his work to groups, university societies, etc., for expenses for travel only.

## Festival

There will be a festival of alternative, independent and radical information-carriers (publishers, bookshops, distributors and so on) in Amsterdam on the 15th, 16th and 17th of September. It will be in the old Stock Exchange (De Buers van Berlage) in the centre of Amsterdam and has been organised by the bookshop Het Fort van Sjakoo which is at Jodenbreestraat 24, Amsterdam. There will be over a hundred stalls from twenty different countries and there are four related exhibitions from the 12th to 23rd September. All welcome. For more information send a stamp to Phoenix Press, PO Box 824, London N1 9DL.

## LIBEL!

SOME readers will be aware of a recently published attack on our comrade Nicolas Walter. Undoubtedly, lawyers would characterise it as actionable, and all decent people would call it despicable. *Freedom* is in the dilemma of wanting to defend Nicolas against the libel, but not wanting to give free publicity to the perpetrator. So we are not publishing anything about it other than this short notice, but will send a copy of Nicolas's reply to anyone who sends for it, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope.

## Donations

WE FELT that a few words about the Freedom Magazine Fund and the Freedom Press Overheads Fund would not come amiss, both for the many new *Freedom* readers who would like to know more about the purpose of these funds, and for older comrades and friends who may have forgotten how important these funds are. They enable the day-to-day activities to continue.

**Freedom Magazine Fund** is to meet the deficit incurred when printing and postage costs exceed income and subscriptions (or if donations exceed the deficit, to expand the circulation by sending free copies to enquirers and others who may be interested, and perhaps advertising).

**Freedom Press Overheads Fund** is for rates, insurance, heating, telephone, advertising and all postal and other overheads incurred in running an office which deals with all mail orders, subscriptions to *Freedom* and *The Raven* as well as enquiries. None of these overheads are charged to either *Freedom* or the Bookshop. Aldgate Press the printers — another creation of the FFP — who have made such a success of the enterprise, share with Freedom Press the major items. Nevertheless Freedom Press still has to find £5,000 a year on overheads.

## Anarchist Forum

London Anarchist Forum will resume meetings when the Mary Ward Centre re-opens in September. Fridays at 8pm, Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Street, London WC1 (behind Southampton Row, opposite Russell Square). Forum people usually meet in the ground floor cafe beforehand.

September 29 — Introductory meeting: open discussion

October 6 — David Dane **The Future of Anarchism**

October 13 — Peter Neville, subject to be announced.

MID-JULY TO MID-AUGUST 1989

### Freedom Magazine Fund

Aylesbury PA £2.10; Clwydd SR £1; Wolverhampton JL £2; Seoul HKR £75; Vancouver JD £3.50; Castleford EPW £1.10; Newport NNF £1; Nottingham AH £2; London GW £6.

Total = £93.70

1989 TOTAL TO DATE = £869.76

### Freedom Press Overheads Fund

Stockport HR £1.05; Hull PJH £1; Lancaster JA £6; Abington MB £3.80; Heidelberg RS £5.83; Wolverhampton JL £3; Accrington PG £2.15; Seoul HKR £75; Vancouver JD £3.50; Nottingham AH £2.

Total = £103.33

1989 TOTAL TO DATE = £703.22

## Lee House closed

OUR comrades of Lee House have asked us to publish the following:

'Lee House Community Squat Centre is to be evicted at the end of August. We thank all those who supported Lee House and made it, at times, such a success. There are no immediate plans to carry on elsewhere, but those involved are still alive and involved in other things, the struggle continues.'

Squats inevitably have no security, but it is sad that Lee House has had to close after so short a time. In the few months of its existence, we know it had become a snack bar and meeting place for the young people of the area, a worthwhile thing in itself but also a way of spreading anarchist ideas favourably.

We commend our comrades for their energy, their generosity, and their effectiveness, and wish them the same success in any future undertakings.

Axel Hoch, confined to the house as the result of an accident, would welcome calls from comrades on 01-348 2761.

# Bookfair San Francisco 1989 Anarchist conference

This year's Anarchist Bookfair will be held on Saturday 7 October at the same venue as last year, Conway Hall. Anyone who wants to run a stall there and has not yet booked should urgently contact the organisers, New Anarchist Review (84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX) to find out if there is any space still available.

The cost of the Hall and publicity (£1,020 this year, up to the time of this notice going to press) is met by a charge of 10% of sales, against which stallholders pay a non-returnable deposit of £5 per half table at the time of booking.

This year the small hall has been booked as well, and can be used for meetings and workshops. Please contact NAR if you would like to use this facility.

Plans include a creche, video presentations, a social, a gig, a poster exhibition and more international publicity. If you can contribute to any of these, please contact NAR (unless your main aim is to exclude another group or individual, in which case you disqualify yourself as an organiser).

IS ANYBODY going to send us a report of the anarchist conference in San Francisco which ended on 26 July? All we know of it so far is a report in the *New York Times*, which tends to harp on a seemingly pointless riot in Berkeley, across the bay from San Francisco, on the last day.

'Berkeley police said that 300 people from the annual international convention threw stones and bottles, broke store windows, set trash fires and commandeered a Coca-Cola delivery truck. There were 30 arrests.'

The *New York Times* also tells us there was another demonstration in San Francisco itself, which was peaceful, and that the conference organisers were disappointed by the riot as they had hoped to improve the public image of anarchists. Joey Cain, one of the organisers, is quoted as saying: 'People think we're mad bombers in pointy hats and beards. We have to counteract that by showing that anarchists are responsible people.'

It seems there were 100 conference 'workshops', most of them in the courtyard of the Horace Mann School, plus a

'workshop' labelled 'Anarchy 101' for people from the neighbourhood who were curious to know what was going on. The number attending was more than 1,500.

Much of the rest of the *New York Times* report goes on about two distinct groups making up the anarchist movement — at one extreme the bearded elders versed in the works of Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, and at the other end the punk anarchists with pierced noses and partly shaven heads highlighted with fluorescent streaks. In the absence of a more horse's-mouth report, we think the *New York Times* correspondent may have been deceived by the apparent age-gap in the movement, which has been apparent since we were young ourselves — old comrades and young comrades separated by a shortage of anarchists in their thirties and forties (the ages when anarchists do not take part in time-consuming events because they are busy raising families). But we are ready to be corrected whenever your reports get here, comrades.

Freedom eds.



# Rivers of blood — oceans of tears

ON JUNE 4, the People's Liberation Army attacked unarmed demonstrators in Tiananmen Square with tanks and automatic weapons. According to different reports, 1,000 and 3,000 demonstrators were crushed beneath the treads of tanks or shot to death. But perhaps these numbers are too low as, according to press reports, the army attempted to disguise the number of its victims by crushing their bodies with tanks and then cremating the remains on the spot with flame-throwers.

Since then the Chinese regime has undertaken a propaganda offensive which would have filled Joseph Goebbels with admiration. The Chinese Communist regime now claims that no massacre took place, and that up to 1,000 of their heavily armed soldiers were murdered by the unarmed demonstrators.

Worse, thousands of the idealistic young people who opposed the corrupt, bureaucratic Communist regime have already been arrested in the repression which followed the massacre, many of them have been sentenced to death, and several have already been executed. The 'lucky' ones will undoubtedly spend many years in labour and 're-education' camps.

But while the events in China are disgusting, they should come as no great surprise. Bloody oppression of dissent is nothing new in the Communist world. In 1956 the popular uprising in Hungary was suppressed by Soviet tanks and thousands died.(1) In 1921 the Red Army, under the orders of Lenin and Trotsky, murderously suppressed the revolt at the Kronstadt naval base, with thousands of casualties. Before the massacre Trotsky threatened 'we will shoot you down like partridges'. And his troops vigorously carried out his threat against the revolutionary sailors.(2)

But Communist disregard for human life goes far beyond contempt for the life and liberty of opponents. It is institutionalised in the normal operations of Communist states. Incredible brutality has been employed routinely in pursuit of the objectives of the totalitarian elites who run these systems. In the late 1970s the Khmer Rouge converted Cambodia into a gigantic concentration camp and murdered between 1,000,000 and 3,000,000 of their own people. The murderous Mengistu regime in Ethiopia has killed hundreds of thousands in its war against Eritrea through bombardment of civilian targets and deliberate starvation of the civilian population, and it has shot thousands more in the chambers of its secret police. In the Soviet Union under Stalin, where in the 1930s a full one-

quarter of the adult population was in labour camps at any given time, 20,000,000 to 40,000,000 persons died — they were either executed, starved to death in deliberately induced famines, murdered in pogroms, or they succumbed to the hideous conditions in the camps.(3) Even Lenin — whom many marxists revere as a saint — was a conscienceless butcher. One of his first acts in office was the setting up of the secret police, the Cheka (now the KGB), and under his regime somewhere between 200,000 and 1,500,000 persons were executed. (4, 5)

## Why such atrocities?

The reason for these monstrosities is not difficult to find. It is inherent in leninist dogma. The doctrine of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the idea that a 'vanguard' party should hold a monopoly on political power and that its will is that of 'the people', is the bedrock of marxist-leninism. The achievement and maintenance of a monopoly on political power is the number one priority of all marxist-leninist parties, so it comes as no surprise that once in power they mercilessly crush — when they are able — any and all attempts to challenge their authority. They are guided by dogma rather than ethics, and they operate under the principle that the ends (control, political power) justify the means, no matter how bloody.

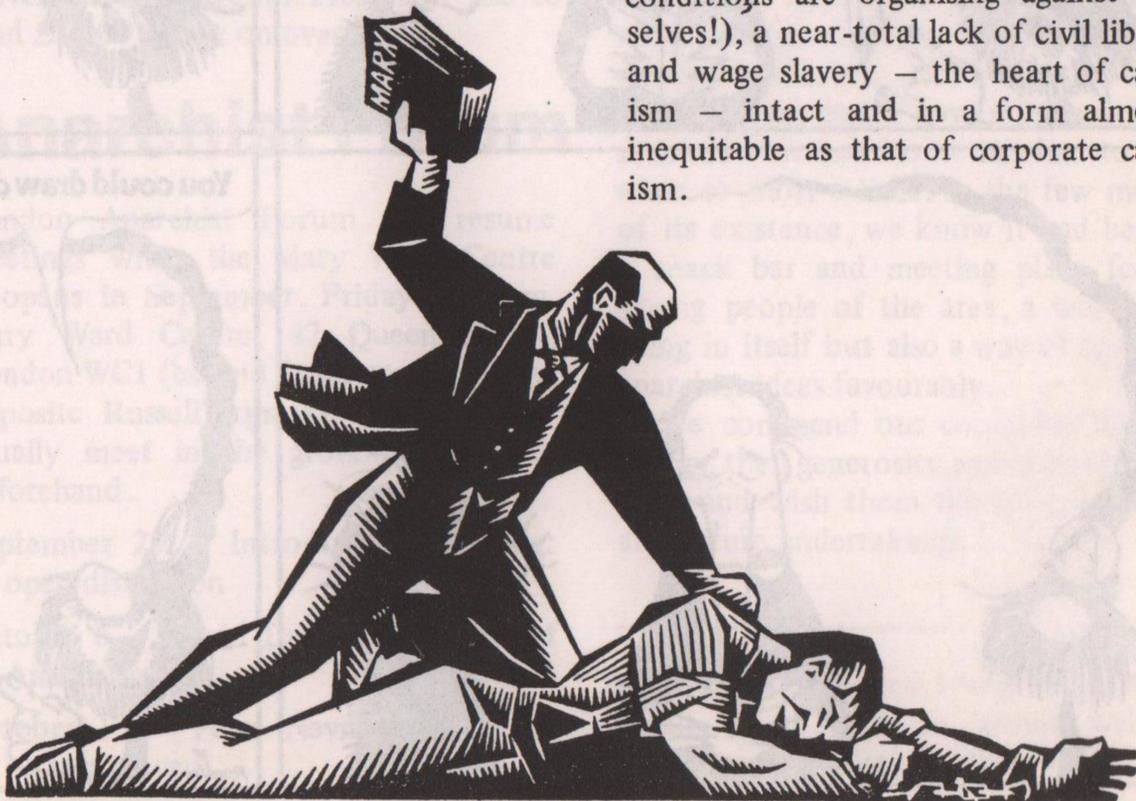
The theoretical justification for this authoritarian dogma — that the will of the party is the will of the people — is patently insane. This despicable doctrine doesn't even rest directly on the highly questionable idea of majoritarianism. (Does murder in an imperialist war, for instance, become a moral act if the war is approved by a majority of the population — as most wars are?)

Instead, it rests on pure assertion. Somehow, magically, the will of the party bureaucrats, secret police, military brass, and professional politicians is identical to that of the working masses. This idea is on a par with the Catholic Church's doctrine of transubstantiation (that when the priest whispers his mumbo jumbo over the bread and the wine it magically becomes the body and blood of Jesus Christ).

One would expect that those setting up brutal dictatorships and committing mass murder would have better justification for their actions than this. But they don't. All of the tentacles of the Communist repressive apparatus sprout from the dogma of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat — the secret police, prisons, labour camps, psychiatric commitment of dissidents, a goose-stepping swollen military, party control of labour unions and the communications media, etc., etc. The insatiable desire of Communist bureaucrats for CONTROL of all aspects of life is no aberration. It is a direct result of their acceptance of majoritarianism as an unqualified principle — might makes right — and their insane assertion that their will is that of the working masses.

## But does the system deliver?

What makes this even worse is that wherever they have achieved power, Communist elites have miserably failed to deliver the goods they've promised. Instead of communism — 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs' — they have delivered a particularly vicious form of capitalism: state capitalism, with a privileged ruling elite, brutal suppression of independent labour unions (because, according to leninist theology, workers who organise independent unions to improve working conditions are organising against themselves!), a near-total lack of civil liberties, and wage slavery — the heart of capitalism — intact and in a form almost as inequitable as that of corporate capitalism.



True, income inequalities under state capitalism are not quite as extreme as under corporate capitalism. But rivers of blood, bodies stacked like cordwood, and concentration camps filled with political prisoners seem like a hell of a price to pay for this slight narrowing of the gap between rich and poor.(6)

But, and this is the final irony, Communist economic systems function so poorly that their ruling elites have begun reintroducing major elements of private capitalism in their efforts to rescue their floundering economies from total collapse. This has led, among other things, to millionaire entrepreneurs being granted membership in the Chinese Communist Party.

The economies of Communist countries lacking millionaire 'comrades' are perhaps in even worse shape than those experimenting with overt capitalism. The Cuban ruling elite has probably been the most recalcitrant of any in the Communist bloc about introducing Gorbachev-style capitalist 'reforms' into its economy. And Cuba is an economic basket case, plagued by worker absenteeism and low productivity. (El Caudillo himself, Fidel, has ranted and raved for hours on Cuban TV and radio about Cuba's unproductive work force.) At present, the Cuban economy is kept afloat only by an annual subsidy of \$5 billion from the Soviets — 30 years after Castro took power, and at a time when a large majority of the Cuban people have never lived under any system other than Castro-style 'communism'

That the Cuban Communist regime has failed should come as no surprise. All leninist regimes have been failures.

In terms of providing for the needs of their peoples and in allowing human happiness, they have been even less successful than their social democratic brethren. In countries such as Sweden and Denmark the social democratic form of 'socialism' has at least provided a few significant reforms to sugar coat the bitter pill of wage slavery, while retaining the 'bourgeois civil liberties' so despised by leninists.

Marxism has had over 70 years to accomplish the task, and NONE of the 57 varieties of marxists to hold political power (social democrats, leninists, stalinists, maoists — even the trots had a shot at it in Ceylon in the 1970s) have created anything remotely approaching a free, equalitarian society. At best (the social democrats) they've delivered a few reforms. At worst (leninists, maoists and stalinists) they've delivered secret police, prisons, forced labour camps, show trials, summary executions, a low standard of living, a vice-like grip upon all facets of social life, and corpses festering in mass graves. All of these hideous things are a direct outgrowth of leninist dogma —



that power must be achieved and maintained at any price.(7)

It is long past time for all honest political progressives to recognise leninism for the dead-end that it is. It is long past the time to renounce the belief that 'in order to free the masses of the people, they have first to be enslaved!'(8)

#### Is a free and equal society possible?

Yes, we believe it is, though it will never be achieved by leninist regimes. Instead, it must be achieved under principles diametrically opposed to those of leninism. Leninists believe that the ends justify the means. We believe that means determines ends.

The leninist path leads to dictatorship, centralisation, and suppression of individual rights. This approach has clearly failed. We believe that it is time to follow the less explored paths of self-management — direct democratic control of our communities and workplaces — decentralisation, federalism, and respect for the equal freedom of all persons.

There is no guarantee that such an approach will bring about a free and equal society — though we believe it will — but it is absolutely certain that marxism-leninism will not bring it about.

Chaz Bufe

1. See *Hungary 1956* by Andy Anderson.
2. See *Kronstadt* by Ida Mett, and *The Unknown Revolution* by Voline (E. K. Eichenbaum).
3. See *The Time of Stalin* by Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko.
4. See *The Guillotine at Work* by G. P. Maximoff, and Voline, op. cit.
5. The exact number of victims cited in all of the above instances is inexact. What is certain is that multitudes were

murdered in every instance cited. What is equally certain is that many marxists would rush to challenge these numbers. Nothing demonstrates the moral degradation of these leftists more than their eagerness to quibble about the numbers of victims of their dictator-heroes. They actually seem to feel that it's a point in favour of the totalitarian systems they admire that information in Communist societies is so tightly controlled that it's difficult to make accurate estimates of the numbers of victims.

6. It speaks volumes of the moral poverty and clouded vision of many leftists that they support brutal, authoritarian regimes, 'existing socialism', because they display a veneer of social reforms over a foundation of privilege, prisons, and executions. To these deluded souls, socialism consists of a herd of well fed — or equally emaciated — pigs under the staffs of what they stupidly imagine to be kindly shepherds.
7. Perhaps the crowning irony of 'revolutionary' marxism is that in North Korea, a particularly hard-line Communist country, government by hereditary monarchy has been reintroduced. In that unfortunate land, dictator Kim Il Sung has already designated his son, Kim Jong Il, as his heir to power.
8. Bakunin's sarcastic comment about marxist political aims in 'Critique of the Marxist Theory of the State' which he wrote over a century ago. See *Bakunin on Anarchy*, Sam Dolgoff editor/translator. [Or better, Bakunin's *Marxism, Freedom and the State*, editor and translator K. J. Kenafick, Freedom Press — eds.]

# Yugoslavia: a weak link in the anarchist chain

HAVING been in Yugoslavia for a year and made lots of contacts, I'd like to say a bit on the position of anarchism in this country. Encouraging news like that which can be heard from Poland and Hungary is unfortunately all too rare from Yugoslavia. We're dealing with a fairly rudimentary situation.

A search through the history of the Balkans, or at least of that part of the Balkan peninsula that is today within the state of Yugoslavia, reveals only limited traces of anarchism. Mention should be made of the old agrarian social structures with their peasant co-operatives and other traditions of mutual aid. But these can only be considered in context with the strong patriarchal relations, the domination of monotheist religion, and the ethnic/national preoccupations which here all too often boil over into blood-thirsty chauvinism. Anyway, industrialisation has removed almost all traces of these old libertarian elements, without damaging the nationalisms, patriarchy and religion.

Several other things of historical interest are a syndicalist propaganda group which was active in Belgrade shortly after the turn of the century (and about which recently an article appeared in the Zagreb sociological review *Pitjana*); a rural commune which existed in Slavonia (north central Yugoslavia), and a workers' soccer club before World War Two in Split, which called itself 'Anarchos' and apparently developed some elements of a popular anarchist culture.

The Yugoslav system of workers' control arouses quite a deal of interest. This so-called 'self-managed socialism' involves a considerable degree of decision-making independence in many thousands of enterprises and factories in all branches of the economy. This needs to be considered, however, in the overall framework of central control by the Yugoslav League of Communists. It seems that this widely-praised 'alternative model for socialism' with its economic (and to a certain extent cultural) decentralisation came about not on the basis of libertarian-type ideas but much more due to the decentralised settlement pattern and social diversity of the mountainous country. The stalinist party leadership couldn't create a centralised economy overnight. So in 1950 with the introduction of appropriate legislation, they yoked together the country into a framework of semi-autonomous workers' councils. (Which is quite a contradiction, no? You can be no more semi-autonomous than semi-pregnant . . .)

Most people will have heard of the

current Yugoslav crisis, marked for example by over 1000% skyrocketing inflation and a flaring-up of nationalist conflicts, linked with or triggered by an aggressive Serbian chauvinism under Milosevic (Serbian Party boss and President of that Republic). The official ideology has lost direction and admits it is in crisis. In the north west of the country many independent political groups are forming, largely on the model of Western liberal parties, and are increasingly searching for a share in political influence. Ideological control has diminished in the last few years and sections of the press are showing an openness and critical approach unknown in the last decades.

Although party domination and its ideology are rejected by large sections of the population verbally, the inherent culture of uncertainty and fear is not so easy to overcome. Almost everyone is a cynic, but almost no-one wants to become involved in alternative politics. I feel that the unstable economic situation and the plummet in living standards is strengthening this passivity. But other anarchists think differently. They say that the simple existence of a crisis in the country motivates people to change, that it will of itself generate resistance. (Strikes me as a mechanistically 'marxist'-type view.)

Anarchists in Yugoslavia are few and far between. There are no firm groups, but there is a loose network of individuals in the cities Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. Recently a 'Tertiary-school Alliance of Anti-Yugoslav Anarchists' (AAAA) was formed in Ljubljana, but I don't know much about it yet. A Zagreb comrade said the founding of the group was just

meant as a joke. Some anarchists are involved in wimmin's groups, peace groups and ecological initiatives like SVARUN in Zagreb. The anarchists tend to be young, most are tertiary-educated or are currently studying. Some classical anarchist literature has been translated into Serbo-Croat and Slovenian, but it seems that there is virtually nothing modern and/or popular, e.g. situationist texts, power analysis, anarchist comics, etc.

I think it's particularly important to help develop syndicalism in Yugoslavia. During my contacts with anarchists here I've noticed an almost total absence of syndicalist inclination. The current transition to classically capitalist economic structures without elements of self-management will probably lead to extreme exploitation (like in the South East Asian 'Free Trade Zone'?) unless there are strong workers' defence organisations. But there are sporadic positive signs, like the refusal earlier this year by train drivers in Slovenia to pay dues to the official union. From this it's a step further to cancelling membership and forming independent worker-controlled unions which will advance the interests of members, not those of the state or corporations.

In several conversations it was stressed to me how important it is to send anarchist books and magazines. Anarchist material is hard to obtain in Yugoslavia, not least because the average monthly wage is below \$200 and costs of living are relatively high. Even more important, one anarchist emphasised, is providing financial support so that activists can come abroad and experience a personal exchange of ideas and emotions impossible on paper. In this regard I think a good example has been set by the US anarchists who planned to invite some Polish comrades to the big gathering in San Francisco in July 1989.

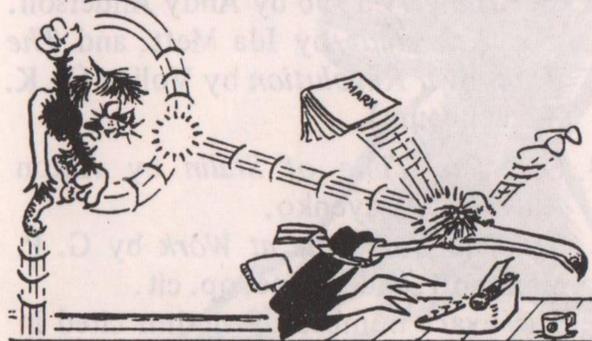
I speak Serbo-Croat and Macedonian and can read Slovenian. If you're looking for a co-worker on any anarchist project relating to Yugoslavia, drop me a line. My address in Australia may seem a long way away, but remember there are many migrant workers and refugees there from Yugoslavia. Here is my address: c/o 1 Holder Street, Turner, ACT 2601, Australia.

Will Firth

[*Freedom* editors, with our usual caution, have omitted names and addresses from this article. It is safer if those wishing to communicate with Yugoslav comrades write to Will Firth first — Eds.]

## WILDCAT STRIKES AGAIN

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



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

# Support your local anarchist group

Attending a meeting of the Anarchist Research Group on Saturday 8 July 1989, I heard David Goodway give a stimulating talk on 'Anarchism and Intellectuals: the case of Herbert Read and Alex Comfort'.

David mentioned that although they had published a number of his works, Herbert Read had been dismayed that the anarchists in Freedom Press would never do much to achieve the anarchist revolution. This led to a general discussion of the role of intellectuals in the anarchist movement and being in a quixotic mood I mentioned a friend who finding a well-known anarchist teaching in his university department approached her with the suggestion they should get together to propagandise the ideas in the university, with a completely negative result. I noted one of the ARG members sitting there had been around in Birmingham University when I was secretary of the Birmingham Anarchist Group. I gently pointed out that, with respect, this comrade had never, to my knowledge, attended a single meeting of the then Birmingham Anarchist Group. Intellectuals often provided a vehicle for our thinking but never met us in the flesh.

Why I said this was not to put anyone on the spot but because being long in the tooth I am often asked by younger anarchists 'you were around in the year dot, did you ever meet (well, if not the founding fathers of anarchism, I'm not that old) these public figures who wrote about anarchism'. I usually have to answer 'no' and usually add a suffix 'well I was active in the provinces', but I have a thought that even if I had been in London it would not have made much difference. There are anarchist movements and anarchist movements rather like layers of skin in an onion. London particularly is prone to splits and factions which frequently continue long after the people who originally quarrelled have moved on.

The members of the Anarchist Research Group hotly protested either they were involved in other groups or that they found the activities of many so-called anarchist groups frankly embarrassing and give a number of instances, which I think was David Goodway's point about Herbert Read.

Looking back over my past life, always dangerous either because there are so many gaps in one's memory or because one has lost one's time sense related to a sequence of events, I tried to visualise how I felt about intellectuals. Firstly I would probably not be a conscious anarchist were it not for intellectuals, especially Herbert Read's works, as these introduced me to anarchism.

Very few comrades of my acquaintance, except the late Alan Albon, lived anarchist lives, and even he not all the time. We mainly live the same lives as anyone else but see ourselves as different to others in that we think anarchist ideas and express them to others to try and mitigate the stresses society imposes on us. Oh yes, and we have out ideals about relationships, events and places and we take up causes and call this activity.

Some of us believe this makes us more virtuous than others, especially if we link it to a few ideas to which we pretend to rigidly adhere, call ourselves a name and publish a paper. There is no evidence that makes us happier, better people or more effective. Most real activists of my acquaintance do not rigidly adhere to ideas, do not need to call themselves names or publish a paper. All they need to do is do it. I keep telling people who want to be activists it is quite simple — you just decide what you want to do, the way to do it, and then you put one foot in front of the other. You do not need groups, position papers or a publication. But it may be nice to meet other people of near enough like mind. Which is a good reason for supporting your local anarchist group.

So what must an anarchist group be and do to encourage others to join in? Well, the first things that need to be thrown out of the window are the position papers or the demands by the authoritarians in our midst that we all rigidly follow the line or, more precisely, pass a motion that says that this is what we do, whether we do it or not. A cross fertilisation of ideas is crucial.

And if you are into getting or selling publications then take a broad range. When I was in a regional anarchist group in Birmingham in the '60s we sold *Freedom*, *Peace News*, *Solidarity*, *Resistance* and so on. We did not necessarily agree with all the contents of all the papers or every issue, but we rejected censorship. When I go to some anarchist meetings in London the groups appear to rigidly sell only their own publications, although they monotonously claim a 'right of reply' when papers such as *Freedom* say something they dislike. They, of course, have never been known to give this right to others.

Another thing is the element of trust, of acceptance of how others are and from this of support. One should not do things which might deliberately upset others, although people have to be understanding here.

Some groups, like the London Anarchist Forum, are largely discussion groups exploring and trying to extend anarchist theory and relate this to practi-

calities. People accuse us of lacking activity although most of us have full-time jobs, are active in our unions or voluntary bodies, regularly attend others' meetings and conferences and report back to the movement. Other groups do things. I am active in my union — have held most offices and am currently health & safety representative. I hold offices in three groups concerned with sociology teaching. I am a director of our residents' association and am a member of over a dozen other bodies. I am constantly accused of not being an activist. My, my, I have the feeling many so-called activists are essentially non-joiners who want to attach themselves to an 'active' group to feel virtuous whilst doing practically nothing.

So in conclusion may I say join in with other anarchists in things of common interest. Do not expect if you have just joined the group they will all be supporting your interest. You have got to work on them. Oh yes, and do expect whichever sex you are that people may take an interest in you personally or sexually or both. That's instinctive. It's how society reproduces itself. But establish a space for yourself personally. Most people behave honourably if you treat them with respect. They only get intrigued and vexatious if you make things too much of a mystery.

Peter Neville

## Plastic Willies Seized

TALKING of victimless crimes, a squad of policemen from Bow Street police station, London, raided Knutz, a joke shop in Covent Garden, at the end of July, ransacked the place for two hours, and confiscated 27 chocolate willies, 27 willie-shaped pencil rubbers, 24 willie-shaped clockwork runabout toys, 18 willie-shaped soaps, two willie-shaped toothpaste dispensers, and 107 willie-shaped water pistols.

Is a prosecution results, this will improve Bow Street's statistics in two ways. It will increase the number of reported offences in the area — thus proving the need for more policing — and it will increase the detection rate (the percentage of reported offences whose perpetrators are prosecuted) showing the police to be efficient.



# Poke your finger through a rainbow

WATCHING British politics is like witnessing a small child having an epileptic fit. The twitching and writhing may look practically terminal, but you know they are much the same as before. In the case of government, they have been happening ever since 1332, when Parliament divided into two houses. We should be grateful. Reshuffles of the Cabinet, when some talking heads are silenced only to be replaced by a new flavour of the week, happen to be the fuelling rods which heat up the views of us, the dissenters.

Put simply, and maybe naively, it matters little which faces Thatcher shoves into the various slots. Nor does it matter that major banks are detected fiddling the manipulation of massive amounts of money. We still remain a million miles away from the important matter of adapting production to needs. We are unable to provide houses for those who need them while the money markets kowtow to interest rates. People cannot afford high interest rates because the wage structure is depressed.

A few shafts of common sense are now appearing. In America the House of Representatives has already balked at the cost of a super new warplane which cheats radar traps. Russia, which has become Gorbachev's headache, is on the look out for a financial main chance in Europe, and even sends officials to conduct massive buying sprees in Britain and France. These are only two indications that the plight of the economic 'stumbling horse', as Khrushchev once called it, has been noticed.

Yet it is still not a very good idea to feel optimistic and think that mankind is finally seeing sense and improving to such an extent that restrictive political codes are being broken to try and benefit mankind. This is a song which has been sung too often. The Enterprise Culture, based on the widespread introduction of computers and information technology, focusses mainly on piddling little businesses which produce little more than gift shop tat. There is nothing akin to a steelworks or a shipyard rising from the ruins of a Britain in which the National Trust and theme parks have become an industry.

If a computer can be used for anything at all, it is a tool for making forecasts rather than guesstimates. What we now learn from it is that the education business will somehow fail to yield the skills which we may need in the next two or three decades. In the days of the Industrial Revolution the ruling classes sincerely believed that too much education was a dangerous thing. It may even lead to the production of thinking

adults who could overthrow the ruling classes. All that has changed, of course. It is now believed by otherwise sane and sensible people that technology, not bulk manpower, is the real answer to extending our trade frontiers. The idea has already been nipped in the bud by the multinationals and their worldwide pattern of assembly plants. In this new 'screwdriver culture', when factories in Britain and other countries simply put together a series of bits and pieces made elsewhere, education does not seem at all necessary, because the work is boringly simple. In many cases a gang of tranquilised chimpanzees — or robots — could do the job equally well. People are not needed.

Here is an odd fact. Money spent on education practically equals the money spent on industrial equipment. In industry



the dividend is much higher than in education, where the perversity of human nature often leads the individual to jack it all in and flee to another country for higher wages. When it comes to education we are just about treading water by bringing people up to the standard demanded by industry. We could just as well spend the same money on equipment, including the once-sacred cow of management.

'Investing in education' is yet another catch phrase which fails to take into account that we are dealing with human beings. Nowadays we pay very little attention to attitudes and how people actually feel about things. A pity. In the 1930s Arthur Labriola carried out a scientific survey of attitudes to work only to discover that the majority of people actively disliked and resented having to support themselves by selling their skills to others. Earlier, in 1909, Adolf Levenstein did a similar survey and found that workers actually hated the system and were even more militant in their loathing of the system. People viewed the business of 'making a living' as part of something large and ominous which could easily destroy them in the end. So here we are in the '80s with a structure of education which is determined by 'specialists' and, overtly, by the capitalist industrialists, and we are no further forward than we were in the '30s. We continue to produce young people who are patterned for

certain types of work, a few of whom will become managers while the rest stay on the lower perches. It all looks like a penal establishment with the difference that the inmates go home at the end of the day to that other prison, the mortgage-based house harnessed to the price of groceries.

Work remains unattractive because it seldom has a specific end in itself, apart from the taxed wage packet. This is the root cause of social unrest. When you put a stop to the wage packet, you also threaten the home. There is no buttress left to withstand dire letters from bank or building society. The advice doled out by the Citizens Advice Bureau cannot, in the final resort, halt the bailiffs. Fear, as the recent Dock Strike and the employer's big-stick tactics show, still reigns.

Ever since the recession numbers of people all over Britain have been attempting to create what D'Annunzio called 'effort without weariness'. He wanted to see work which could be understood and was a pleasure to do. Communal effort was most strongly marked in the Miners' Strike, when the women set up creches and communal feeding points. Public sympathy was marked by donations of food and money from all over the country. The will to create something together is always present. Even before the Miners' Strike many thousands of redundant people managed to set up their own centres and small enterprises in which resources and knowledge were pooled. At the same time the government and the banks perceived a main chance in currying favour and offering loans. Some people made the unfortunate mistake of allowing themselves to be seduced by the new Enterprise Culture and applied for grants. A Begging Bowl Culture was born and quickly taken up by the reformation of the Social Security rules, when applicants were told to apply to charities for handouts. Social Security as such melted down from a comfortable mountain to a little lump. A new sort of weariness was born because independence was lost.

This eggshell structure will shatter yet again. It always does. In the middle will be a lot of people aged between about 40 and 60 who once had their earning capacity halted by redundancy and the sack. A new generation will probably suffer the same fate. Like other generations, they will go on believing that their betters know better. They will pin their hopes on the idea that somebody, somewhere, can do something for them. What education does not explain is that you can poke your finger through a rainbow only to discover that what seems to be reality is nothing more than very thin air.

Fred Oughton



# Fission Fusion Fossil

RUSSELL Gill is in danger of being a little simplistic when he says 'it is perfectly feasible to predict free energy for all'. Firstly, there is no such thing as a free lunch. Large scale water power means huge dams flooding vast tracts of (inhabited) land and, in the case of tidal power, the blocking of river mouths to fish such as salmon (although by-passes are possible). Wind power also needs very large areas ('wind farms') to produce a power station size output, and is very noisy and ugly. Wave power is not perfected, although it is obviously feasible for producing smallish amounts of electricity, and its grant has been stopped by British Nuclear Fuels' lobbying. All these 'green' options require a good deal of capital investment and probably compulsory purchase, while they are subject to the weather and severely limited in suitable areas. They are, at least, cheap to run.

Small generators are not necessarily the answer. Lots of small generators was the pattern before nationalisation, and it was made more efficient by making bigger ones with the 'supergrid' — many small generators would almost certainly increase the price per megawatt and the total capital required. I know several people who, of necessity, generate their own electricity and it is fraught with problems. In most cases a diesel generator has turned out to be best, which brings us back to square one.

Secondly, any economist would tell Russell Gill that the demand for a remotely useful product will, in the long run, be infinite if it is supplied free of charge. All environmental groups — and Norman Albon — are agreed that demand must be *reduced*, having been overstimulated by a low price. The state has held down the price as a way of subsidising industry from central taxation (1). If the consumer, mainly industry, had to pay the full cost the demand would be a fraction of its present level. If, that is, the CEGB not only ran at an 'economic profit' (2) but had to pay a real price for the land it uses, like ordinary mortals, and was not allowed to spew poison over the countryside (according to ordinary Western property rights, for what they

are worth), then it would be a very different story. Everything, including power stations, would be incredibly efficient — remember American cars before the oil crisis?

Ironically, privatisation will finish off the (much reduced) direct subsidy, and may allow politicians to make slightly more zealous noises about pollution. But the generating companies' right to cover the UK with poison factories and chemical dumps at will, will like that of British Rail and coal, remain.

In a free society, 'collective' can perhaps be substituted for 'private' property rights, but the economics is the same.

Joseph Alexander

## Notes

1. As industry pays for a much smaller percentage of tax revenue than it uses of total electricity output, its costs can be reduced while not taking as much away in tax. Not only does this stimulate employment, but it is protectionist in an invisible way — other countries' industry may have higher costs. The poor used to be in the same category, but since the tax 'reforms' this is less so.
2. The return of capital at which point it is worth taking your money out of the bank.

RUSSELL GILL agrees about the problems of energy use and raises the important question of what to do about it. I agree with the editors that voting for any party is not a solution. Ecologists (including a few anarchists) have performed a useful service by drawing attention to these problems of environmental exploitation.

When discussing the Green Party, we need credible alternatives established by both discussion and experience. We should not be too rigid about ways of freely organising society and have before us environmental problems.

Donald Room writes about misleading observations and gives examples; I had left out such discussion because it would have taken a lot of space. It is

impossible to be certain about small, slow changes in processes so complex and variable as climate or to always establish cause and effect. There is a risk of being wrong; in this case any remedy would only slowly take effect and perhaps be too late.

Donald also notes that people take up bandwagons out of self interest. Perhaps this is accentuated by our present sort of society.

Norman Albon

## Mixed economy

REGARDING JG's article 'Thinking About Economics' in the July edition of *Freedom*, I agree with the author's assertion that any libertarian society will have a 'mixed economy' — collectivist/co-operative, communist and small capitalist. Each sector has its own advantages and disadvantages. What I wish to point out is that discussions of 'after the revolution' are, at least, incomplete and possibly entirely beside the point.

Revolution in an advanced industrial society is highly improbable. Given present psychological and organisational conditions such an event would even be highly undesirable. A libertarian outcome is even more likely than revolution itself.

Discussion of economics is indeed an important anarchist activity. The desire of many to shy away from the topic is motivated by a barely concealed desire to create a nice 'superior' closed sub-culture, a mutual admiration society that has more in common with a religious sect than with a political movement. Those who wish to see anarchism become a movement rather than an emporium of identity have the task of proposing things that have at least a small chance of success in the near future.

The field is wide open if there were people willing to grasp opportunity. A skillful mixture of policies could attract support from both right and left and would put anarchists in the position of speaking to a potential majority. The appeal to the emotions of the right would be via tax reductions. Deductions to



# Even worse

certain things should be not only tax deductible but 'deductible from taxes'. The appeal to the left would be the stepwise goals whereby finances were diverted from the state to worthy causes.

Special tax breaks for producer co-operatives should be advocated. Donations to community based service agencies should be an alternative to state taxation. Well thought out ecological projects (how about 'trees instead of bombs and bureaucrats?') could be pressed for. The list is endless.

All these demands could link together in what would be essentially a gradualist approach to a libertarian society. Their piecemeal, relatively low risk, nature would be more likely to appeal to the average person than apocalyptic visions of 'The Revolution' or the incestuous strivings of closed subcultures towards self perfection. What is also important is that practice in trying, for a change, to appeal to a majority might be a salutary lesson for some among us whose basic criteria for what to support seems to be whatever is most exotic.

It would be nice to expand the communist sector of our economy. Libraries are a present day example of such economics. An emphasis on the here and now might not be as exciting as revolutionary dreams, but it will produce a balanced and enduring movement. There is room to 'libertarianise' large portions of the collectivist / co-operative and capitalist sectors. The overriding point is that any proposals must be practical and possible.

Pat Murtagh

## FIGHTING THE REVOLUTION

TWO pamphlets with this title are among Freedom Press publications.

*Fighting the Revolution 1* includes biographies of Nestor Makhno, Buenaventura Durruti, and Emiliano Zapata, who led anarchist fighters in the revolutions of Ukraine, Spain, and Mexico respectively.

*Fighting the Revolution 2* includes essays by Kropotkin not published elsewhere, with short pieces by Louise Michel and Elisee Reclus.

**Fighting the Revolution 1** £1.00  
**Fighting the Revolution 2** £1.20  
 post free from Freedom Press Bookshop

In spite of all the horrors for which the state is responsible, there is little reason to believe that getting rid of it would be enough, by itself, to bring the reign of sweetness and light. The Italian authorities are reported to admit that Sicily and parts of southern Italy are no longer under state control, but the people there do not spend their time dancing in the village square. The mafia are reported to have taken over, with drug dealing, kidnapping and protection rackets flourishing. Ninety percent of the young people in the area are unemployed. To quote one inhabitant: 'Now every village has a duce and we live in terror and poverty' (*Sunday Times*, 18 June 1989).

History leads us to expect something of the sort. The period before the rise of the centralised state was not a time of free peasant communities but what Europe knew as the feudal age, each district under a dominant warrior with his band of armed retainers — a *capioso* with no overlapping power to be brought against him, almost literally a 'duce' in every village.

The ultimate aim of communism, that the state should wither away, and the anarchist objective, to do away with it now, both rest on an unspoken condition: that the great majority of people should change their behaviour, coming to act in matters of ownership as members of a community rather than as self-interested individuals, and in political affairs as independent beings seeking neither submission nor domination. Given that change, the state disappears of itself — without it, the alternative to the state seems likely to be something worse.

George Walford

## TONY EARNSHAW'S VIEW FROM THE BACK OF TOWN



An old acquaintance caught his eye,  
 on the way from The House.

## REVIEWS



### Caught Looking: Feminism, Pornography and Censorship

The Real Comet Press, 3131 Western Avenue, Seattle, Washington, USA. 1988, £9.00.

### The Myth of the British Monarchy

Edgar Wilson

The Journeyman Press Ltd., London, £5.95

WHEN reluctantly called upon to review, the reviewer must feel that either they are unworthy of the work under review or that the work is unworthy of them. I, as always, fall with a disarming pratfall into the first category, for my sympathy is ever with the artist, the poet or the writer, for who are you to damn creation no matter how flawed. But, God knows why, the reviewer must give an honest opinion.

For *Caught Looking* I can have nothing but praise. This is the second edition of this plush American magazine and is the production of eight women who protest against our world-wide shrinking personal liberties. *Caught Looking* flowered from a collection of 1978-86 essays compiled by the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce. In 1986 the American Supreme Court invalidated the Indianapolis anti-pornography ordinance and a group of American women decided to do battle with the world's self-elected censors of our minds by producing a 'pornographic collection that would itself have to run the gauntlet of potential censors'.

We live out our lives surrounded by those people who try to compensate for their own inadequacies by calling upon the armed forces of the state to impose their trapped opinions on their fellows ('fellow: one associated with another, comrade, congenial companion' — *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*). They call upon the state to burn books, close bookshops, hound dogs, destroy pigeons, murder writers, veil women, castrate the language of our fathers, chase the hunter chasing the fox, patronise people of different racial backgrounds, and all in

the cause of their own tainted morality, for no-one ever harmed their fellow without a valid moral reason. *Caught Looking's* 98 pages are filled with reproductions of old time 'filthy photographs' when dog-eared and thumbed they were passed around with all the guilty excitement. Age destroys the appetite for primitive 'filth', and the digestion cannot take cream cakes and Coca Cola, and the loss is ours. But damn the aged who sneer at the young for enjoying these basic pleasures. Sweden ruined the pornographic industry by mass circulation and legality, and those who would ban the 'filthy' book or photograph will, unwittingly, return the dirty book and postcard to the young bucks supping of that underground world of art and literature that mocked the state and church.

*Caught Looking* carries many well-argued essays, but one knows that it is the large number of reproduced hard-core 'filthy' photographs that will raise the eyebrow, call for the sneer, disgust, contempt, legal harassment and book burning by our commissars of what we should think, read, view, say, write, eat, and in that literal end, finally shit.

In one long generation we have lived through the Victorian councillors sitting in the music halls writing down, for legal prosecution, the dirty joke, the disgusting women handing out white feathers in World War One, the state trials of major and minor works of art, the organisers of Violence in Art themselves standing in the dock at the Old Bailey, this witch-hunting rabble seeking violence in the children's comics, always on the hunt, yet it would seem to me equally — nay, more so — obsessed with the very sexual mores for which they call upon the state to imprison their fellows. One waits for the great protests against the British sweat shops wherein ethnic minorities work out their long days, but one assumes it does not have the erotic pleasure of hunting down the 'dirty' magazine.

One reads that a major political organisation that shall be nameless — hi Jeff — has forwarded a resolution for 'Affiliation to Anti-Pornography Cam-

paign' and this, my fellows, in an area that banned the newspapers in the reading room of the public library for political reasons, tried to get a theatre with a national reputation to ban its play, again for political reasons, and now wants to go into the pornography hunt. Fellows, you are in bad company. To me art begins when the imagination seeks to become visual by using a twig to draw the image in the dust, writing is the first attempt to communicate by signs on the cave wall, music by tapping pebbles to seek a rhythm, and who dare stand and condemn or censor it. I can stand the vegetarian high on lettuce scowling at my sausage, and if a group of nuns or women traffic wardens wolf whistle me as I walk by I automatically finger my flies to see if they are closed, and walk on happy with their applause. And I can understand those of either sex who might be annoyed by it, but when some intellectual opponent calls me a fat cunt or a bald twat I accept it as a thing of little importance for I know that he knows that I have won the debate.

The old cliché comes up 'shouldn't we ban the Nazi filth?', and fellows, I cry 'no, no, no', for in that ol' final analysis the struggle for the free mind against your censorships will end in physical struggle, and as the Berlin communists lined up with the Berlin Nazis in 1933, united in their hatred of freedom, so you who dare not accept the free mind and free communication must in the end line up with the jailers of the state. For you demand that they enforce your obscene demands, and 20,000,000 'dead paid your price'.

It is left to Edgar Wilson to fly the ribboned banner of lost causes as with the ghost of Tom Paine he demands the abolition of the British monarchy. As a one-time card-carrying member of the Flat Earth Society and one who long, long ago enjoyed reading and accepting exposes of the evil lives of the Popes, is there Atalantis, things from outer space, and who really killed Kennedy, I have always been the seeker and the cynic, and Wilson's book is for the young student radical honed on the French revolution. The British monarchy do me no harm and like the unfortunate Duke of Windsor, whom the Tory politicians sacked, I do not believe that they have any political clout. I like a military band, Fergie's legs, Anne's hooter and Philip's faux pas, and I have no desire for the next OAP meeting to be held in Buckingham Palace.

If a society wishes to feed them, clothe them and house them for the pleasure they derive from them, then good luck, and all I ask in return for my acquiescence is my free libraries, art galleries, OAP bus pass — or in other words, each to their own. Viva *Caught Looking*.

Arthur Moyse

## The Great French Revolution

Peter Kropotkin

Translated by N. F. Dryhurst  
Elephant Editions, paperback, two vols.,  
£3.95 each

Black Rose Books, Freedom Press, paper-  
back £11.50

KROPOTKIN'S book on the French Revolution was his most important historical work, and is also one of the best examples of anarchist historiography, though it is too much of a narrative and it stops too abruptly at the fall of the Jacobin dictatorship in 1794. It was first published in 1909 in France, and then immediately appeared on both sides of the Atlantic in a rather clumsy English translation by Kropotkin's friend Nannie Dryhurst (with the uncredited help of Kropotkin's daughter Alexandra). Several other translations followed, and also occasional new editions in English.

Some of the translations were significant because they incorporated various revisions by Kropotkin — notably the Italian one of 1911 (which was done by Mussolini, still a revolutionary socialist in need of money), the Russian ones of 1914 and 1919, and then the later one of 1979 (which was followed by others in

Eastern Europe), and the French one of 1989 (which is introduced by Heiner Becker). One odd thing about the book is that while it has of course been widely read by anarchists, it has been surprisingly popular among Marxists, even since Lenin praised it highly, and it has been taken much more seriously in Communist countries than in the West, where it has been almost ignored by professional historians of the subject.

The new editions in English have been less significant, since they all reproduce the original text without any alterations, but they are convenient when the old ones are elusive and they contain various editorial additions. One with a Foreword extracted from the biography of Kropotkin by George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic and an anonymous biographical Note was published in 1971 by Schocken Books in the United States and by Orbach & Chambers in Britain. Another with an Introduction by Alfredo Bonanno (and a nice cover design by Clifford Harper) was published in the Anarchist Pocketbook series by Elephant Editions in 1986. Now there is a new one in the Black Rose collected edition of Kropotkin's works with introductions by George Woodcock (the first two were reviewed here in May 1989), neatly

timed to coincide with the bicentenary of the beginning of the revolution.

Of the two editions still available, the Anarchist Pocketbooks edition is in two small cheap paperback volumes and the Black Rose edition is in one big expensive paperback volume. The actual text in each is the same, being reproduced from the original British edition of 1909, reduced in the former and slightly enlarged in the latter. Otherwise the only difference between them is their Introductions. Bonanno offers seven pages which are oddly expressed and clumsily translated, but stimulating and up to date, taking some account of later ideas by specialist historians and anarchist writers about both the course and the significance of the Revolution. Woodcock offers eighteen pages which are well written and very readable, but completely ignore later work on the subject and the many historiographical and ideological problems raised by the book. As with the previous volumes in this edition, a valuable opportunity has been ignored, though the book is pleasant to read.

The main defect of all the editions so far, however, is their almost completely uncritical view of Kropotkin's work. The hard fact which none of them recognises is that he was not a reliable historian (just as he was not a reliable scientist). He approached the past of the human species (just as he approached the natural world in general), not in order to learn what the facts were and test his anarchist beliefs against them, but in order to find facts which would support his anarchist beliefs. He therefore looked at the French Revolution for signs of revolutionary populism and anarchist communism (just as he looked at biological and social evolution for signs of mutual aid and anarchist communism). Of course he found them, but he didn't consider the equally significant signs of counter-revolutionary populism and authoritarian communism, and he didn't confront the problem of the use of terror and the rise of dictatorship, which was one of the main effects of the French Revolution — and of its successors.

The French Revolution has had and still has enormous influence, for bad as well as for good, so libertarian discussion of it remains important. But Kropotkin's book is now very much out of date (he says nothing about women or slaves, for example) and while his interpretation was valuable eighty years ago for its emphasis on popular movements and direct action, which lie at the heart of anarchism, it is dangerous today for its acceptance of myths about 'the People' and 'the Revolution', which still infect the whole left. In general, Kropotkin's historicism and scientism represent an ambiguous legacy which the anarchist movement still hasn't shed. NW



Drawing by Cliff Harper

## 1989 WHITECHAPEL OPEN

Whitechapel Art Gallery, Whitechapel High Street, E1 7QX.

This year's open exhibition comprises of work by over 150 artists who work within East London, a traditional event going back over 50 years. The Whitechapel Open remains one of the most important indicators of trends in British art, not surprising when one considers that over 1,200 artists initially submit work for selection, making East London possibly the highest concentrated area for artists in Europe.

In conjunction with the Open Exhibition at the Whitechapel are Open Studio days at various premises throughout East London. This is in some ways much more rewarding than a trip round a gallery because it offers an opportunity to meet artists in their own studios. Not only is it a chance to discuss work in an informal atmosphere but also perhaps an opportunity to purchase works for much less than what you would normally be expected to pay in a commercial gallery. This is only the second year that the Open Studio visits are taking place, so it is worth encouraging people to visit them, since entry is free and there are no obligations to purchase. Since there are over 500 artists in 23 different locations taking part it is impossible to list all the information here, but interested parties should get in touch with either Isabelle King, Press Officer, or Debbie Duffin, Open Studio Co-ordinator, both c/o the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Tel: 01-377 5015.

Some of the artists whose work is in the Open Exhibition and are taking part in the Open Studio weekends are featured below.

### **Leslie Hakim-Dowek (born 1960, Beirut)**

A young artist from Lebanon who moved to London in 1975 at the beginning of the Civil War. As with most artists who find it difficult to adjust to life in exile whilst drawing inspiration from their homeland, Leslie is no exception and returns as and when the situation allows to recharge her 'creative' batteries. Quite naturally her early works were related to the situation in the Lebanon, featuring her Mr Man symbolising 'any man and every man, instigator but also victim of violence'. Then followed the Shrines or Meditation Boxes which look like icons but are concerned with the loss of our natural environment. Also at this time (the early '80s) written statements were added to the works (French being her preferred language) which gives them a collage/object feeling.

Leslie is currently working on three-dimensional wall pieces called Lost Flora. Visually and constructionally they look like icons or crosses but feature extinct or endangered species of flowers



Painting from the Le Bateau Ivre series by Hervé Constant

to symbolise the irrevocable decline of nature.

Her work is featured in the Whitechapel Open exhibition and her studio is in Richmond House, Richmond Road E8.

### **Saleem Arif (born 1949, India)**

The first thing that one notices about the works of Saleem are the bright and vivid colours, the variety and subtlety of images and symbols reflecting not only his Indian background but also his wide travel experiences. What may appear at first glance to be flat shapes and colours turns out to be more complex on examination, for each layer of paint/sand is built up often with various colours to provide a rich texture and surface. Very tactile!

The second feature is that there is no conventional framework — no squares, no oblongs or even frames. The works are often built in layers on top of one another and can be viewed from various angles to give different perspectives. Shapes which have been cut out of the work add a three-dimensional touch — having highlighted the edges around the 'missing' pieces they then become as important as the 'existing' pieces. An interesting feature of his work (which owes a nod in the direction of the old surrealists) is the use of overlapping images — where, for example in a piece of work such as Squaring the Circle (1984-86), although painted in different colours, part of the shape of a man becomes part of the horse and vice versa, it is also ambiguous as to whether the man is standing in or next to a large ceremonial dish. The range of works are full of symbols relating to his Islamic background — knives, birds, fish, dishes, etc. The media used in these paintings is sand and paint on muslin then fixed to paper, 15ft x 10ft not being an unusual size. Visit the Whitechapel or Saleem in his studio to discover the secret of how these works are mounted

on the walls. Saleem's studio is based at Britannia Works.

### **Hervé Constant (born 1951, Casablanca)**

Of all the artists I visited, Hervé's work is by far the most complex, most intriguing of the lot. Previous writers have been at pains to point out references to colour symbolism — red for male and generative, white for female and purity, yellow as desire (the passionate part of red), blue as the godly part of red (?). But this proves to be an unsatisfactory yardstick as Hervé himself admits the colours are interchangeable as befits changes in moods from one work to another. Other writers tend to stress the work as a form of autobiographical record, portraying his early theatrical days as an attempt to express human drama. On one of the two pieces of his work that I own entitled Self Portrait at Sea — a fine work in gouache and pastel featuring a piece of driftwood/human skull depending on your perception — the theatrical references are quite obvious! Alas poor Yorrick washed up on the beach.

For me the development of Hervé's paintings show an attempt to overcome problems inherent in communicating in the modern world. His early work was full of inanimate objects like wheels, chains, telephones, etc., whose immediate function became unclear and therefore took on a symbolic function. The later works have had texts accompanying them to act as some sort of stimuli. Hervé's preoccupation is with the poetry of Rimbaud, particularly *Le Bateau Ivre*. Most of Rimbaud's poetry was written between the ages of sixteen and nineteen so it expresses all the vigour and innocence of youth, remaining just as fresh today. It is expressly significant that Hervé should so clearly identify with the poetry of Rimbaud.

His studio is based at Martello Street.

**Francis Wright**



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