

# **Noam Chomsky**

**ON THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY IN**

# **HAITI**

**Murray Bookchin, Tony Gibson,  
Brian Morris, Denis Pym,  
Dachine Rainer, Nicolas Walter,  
and Jan Weryho write  
about various books**

**FREEDOM PRESS AND BLACK ROSE BOOKS**

**THE RAVEN**

**ANARCHIST  
QUARTERLY**

**28**

# **THE RAVEN anarchist quarterly** 28

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## Editorial Notes

Perhaps we should explain. After all, the last eighteen issues of *The Raven* have been on single topics and we have no intention of changing since it has meant that each issue is complete in itself and we have seen that there is a steady demand for individual issues.

This is not to say that the mixed issues 1-7 and 10 are not full of interesting and stimulating contributions. The decision was taken when we realised that regular publication could not depend on one editor (there was a gap of nine months between numbers 6 and 7) and that, as we pointed out in number 9, 'excellent as much of the material published in *The Raven* certainly is, it appeals in the main to academics and historians'. And we added our comment that 'for those of us who are engaged in anarchist propaganda, anarchist history is of relative importance except when it provides us with valuable lessons for the future'. In that same issue we also outlined the hoped-for future for *The Raven*: 'With these considerations in mind and starting with number 10, *The Raven* will no longer be a free-ranging bird consuming whatever it can pick up.'

And all concerned with the editing of the past eighteen issues of *The Raven* have each and all done their jobs more successfully than was proposed in the original programme. For having decided to clip the wings of our free-ranging *Raven* we added:

We are aiming to plan at least a year ahead, and approximately two-thirds of each 96-page issues will be on a particular subject. The other 32 pages will be 'unplanned' to a certain extent, in that we hope the planned material will produce contributions for publication. We also intend to have a regular book reviews section.

We must accept part of the blame for the fact that the 'topical' issues of *The Raven* have been filled by the particular 'topic' – even some issues of 100 pages – and the 32 'unplanned' pages have gone by the board. So, dear comrades and sympathetic readers, this issue makes up for the three issues which were so taken up with science (two), religion and fundamentalism that virtually not a page of the 32 which should have been 'unplanned' in each issue was taken up. *The Raven* 28 makes up for this omission with the whole of this issue 'unplanned' but, we hope you will agree, stimulating, controversial and topical.

Nicolas Walter, we thought, contributed as usual a thoroughgoing review of two major Freedom Press titles but only to *Freedom*, and

since no one has offered reviews for *The Raven* and as we received a vigorous criticism of Nicolas's review for *Freedom* which was not published, we thought that as many readers of *The Raven* are not readers of *Freedom* this was an ideal opportunity to acquaint them with the books by reprinting the Walter article, and two responses already published in *Freedom* as well as the unpublished response from our dear demanding poet Dachine Rainer.

Murray Bookchin's contribution will be welcomed by all. Perhaps the comment we can make is that almost inevitably those who make 'a name' for themselves as writers or activists even in the anarchist movement (alas) must accept personal attacks from critics. We leave it to readers to draw their conclusions from Murray Bookchin's 'meditations'.

Tony Gibson mentioned his intention of offering an article around the late Marie Louise Berneri's *Journey through Utopia* as we were all celebrating his eightieth birthday. He proudly displayed his cloth-bound edition as first published in 1950, assuming that it had long gone out of print! We have taken the liberty of editing the first five lines of his 'Anarchists and Utopia'. Not only, to our knowledge, were German, Italian and Spanish translations published but the original edition has been in print in this country, then in the USA and ever since in more than one printing by Freedom Press. We share Tony Gibson's enthusiasm for 'Anarchists and Utopia'!

We have also decided to publish our account of the Freedom Press/Black Rose Books saga; though late in day we believe it to be a document deserving inclusion in this issue of *The Raven* which deals above all with books.

The next issue should be on sale by mid-April, in time for the official celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the biggest massacre in world history, World War Two.

In the summer we are planning a new issue on 'The Land' – bearing in mind that now in this country alone some one million acres of good arable land have been compulsorily set aside by the EU and farmers paid handsomely to do nothing.

In the autumn we would like to publish a *Raven* on 'Federalism and Devolution' (as understood by anarchists, obviously!) and the winter *Raven* could well be on the burning questions of 'Economics, Unemployment and Capitalism'. Having given readers a list of subjects we are proposing to deal with we hope you will be inundating us with ideas and suggested contributions!

## Noam Chomsky

### Haiti: Democracy Restored

#### 1. *The anniversary celebration*

On 30th September the third anniversary of the military coup that overthrew the elected government of Haiti in 1991, jubilant crowds marched peacefully to celebrate the restoration of democracy, encouraged by the official US declaration that the right of peaceful demonstration would be protected by the 20,000 troops who had entered Haiti on 19th September under an agreement between former President Jimmy Carter and General Raoul Cédras. That was, in fact, one of the major goals of the US intervention to restore democracy, the press reported. The demonstrators were attacked, beaten bloody and scattered by armed gunmen. 'The bodies of dead Haitians keep piling up', one Western diplomat said, just as they had the day before when a grenade exploded at a celebration of the return of the elected mayor of Port-au-Prince. US officials complained 'that Haitian police could no longer be trusted to enforce law and order', the press reported, 'but would not say if US forces would assume responsibility'. 'It would be very difficult to rely on the police to provide security given the fact they haven't provided any security so far', US Embassy spokesman Stanley Schrager said, apparently surprised that the US-trained police are acting as they have always done in the past.

US combat troops were in the streets in force, but not to protect the demonstrators. 'Instead', John Kifner reported in the *New York Times*, 'the tanks, armoured vehicles and even two firetrucks were deployed along Avenue John Brown leading to the wealthy suburb of Pétionville, as if they were trying to protect the homes of Haiti's affluent, light-skinned elite should the poor of the slums and shanty towns try to charge uphill'. 'The only conceivable reason for this deployment appeared to be to protect commercial establishments and prevent any crowds from going up the hill toward the homes of the elite'.

US military spokesman Colonel Willey 'said the troops were positioned to form "a cordon so Haitian police could work on the

inner perimeter”’. And work they did. Haitian police joined with the paramilitary (FRAPH) gangs attacking the demonstrators, using their trucks for ‘loading up the armed men in civilian clothes by the FRAPH headquarters’ and then helping to scatter the demonstrators, ‘exchanging high-fives with the gunmen or giving them rides in their pickup trucks’.

A US military convoy did approach the site of the first attack on the demonstrators, where ‘at least eight bodies’ were counted by journalists. But, Kifner continued, they ‘quickly drove off, as did others that followed’, making it clear that US forces ‘would not provide protection to the marchers’ so that terror could proceed unhampered. US forces ‘were nowhere near the announced route of the march, from the Basilica of Notre Dame where a requiem mass was celebrated for the more than three thousand people whom human rights groups say were killed during military rule, to the city cemetery’. The troops are following White House orders. Explaining the continuing atrocities under US military occupation, commanding General Henry Shelton informed the press that he had been instructed by his superiors in Washington that ‘it is not our policy to intervene in law-and-order matters per se; that is a Haitian matter’. The problem, he said, is that Haitian police are ‘not trained in riot control’. The ‘level of civility that is here’, he explained, ‘is provided by the police and the military, which is under the control of General Cédras’. And by the inheritors of the Tontons Macoutes, who are to be controlled by the Haitian police with whom they exchange high-fives as they perform their common tasks.

FRAPH members interviewed by *Wall Street Journal* correspondents Helene Cooper and José de Cordoba said they had no problems with the American troops. While the attacks on the demonstrators are underway, one said, ‘US soldiers riding by on their Humvee armoured vehicles wave cheerfully to FRAPH members, who wave back’. At the 30th September anniversary march, the *Wall Street Journal* continues, ‘those Humvees, along with tanks and other armoured vehicles, staged a massive show of “presence” with the intention of containing the pro-Aristide demonstration to downtown, and addressing what appears to be the US’s principle fear: that mobs of President Aristide’s supporters will go on a rampage against wealthy Haitians and supporters of the military regime’. Back in Washington, Deputy Defence Secretary John Deutch ‘said US troops would use force to stop violence only when their own safety was assured’, though it seems

that exceptions will be allowed if 'the wealthy Haitians and supporters of the military regime' might be endangered by 'pro-Aristide mobs'.<sup>1</sup>

The *New York Times* reacted in its lead editorial on the day of Kifner's front-page story about the deployment of troops and its motives. It addressed one problem only: the danger that Clinton might 'meddle in the nation's political affairs' by using the CIA to promote Aristide. 'If President Aristide is as popular as the administration believes, he does not need the CIA's propaganda help', the editors observe. Perhaps they are thinking of the barrage of propaganda let loose via the leading CIA specialist on Latin America, Brian Latell, who contrasted the 'murderer and psychopath' Aristide with the model gentleman General Cédras, one of 'the most promising group of Haitian leaders to emerge since the Duvalier family', which is why Latell 'saw no evidence of oppressive rule' while Cédras's forces and their allies were slaughtering, torturing, raping and rampaging. 'The US should be wary about tying its own interests, and the safety of its troops, so closely to [Aristide's] cause', the editors added soberly.<sup>2</sup>

The *New York Times* editorial staff reflexively assume that the facts are what Washington declares them to be; the CIA is being used to promote Aristide, a dubious form of interference in another country's affairs, they warn. Others, less trusting, actually inquire. Once again showing what a serious journalist can do, Alan Nairn took the trouble to find out what Clinton's intelligence apparatus is really up to. One of the more benign figures he unearthed is Haitian-born Major Louis Kernisan, who served with the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) in Haiti from 1989 through 1991 and is now devising the plan to 'professionalise' Haiti's police – already professionalised by the same professionals, in the very recent past. Kernisan is much impressed by the impartial role of the army that has terrorised Haiti since it was established under the 1915-34 US military occupation, and by the murderous section chiefs, disbanded by Aristide in one of the moves that raised doubts about his democratic credentials. Kernisan is part of an FBI unit set up to train the security forces of Guatemala and El Salvador in 1986, with notable success. He anticipates mass detentions and other techniques of population control as the popular movements are reined in and the US restores to power 'the same folks as before, the five families that run the country, the military and the bourgeoisie'. Construction of yet another 'showcase of democracy' seems well underway. But that is the real world.<sup>3</sup>

The real world is described succinctly by 'a US official with extensive experience of Haiti', quoted in the *Boston Globe*. 'Aristide – slum priest, grass-roots activist, exponent of Libertarian Theology – “represents everything that CIA, DOD and FBI think they have been trying to protect this country against for the past fifty years”,' he said. They have not misunderstood their instructions from the executive branch, and the interests it represents.<sup>4</sup>

It is hard to imagine that Washington will permit such crass display of the class and power interests of the intervention, and its intent to subvert and eliminate any thought of democracy. Cosmetic changes will surely be needed, if only for the benefit of the doctrinal institutions, which have to have some peg, however fragile, on which to hang the official tales about 'idealism', 'good works', 'benevolent intentions', and the rest of the familiar ritual. Allowing FRAPH and the rest of the attaché-Macoute system to function freely will pose an eventual threat to the occupying forces themselves, though they have been given ample time to go underground with their weapons and organisational structure intact.

## 2. Dilemmas of power

The continuing state terror under the eyes of the US military forces reveals the 'riskiness of having the Pentagon rely on Haiti's police', *New York Times* correspondent Steven Greenhouse reported. The solution, the administration believes, 'is pressing prominent Aristide allies to warn people against provoking street violence' and urging that Parliament get down to serious business, beginning with the primary task: 'to pass an amnesty for the military – as promised in the Carter agreement'. That seems the most direct and reasonable way to deal with the difficulties caused by those who are provoking FRAPH and its police allies.

But there is a problem. Aristide continues to be slippery and evasive, despite the tutelage he has received in Washington. While some officials challenge 'the conventional wisdom of Aristide as a doctrinaire monomaniac', the *Boston Globe* reports, he 'is nonetheless showing some of his old ambiguity now': while calling for 'non-violence and reconciliation ... he has also been lukewarm to the idea of a blanket amnesty', still not unambiguously joining Washington, the media and political commentators generally in accepting the principle of complete impunity for murder, torture, rape and other atrocities. Untrustworthy as always, Aristide seems to be



hesitant about defying the plea of the major human rights organisations, the United Nations, the South African Judge who is chief prosecutor for the UN war-crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and his Australian deputy, and others who do not rise to such heights of Christian mercy as US elites, and who warn of the consequences for international human rights law if the criminals are informed that they can do their work with impunity.<sup>5</sup>

Recall that they were so informed in Haiti, from the start. Cédras, police chief Francois and the rest were informed with great clarity that they could continue their work of decimating the popular organisations, secure in the knowledge that when the time came for them to hand the work over to others, they would either be flown out on an American jet with what remained of the country's wealth in their pockets, like Somoza and Duvalier, or allowed to stay on in the rich suburbs enjoying the fruits of their labours and awaiting the next opportunity, which may not be too long delayed. Given such unambiguous assurances from on high, there never was the slightest reason for them to call a halt to the terrorist onslaught against the disobedient population – one of the many truisms that would be featured in a free and independent press.

The gangsters in charge know the routine as well as their Washington helpers. Guatemala, in many ways the model of successful counter-insurgency, is a case in point. Here, 'democracy' was officially restored by a combination of nazi-style violence with US support, combined with softer measures, minimal services organised by the conquerors: if you want your sick child to live, come to us, and maybe we'll help; work for us, and you have even better prospects. As the US arranged to displace the generals in Haiti, 'free elections' were held once again in Guatemala, which Washington has been nurturing as a 'showcase' for free market democracy for forty years. The winner was Rios Montt, a gentleman who would receive a welcome reception from Himmler and Beria, as he did from Ronald Reagan and the State Department, who hailed him as a man 'totally committed to democracy' while he was presiding over the slaughter of tens of thousands of people in the highlands, levelling some four hundred villages. In the recent elections, Rios Montt's party received about one third of the vote, enabling it to control the legislature along with the other right-wing pro-business party. About 80% of the population stayed away, including the indigenous people he targeted for destruction and the poor generally, who seem not to appreciate the freedoms we have won for them. Cédras and Francois may well

have drawn the obvious conclusions, even if commentators here did not.

It's easy to appreciate the dilemmas faced by policy-makers and respectable intellectuals. It is, indeed, 'risky' to rely on the chief instruments of terror to stop terror, but hard to see what the alternative is when faced with irrational and criminal adversaries: those who provoke violence by peacefully calling for democracy and freedom, and those who respond to the provocation. It is also a challenging task to reconcile truths of logic with what is taking place before our eyes. Thus 'the objective of the Haiti mission ... is certainly an honourable one', Anthony Lewis declares, from the outer limits of intolerable dissent. And this Certain Truth must somehow be reconciled with the sight of US forces deployed to protect the wealthy and privileged while the usual victims bleed in the streets and the usual torturers maintain 'the level of civility'. Furthermore, how are we to comprehend the remarkable fact that the US is carrying out the same policies it has pursued without change for two hundred years in Haiti, as it has elsewhere within the reach of its power? It's all very mysterious. One can see why the situation is regularly described as 'confusing', posing extraordinary dilemmas.<sup>6</sup>

There were other difficult tasks as the troops landed, and at the time of writing (early October) they have been handled with no little success. Three central doctrines have to be defended. First, the Clinton administration was appalled by the terror in Haiti. Second, it had become clear by 'last spring' that 'draconian economic sanctions would fail' so that stronger steps were needed to achieve the goal (Taylor Branch). And third, that goal is 'to create conditions favourable to constitutional democracy' (Branch). The third doctrine is too deeply entrenched to be open to discussion, so let us keep to the first two, which at least seem to have a factual flavour.

The first doctrine was elaborated by senior White House officials who informed the press that there is 'nothing more moving' than 'watching people being beaten', so that 'Mr Clinton and his aides had come to view such violence as both morally repugnant and politically unsustainable'. 'Four or five nights of it on television would have undone us politically', a senior administration official informed the press. These problems led to a 'level of concern within the administration ... so great that senior officials from several agencies meet twice a day to plot their public-relations strategy, White House officials said'.<sup>7</sup>

The dilemmas faced by the administration are clarified by comparison with other current example, say Colombia, where vast atrocities render ridiculous any thought of democracy; mere survival is enough of a problem for those who dare to raise their heads. But these atrocities are 'politically sustainable'. The press does not report the facts made public by the leading human rights organisations, church groups and others. The atrocities are not even 'morally repugnant', or so a rational observer would conclude. About half of US military aid for the hemisphere now goes to the state terrorists in Colombia, increasing under Clinton; and the man who presided over the worst terror in recent years took office as Secretary-General of the OAS just before US troops landed in Haiti, having achieved this post thanks to a White House power play that was accompanied by much public praise for his achievements.<sup>8</sup>

Let us turn to the second Truth, the failure of the draconian economic sanctions that was evident by last spring. As known to readers of *Z* magazine at least, the facts are radically different. As of last spring there had been no draconian economic sanctions. The Bush administration let it be known at once that the OAS sanctions announced in October 1991, shortly after the coup, were to be toothless. A few weeks later (4th February) Bush undermined the sanctions more explicitly, granting an 'exemption' to US enterprises. Trade continued at a substantial level through 1992, then increasing by 50% under Clinton, including purchases by the Federal government and a sharp increase in imports of food exports from Haiti. The facts were not totally suppressed in the mainstream. The Bush exemption of February 1992 was reported. In the *New York Times*, under the headline 'US Plans to Sharpen Focus of its Sanctions Against Haiti', correspondent Barbara Crossette explained that the administration would permit these violations of the embargo so as 'to punish anti-democratic forces and ease the plight of workers who lost jobs because of the ban on trade'. This 'fine tuning' is Washington's 'latest move' in its efforts to find 'more effective ways to hasten the collapse of what the administration calls an illegal government in Haiti'. Oddly, the 'fine tuning' was welcomed by the 'anti-democratic forces' who were punished by it, and bitterly denounced by the beneficiaries of our charitable impulses. Again, a bit 'confusing'.

Occasional later references did not entirely relieve the confusion. Thus the *Christian Science Monitor* explained that 'the Bush and Clinton administrations believed these [US-owned] companies were so vital to Haiti that they allowed them to continue operating during

the embargo'. While the vision of our benevolence brings tears to the eyes, nevertheless duller minds might wonder why only US-owned enterprises have the curious property of being so beneficial to the suffering people of Haiti, and why the reactions are so inconsistent with administration intent.<sup>9</sup>

Elsewhere too, one could find some hints that the embargo was less than 'draconian'. In fact, as of last spring, it was 'fine tuned' so as to leave the rich and their military associates pretty much untouched, though the undesirables suffered. It was only in late May 1994 that the Clinton administration even took formal steps to implement sanctions, always excluding the most privileged.<sup>10</sup>

As the troops landed on Monday 19th September, the task of maintaining the crucial doctrine became still more challenging. On Sunday the AP wires began running reports about the military intervention that every news desk in the country could see were of major significance, perhaps the most important of the week. Beginning Sunday, John Solomon reported leaks from an inquiry initiated by the US attorney's office a few days before the invasion. The documents released to AP revealed that sanctions had never been seriously applied at all. It is possible that the inquiry was launched in preparation for the intervention, under the same general rubric that led the press to highlight the murder of orphans, narcotrafficking and other atrocities that had previously remained at the margins or unreported.

According to documents provided to AP, the judicial inquiry focused on the most important evasion of the embargo, known to everyone watching Haiti: the import of oil. The three companies involved are Shell, Exxon and Texaco. The first two were able to pretend that subsidiaries elsewhere were violating the embargo, leaving poor Washington helpless. But Texaco lacked that pretext and was therefore bound by the Bush administration executive order of October 1991 banning its Haitian activities. The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) began monitoring Texaco's violation of the order immediately, noting that Texaco was providing both fuel and hard currency to the military junta. On 18th May 1992, OFAC issued an order for Texaco to 'cease and desist'. On the same day, Texaco executives spoke to Secretary of Treasury Nicholas Brady and OFAC director Richard Newcomb, who met with them the following day. Both Brady and Newcomb were informed that Texaco planned to evade the executive order by creating a 'blind trust' that would technically be responsible for the shipments; Deputy Secretary of

State Lawrence Eagleburger received the same information. Texaco asked OFAC for a ruling on this evasion. No response was received for eleven months, when OFAC advised the company that the device was illegal. By then, the operation was proceeding. Until at least mid-1993, OFAC alleges, Texaco stations 'illegally bought and distributed numerous tanker shipments of fuel from the junta either directly or through the blind trust'. A 1993 OFAC document reports at least 26 tanker shipments, 160 violations and millions of dollars paid to the junta by Texaco.

Newcomb informed his senior staff that he had been directed to drag his feet by Secretary of Treasury Brady. 'Brady told me to go slow on Texaco', Newcomb is quoted as saying in notes of a mid-1992 meeting. Surely Texaco executives were appraised. 'After three years and two administrations', AP continues 'Newcomb has yet to impose a fine or refer the matter to the US attorney's office for possible prosecution', though in September 1993 he 'put Texaco on notice that the government intends to fine the company'. 'Little has happened in the year since', the report continues.

In a July 1993 memo, after Aristide had been pressured to accept the Governor's Island compromise that Cédra's violated, OFAC policy chief John Roth wrote: 'Perhaps the selective and political side to OFAC's "strong enforcement" of the sanctions ... can be squared with some cosmic (but not widely known) foreign or domestic policy objectives vis-a-vis Haiti or Texaco'. Perhaps.

Illegal operations continued at least until the May 1994 decision to join in sanctions – making sure that plenty of loopholes remained, including the oddly porous Dominican border.

Nothing was done. The Clinton administration certainly knew about the matter a year ago.

'We expect a vigorous lobbying effort by Texaco to quash OFAC's penalty action', Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen was advised in an 1st October 1993 memo, which added that 'Texaco has already contacted the State Department in an effort to have State persuade OFAC to drop the matter', as it evidently did. 'There has been no activity in the case for nearly a year' after this notification, Solomon reported.

In response to the AP story on Sunday 18th September, Treasury Secretary Bentsen ordered an investigation which, if it takes place, is likely to focus on the Bush years. Senator Donald Riegle and Representative Henry Gonzalez, who chair the banking committees, 'expressed outrage at OFAC's conduct described in the documents

and indicated their panels will review the case' as well, also looking into the role of banks in helping Texaco fund the junta. 'I think it's outrageous', Representative Gonzalez stated: 'It's a joke if it is decided to announce a policy and then it isn't enforced.'

In brief, as the US troops landed, if not before, no news desk or editorial office could have failed to be aware of what had been concealed for the three years of slaughter and terror: the sanctions were 'a joke'. How much of a joke they perhaps had not known until 18th September. In a free press all of this would have been featured, along with the obvious conclusions: neither the Bush nor Clinton administration had any serious intent of terminating the terror and restoring democracy. Investigative reporters would have gotten to work to smoke out the rest of the story (for example, the still-unreported trade). And columnists would have explained what it all means.

What in fact happened was rather different: solemn reiteration of the established truths about our noble goals and the failure of the draconian sanctions, coupled with warnings about intervening in conflicts that are none of our business. According to a database search, the AP story was reported on Tuesday 20th September by one journal in the country, *Platt's Oilgram News*, which reported Texaco's denials. The next day the *Wall Street Journal* ran a brief item by an unidentified staff reporter at the bottom of an inside page, reporting Bentsen's order for an investigation and a few of the facts. Similar reports, mostly short and on inside pages, appeared in local papers, but not the national press. All of this will have to come out sooner or later – perhaps after the Haiti operation goes irremediably sour and the time comes for the excuses and evasions to be trotted out, Somalia-style. But when it mattered the free press did its job in admirable fashion once again.

As any serious commentator would also have observed, there is nothing new about the special treatment granted Texaco (we put aside the evasions about its competitors). A similar policy was followed just fifty years ago, when the Western democracies were seeking to undermine the Spanish republic which was then under attack by Franco's fascist forces. The reason was their concern that the popular revolution that was one component of this three-sided struggle might spread; such concerns were put to rest shortly after by their associate in Moscow, who crushed the revolution by violence, fearing any manifestation of socialism and freedom even more than his Western colleagues. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 'neutrality'

stand was carefully crafted to deprive the Republic of arms and oil. His admiration pressured suppliers (including foreign ones) to refrain from shipping materials, including shipments contracted earlier. Roosevelt himself bitterly denounced one businessman who insisted on his legal right to continue shipments of aeroplanes and parts to the Republic. Though 'perfectly legal', his act was 'thoroughly unpatriotic', Roosevelt declared, apologising for his emotional outburst but adding that 'I feel quite deeply about it'. Meanwhile his government was never able to discover that Texaco, then headed by a fascist sympathiser, was violating its contracts with the Republic, diverting tankers already at sea to Franco, whom it continued to supply – in 'secret' except to small left journals which, somehow, were able to discover the facts about the illegal shipments hidden from the Roosevelt administration and the press.<sup>11</sup>

In January 1994 testimony to Congress, reported here in July, the director of the CIA had predicted that Haiti 'probably will be out of fuel and power very shortly'. 'Our intelligence efforts are focused on detecting attempts to circumvent the embargo and monitoring its impact'. Not only was the CIA 'unable' to discover the 'oil boom' that was occasionally reported by the press, but it was also unable to discover that the US government, at the highest level, was fully aware that the CIA testimony to Congress was a complete falsehood and had indeed tacitly authorised the violations of the embargo that the CIA couldn't discover. Or so we are supposed to believe, as we are now supposed to believe that the CIA is busily at work organising support for Aristide.

### *3. Democracy and capitalism*

Whether Aristide is allowed to return in some fashion is anyone's guess at the time of writing. If he is, it will be under conditions designed to discredit him and further demoralise those who hoped that democracy might be tolerated in Haiti. To evaluate what lies ahead, we should look carefully at the plans for the security forces and the economy.

The military and police forces were established during Woodrow Wilson's invasion as an instrument to control the population, and have been kept in power by US aid and training for that purpose since. That is to continue.

As discussed here in July, the head of the OAS/UN mission through December 1993, Ian Martin, reported in *Foreign Policy* that

negotiations had stalled because of Washington's insistence on maintaining the power of the security forces, rejecting Aristide's plea to reduce them along lines that had proven successful in Costa Rica, the one partial exception to the array of horror chambers that Washington has maintained in the region. The Haitian military, Martin observed, recognised that the US was its friend and protector, unlike the UN, France and Canada. The generals continued their resistance to a diplomatic settlement, trusting that 'the United States, despite its rhetoric of democracy, was ambivalent about that power shift' to popular elements represented by Aristide. They were proven right. As the matter is now rephrased: 'At first, Father Aristide resisted having so many former soldiers in the police force, but Administration officials said they persuaded him to accept them', so the *New York Times* reported on the eve of the invasion. This was one of the successes of the educational programme designed for the 'doctrinaire monomaniac'.<sup>12</sup>

The plans for the economy are detailed in a plan submitted to the Paris Club of international donors at the World Bank in August, published by Alan Nairn in *Multinational Monitor* (July-August) with accompanying interviews. The Aristide government is to keep to a standard 'structural adjustment' package, with foreign funds devoted primarily to debt repayment and the needs of the business sectors, and with an 'open foreign investment policy'. The judicial system and other aspects of government are to be geared to 'economic efficiency'. The plan states that 'the renovated state must focus on an economic strategy centred on the energy and initiative of civil society, especially the private sector, both national and foreign'.

The Haiti desk officer of the World Bank, Axel Peuker, describes the plan as beneficial to the 'more open, enlightened business class' and foreign investors. The structural adjustment plan 'is not going to hurt the poor to the extent it has in other countries', he said, because subsidies for basic goods and other such interferences with capitalist democracy scarcely exist there anyway, so not too much will be cut. The minister in charge of rural development and agrarian reform in the Aristide government was not even notified about the plan designed for this largely peasant society, destined to be returned to the track from which it veered after the unfortunate December 1990 election, a tragedy that will not happen again if Washington is vigilant.

We may note in passing some of the features of contemporary Newspeak. 'Economic efficiency' means profits for the few, crucially the foreign few, whatever the effect on the many. The concept



'economic health' is a technical notion designed to measure profitability for investors, while excluding the health of the economy as far as the population is concerned. Thus the economy can be wonderfully healthy while the people are starving. 'Civil society' of course includes all sorts of nice things, but 'especially' the private business sector, including foreign investors, who belong to the part of Haitian civil society on which the 'renovated state' must focus. Democracy means that outsiders design plans without even troubling to inform the government that is to execute them.

The concept of 'democracy' is also illustrated by the standard interpretation of the provision of the Haitian constitution that provides for the elected President to serve a single five-year term. In his address to the nation to rally support for the intervention, President Clinton assured his audience that Aristide had proven himself to be a true democrat. 'Tonight', Clinton said, 'I can announce that President Aristide has pledged to step down when his term ends in accordance with the constitution' and to transfer power to a successor. That conclusion, however, goes well beyond the constitution, which says nothing about how to calculate the president's term when he has spent three years in exile while civil society is being decimated. One interpretation is that if reinstated he should pick up where he left off, so that Aristide's term has almost four and a half years to run. Another interpretation is that his period in exile is part of his term as elected president. People with some lingering taste for democracy will presumably tend towards the first interpretation. Without any exception that I can discover, US commentators adopted Clinton's anti-democratic interpretation. We have to go north of the border to read the obvious comment about 'the three years of stolen democracy': 'By deducting them from, rather than adding them to, Aristide's suspended presidency, a key political objective will be achieved', namely 'a partial legitimisation of the 1991 coup d'etat against Aristide' (Dave Todd, 'Southam News').<sup>13</sup>

The task of civilising the troublesome priest has not been easy and there is disagreement as to whether it has been accomplished or whether he might still revert to his old ways, speaking up for the rights of poor and suffering people, even expressing elementary truths about the oppression of the poor by the rich (inciting 'class warfare') and the role of the US in his country's history ('anti-Americanism'). Close US advisors claim to see much progress. Former Ambassador Robert White, who has consistently supported the elected government in Haiti, said: 'I think the best thing that has happened to Aristide and

his administration-in-exile is that they have had a crash course in democracy and capitalism, and come to understand that too much revolution scares away investors. Small countries can't afford much social experimentation'.<sup>14</sup>

It's not clear whether these remarks are tongue-in-cheek, but taking them literally, they are on target. Aristide has been given a crash course in 'democracy and capitalism', as the terms are understood under prevailing doctrine. 'Democracy' means that you do what you're told and serve the powerful and rich, in silence – or better, politely expressing your gratitude for the opportunity. 'Capitalism' means the same. The 'social experimentation' that went too far is the programmes that were highly praised by the Inter-American Development Bank and other international funding agencies, and that Axel Peuker of the World Bank describes today as a 'rather conservative approach, financial and otherwise' – but too much for the Haitian rich, US investors, Washington and respectable opinion in the United States.

The reasons why this conservative approach went too far are expressed with clarity in a July 1994 position paper of 1,400 priests and nuns in Haiti and the surviving Haitian human rights groups. 'The constant factor in that brief period' of democracy 'cannot be doubted', they write. 'It is unquestionably the emergence of the people of Haiti on the political scene of its country.' The technical term for this atrocity among Western liberal elites is 'Crisis of Democracy', a threat that must be confronted forthrightly if 'democracy' is to be saved. The terror in Haiti, and the crash course in democracy and capitalism organised for Aristide in Washington, have been designed to drive such subversive thoughts out of people's heads, for good.

Not everyone agrees that Aristide has learned his lessons. 'He is a radical Roman Catholic priest who has fought with his church' – much as anti-fascist priests opposed their church under Mussolini and Hitler – 'and often spewed anti-American statements', the *Wall Street Journal* reports. 'His stubbornness and independence continue to drive US officials to distraction'. They expect better behaviour from the lower orders. Senator Phil Gramm condemns Aristide as an 'anti-American Marxist demagogue'. Particularly outrageous was his reticence about thanking his rescuers as they proceeded to restore the power of the army and the wealthy, perhaps allowing him to sit in a box for a few months to observe the process. New records may have been broken for supercilious arrogance and racism as the press

reported the suffering that Washington had endured at his hands. In the *New York Times* Maureen Dowd described 'the strain of trying for three years to restore Father Aristide to power even as he often openly griped about American policy' and failed to say 'thank you' with proper humility to 'his benefactors' ('The Mouse that Roared Squeaks Back'). Congress mocked 'the priest's desire to return on his own terms rather than those dictated by Washington', she reported. 'He wants to stay up here' and enjoy 'the good life', Senator Larry Pressler said, echoing the concerns of President Clinton, reported by 'those close to him', about 'whether Father Aristide had begun to enjoy his life as a celebrity exile'. Liberal representatives have been 'furiously demanding he show more gratitude', that he 'get real' (James Traficant). He should learn some manners, David Obey added: 'The proper response from Aristide is not to second guess and nitpick. The proper response is two words, "thank you".'

Aristide has still not learned his place. He has not learned that his job is to shuffle quietly with a friendly smile while thanking Massa for his kindness.

Aristide's disgraceful behaviour reinforced the fears expressed a few days earlier by political correspondent Elaine Sciolino, who worried that he might not 'be the kind of leader who will make the administration proud when he rides in on the backs of American soldiers' and who might even 'turn on his liberators'. In its efforts to change the radical priest 'from Robespierre to Gandhi', the Clinton administration – all dedicated Gandhians, like the *New York Times* – is 'heartened ... by his public statements that stress love rather than vengeance', and his call to 'let free enterprise and privatisation reign'. 'To help prepare Father Aristide for his return, administration officials have tried to force feed him large doses of economics and theories of public administration'. While some feel that 'he has really grown', others are concerned that he might regress to what he was – when he was praised for the remarkable successes of his brief administration in cutting back corruption and state terror, reducing the bloated bureaucracy, organising a reasonable tax system and setting the country's financial affairs in order, while still trying to respond to the initiatives of the 'remarkably advanced' array of grassroots organisations (Lavalas) that gave the large majority of the population a 'considerable voice in local affairs' and even in national politics ('IADB, Americas Watch').<sup>15</sup>

It is in this precise sense that Aristide 'failed politically when he was in there', as explained by the Clinton's special envoy Lawrence

Pezzullo, replaced after his lying to Congress became too embarrassing; the outspoken advocacy of mass slaughter by Carter's envoy to Nicaragua was never an embarrassment, nor was his record of trying to ensure that Nicaragua's murderous National Guard would stay in power (that, after all, was a crucial part of the task of 'restoring democracy' in Haiti too). Pezzullo made these remarks while reporting his 'growing frustration' with the stubborn Aristide, who 'was unwilling to make political compromises to broaden his political base' beyond the huge majority of the population. He even refused 'to work with Parliament', Pezzullo observed with horror – that is, with the Parliament that was able to stay almost entirely in the hands of the 'enlightened' sectors of civil society, since the authentic civil society still lacked the resources to challenge the traditional system of oppression and violence (always cheerfully backed by Washington). 'It was precisely Father Aristide's estrangement from the elected Parliament, coupled with his chilly relationship with business leaders and the military, that led to his overthrow', Pezzullo explained. Obviously a bad character, though one could hardly expect more in a country 'with no democratic traditions' – only with a vibrant and lively civil society that had, unexpectedly, constructed the foundations of a functioning democracy in which the rabble could actually take part in managing their own affairs.<sup>16</sup>

Aristide's unwillingness to 'broaden the political base' has become a kind of mantra on a par with 'Wilsonian idealism'. Like many other mindless propaganda slogans, the phrase conceals a grain of truth. Aristide has been unwilling to shift power to the 'enlightened' sectors of foreign and domestic civil society and their security forces. He still keeps his allegiance to the general population and their organisations – who could teach some lessons to their kindly tutors about what was meant by 'democracy' in days when the term was still taken seriously.

It is intriguing to watch the process at work. Consider Peter Hakim, Washington director of the inter-American dialogue, well-informed about the hemisphere and far from a ranting ideologue. While Aristide was elected by a two-thirds majority, Hakim observes, 'in most Latin American countries, movement from authoritarianism to democracy tends to reflect a more broadly based consensus than is currently the case in Haiti'. It is true enough that from the southern cone to Central America and the Caribbean, the consensus is 'broadly based' in the sense that sustained terror and degradation, much of it organised right where Hakim speaks, has taught people to abandon hope for freedom and democracy and to accept the rule of private power, domestic and

foreign. It hasn't been easy; witness the case of Guatemala, just now attaining the proper broad consensus after many years of education. Hakim also surely knows the nature of the 'consensus' at home, revealed by the belief of half the population that the political system is so rotten that both parties should be disbanded. And he knows full well what efforts are made to broaden government to include authentic representatives of the overwhelming majority of the population in Latin America, or by its traditional master.<sup>17</sup>

Aristide is not alone in being a slow student. UN envoy Dante Caputo resigned when the invasion was imminent, deploring the unilateral US initiatives that displaced the United Nations entirely. 'In effect', he said, 'the total absence of consultation and information from the United States government makes me believe that this country has in fact taken the unilateral decision of acting on its own in the Haitian process', so that the UN no longer has any role to play. Referring to Carter's grand achievement, Caputo said 'they got a much weaker agreement with sixty military planes in the air than we got at the negotiating table' in July 1993. Cédras scoffed at that one, Caputo notes, and may well do the same this time, proceeding to 'build a political force with Haiti's ruling class, leaving most of the country's current military and economic power base intact'. Caputo was too diplomatic to add that this contemptuous disregard for the United Nations is standard operating procedure and is only to be expected of the world's most powerful state, which has no reason to pay any attention to world opinion or international law, secure in the knowledge that whatever happens its intentions will be deemed 'certainly honourable' by its harshest critics among the respectable intelligentsia.<sup>18</sup>

#### *4. Perspective*

'Perspective' on what is taking place was provided in the *New York Times* by R.W. Apple, who reviewed the lessons of history. 'For two centuries', he wrote, 'political opponents in Haiti have routinely slaughtered each other. Backers of President Aristide, followers of General Cédras and the former Tontons Macoute retain their homicidal tendencies, to say nothing about their weapons' – which the homicidal maniacs in the slums have cleverly concealed. 'Like the French in the nineteenth century, like the Marines who occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934, the American forces who are trying to

impose a new order will confront a complex and violent society with no history of democracy’.

One takes for granted that the vicious terror and racism of the Wilson administration and its successors will be transmuted to sweet charity as it reaches the educated classes, but it is a novelty to see Napoleon’s invasion, one of the most hideous crimes of an era not known for its gentleness, portrayed in the same light. We might understand this as another small contribution to the broader project of revising the history of Western colonialism so as to justify the next phase.

Apple’s colleague David Broder, the renowned liberal columnist of the *Washington Post*, added further reflections. ‘The real danger is that US troops may be caught in an ongoing civil war between heavily armed gangs bent on revenge or determined not to yield power.’ On one side of this bitter conflict, we find the unarmed peasants and slum-dwellers who dared to elect a populist president ‘whose commitment to democracy is unproven’ – or at least we find their mutilated corpses. On the other side, trembling in fear, stand the US-armed and US-trained military and police with the criminal gangs they have organised in the familiar Duvalierist style, and their backers and beneficiaries, the wealthy families who own the country together with their US associates. Truly a cosmic struggle.

US forces in Haiti are not the first to confront challenges and dilemmas of such severity. Similar problems were faced by the Soviet troops entering Prague in 1968, trying to mediate between the Stalinist security forces and the people calling for freedom and democracy, two ‘heavily armed gangs determined not to yield power’. Or the US forces who liberated Buchenwald and faced ‘the real danger’ that the SS troops and the half-alive skeletons, each with their ‘homicidal tendencies’, might continue their ‘ongoing civil war’.

In the light of the threats so graphically depicted by the commentators in the national press, we can understand why ‘the first major arms raid by American troops was for searching not for weapons hidden by attachés, the armed thugs propping up Haiti’s military government, but for guns supposedly held by supporters of the man the Americans had come to put back in office, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide’ (Kifner). The 2nd October raid was based on information unearthed by US army intelligence. Its source was ‘a well-known attaché ... regarded locally as a drug dealer and paramilitary leader’, who directed US forces to ‘a terrorist training camp stashed full of weapons’ – which turned out to be a property owned by Katherine Dunham, where the raiders seeking to disarm

the terrorists surprised a dance troupe practising. Meanwhile the armed attachés who had broken up the anniversary celebration 'were still lounging around their corner today by the Normandie Bar in the centre of the city. No American soldiers were in the area.'

Lying behind the 'comic aspects of the search', Kifner observes, 'lies a potentially serious problem for the American forces as they feel out their political role here. The army's natural inclination is to protect property and order', a difficult matter in 'an extraordinarily bifurcated country, where a tiny elite, whose wealth is largely the product of exploitation and corruption, rules over desperately poor masses' – a situation not unrelated to policies and actions of the current liberators. It's not too hard to imagine how the problem will be resolved.

Basing himself on his analysis of the 'ongoing civil war', Broder offers further advice. Clinton should heed 'the lesson of Vietnam'. He continues: 'you don't commit troops until the country is committed to the mission' – and you understand that no question can conceivably be raised about 'the mission' – again, a stance that does not lack distinguished models. Now that 'Clinton has followed the idealistic President Woodrow Wilson in sending American forces to Haiti', we must recall that our last mission of mercy 'lasted nineteen years'. Disciplined intellectuals are not to recall the facts about that 'idealistic' intervention and its aftermath, though Haitians remember them all too well.<sup>19</sup>

### **5. Restoring civil society**

Both in Haiti and the US, those who matter understand what is happening well enough. 'Senior US officials have initiated large-scale business negotiations with some of the most powerful and wealthy Haitian supporters of the military overthrow of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide', Kenneth Freed reported in the *Los Angeles Times* as US forces were 'supposedly engineering a new political environment to undermine the power of the same anti-democratic elite'. One case is General Shelton's arrangements with Haiti's influential Mevs family 'about leasing a large waterfront plot for construction of fuel storage tanks and a pipeline'. It only makes sense, given that these leading coup backers had already built 'a huge new oil depot here to help the army defy the embargo', as the *New York Times* had reported earlier.

Parallel arrangements are proceeding with the other wealthy families that had financed fuel shipments, among other techniques to benefit from the 'sanctions'. The 'powerful Haitian clan' of the Mevs 'has positioned itself well to keep doing what it does best – make money', José de Cordoba reports in the *Wall Street Journal*. The Mevs had met with Aristide in Washington to induce him to 'moderate his position and reach out to the tiny, mostly anti-Aristide, Haitian middle class' – an intriguing notion of 'middle' when we consider the proposition of those who own almost all the nation's wealth. Inexplicably, the Mevs have been able 'to build a huge tank farm to store fuel' during the embargo, backed by 'loans guaranteed by Haiti's Central Bank'; a fairly typical example of 'free market' capitalism. They had 'profited from their cosy ties to the Duvalier dictatorships' and therefore found it easy to deal with the US and to adapt to the form of 'broadly-based democracy' that they see the Clintonites fashioning.

While still 'nervous about Aristide', the enlightened business sector is 'counting on the Americans', the London *Financial Times* reports. Reasonably enough. Unlike educated Americans, it is not sufficient for them to chant ritual phrases; to pursue their interests they must attend to historical and institutional facts. This 'baronial class' of 'several dozen families', generally light-skinned, recognises that the military forces coming to 'restore democracy' will prefer to deal with them – our kind of folks, after all, unlike the people rotting in the slums. It is 'not surprising that the US should do deals with powerful interests', as in the days of the Duvalier family dictatorship when these interests gained their power, benefiting from similar 'deals' with the US government and foreign enterprise while the population sank deeper into misery. Why should anything change now that the traditional benefactors have returned?<sup>20</sup>

As for the Haitian military, they too expect to hold on to power, Larry Rohter reports in the *New York Times*. Realistically again. They too know their history and are also aware that 'there's nothing in the [Carter-Cédras] agreement that details the future' of the puppet government that they established (US Embassy spokesman Schrager). Schrager is referring to the Jonassaint government that the US now treats with as much respect as General Cédras – though as far as it is known, Jonassaint has not yet been invited by Jimmy Carter to teach his Sunday School class. Rohter asserts that 'the Cédras camp managed to mislead the United States and its allies for three months and then defy them for nearly a year before reaching the accord with



the Carter delegation'. Perhaps. They surely didn't mislead anyone paying attention to what was going on in Haiti and Washington.<sup>21</sup>

Clinton's policies have generally been praised as successful, and rightly so. They achieved what the US has sought ever since the disaster of the free election of December 1990. The previous status quo has pretty much been restored, with one vital difference: civil society has been devastated and its leading figure has (it is hoped) been trained to become more 'pragmatic' and 'realistic'. The way is clear towards restoring the power of the core sector of civil society: foreign investors and 'enlightened' elements of the Haitian business community, those who are offended by the sight of mutilated corpses as they are driven by in their limousines, preferring that the poor waste away quietly, out of sight, while the remnants perhaps find a place in assembly plants where they may even survive the regimen of democracy and capitalism for a few years, if lucky.

The Clinton administration regularly complains that it has to walk a 'fine line'. That's true. US military doctrine is unusual, perhaps unique, in holding that US soldiers are not permitted to face any threat. If someone makes a gesture seen as dangerous, they are to call in massive force. Whatever one thinks of the doctrine, it at once disqualifies the US from participation in any operation involving civilians. UN peacekeeping forces have radically different rules of engagement, as must any civilised country that participates in operations short of total war. There are cultural and historical reasons for US doctrine, traceable to the Biblical sources that inspired our genocidal forebears and to a history of overwhelming power, contingencies that are likely to bring forth the most ugly features of any society.

It would not be very surprising, then, if the Haitian operations become another catastrophe, like Somalia, in which case respectable commentary will have to shift gear, though only slightly. It is not a difficult chore to trot out the familiar phrases that will explain the failure of our mission of benevolence in this failed society. Perhaps, with luck, the worst will be avoided as US forces reinstate one of the two antagonists in the 'ongoing civil war' between the two 'heavily armed gangs bent on revenge or determined not to yield power' – the one that was protected by the tanks and armoured cars as the other, with their 'homicidal tendencies', sought to demonstrate for democracy on 30th September. Following the Guatemalan model, terror can be followed by USAID projects funding FRAPH territories as they construct alternatives to the social service sector that arose

democratically and is therefore intolerable to US elites. I have quoted (from the *Washington Post*) in *Z* (July 1994) the leader of a now-clandestine pro-Aristide group, who predicted that 'the Duvalierist system will continue, with or without the return of Aristide'. 'The Duvalierists have many fine days ahead of them in this country', another human rights worker said, 'people are losing their ability to make things happen here, and it will take many years to reverse that under the best of circumstances'. That is how a 'broad consensus' of the Pezzullo-Hakim type is established, as both of them understand full well. That is the lesson of 'capitalism and democracy' as interpreted by US elites who despise democracy only slightly more than free market discipline (for themselves).

### *6. A parable for our times*

The story of Haiti is far from over. Two hundred years of popular struggles in Haiti teach us a great deal about the commitment to freedom and justice and the depth of its roots. But as of today, Haiti stands almost as a parable of the 500-year record which, if honesty were imaginable, we would describe as a barbarian invasion in which a savage fringe of Western Europe conquered most of the world.

When Columbus landed in Haiti in 1492, it seemed to him a paradise. The extraordinary wealth of the island of Saint-Dominique, the richest colony in the world, was one of the foundations of France's wealth and power. Having won its freedom, Haiti faced the bitter revenge of the great powers, the US taking first place in seeking to crush the upstarts who called for freedom for all people – and forgetting the 1,500 freed slaves from Haiti who had joined in the US war of independence. The reasons were understood very well by French diplomat Talleyrand, who wrote to James Madison in 1805 that 'the existence of a Negro people in arms, occupying a country it has soiled by the most criminal acts, is a horrible spectacle for all white nations', particularly one that based its 'free market' economic development on slavery to provide cheap cotton and that was then engaged in exterminating or expelling the indigenous population. Talleyrand was formulating an early version of the 'rotten apple theory' (in its public version, the 'domino theory') which has played a leading role in post-World War Two history.

Haitian historian Patrick Bellegarde-Smith writes that 'Haiti was the first nation in the world to argue the case of universal freedom for all

humankind, revealing the limited definition of freedom adopted by the French and American revolutions'. Words worth pondering.

In 1915, as Woodrow Wilson was planning his 'idealistic' operation to ensure that US banks and businesses would take over Haiti's financial and natural resources, historian William MacCorkle was still able to write that the island had 'within its shores more natural wealth than any other territory of similar size in the world'. Whatever the truth of that estimate, little remained after Wilson's forces had done their work – apart from profits for US investors and a tiny clique of Haitian collaborators. 'The US occupation was supposed to ensure elite control of the Haitian peasantry and foreign control of the Haitian elite', Bellegarde-Smith observes – to ensure control of Haiti by the central components of Haitian civil society, in the proper hierarchic relation. The extreme racism of the occupiers intensified the internal racism of Haitian society and contributed in other ways to what some call 'Haitian fascism'.

In one of the many sanctimonious displays that are currently defiling media and journals, *New York Times* correspondent Larry Rohter writes that 'the Haitian ruling classes have always viewed their country's poor as less than human', something that makes the struggle 'hard to comprehend' for Americans ('Compromise is American, not Haitian'). He is right about the Haitian ruling classes, and is also right to imply that the idealistic Americans – 'now back, still aspiring to do good works' – have not entirely shared the attitudes of the Haitian ruling classes. The Wilson administration was much more egalitarian, regarding all Haitians as less than human, not just the poor. As for the historical willingness of US power to compromise, we need waste no words.<sup>22</sup>

Wilson's Marines disbanded Haiti's Parliament in 1918 when it refused to ratify the US-imposed constitution, which permitted purchase of Haitian lands by foreigners, and did not allow it to re-convene for twelve years. The occupier's constitution was 'ratified' in a Marine-run plebiscite that did not even approach the dignity of fraud, another one of our contributions to this country with 'no history of democracy', where the current president's 'commitment to democracy is unproven'.

The atrocities of the idealistic mission, including aerial bombing of a Haitian city, finally reached home, eliciting public protest. A 1927 study of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom recounted such US atrocities as burning men and women alive, summary execution of children, beating and torturing,

machine-gunning of civilians, daily shooting of cattle and burning of crops, houses, mills and so on. It came to be understood that atrocities are best left to local clients, as other imperial powers had long realised. Washington proceeded to create an army that 'may have ended forever the possibility of an agrarian revolt against the central authority', anthropologist Sidney Mintz observes, much as it did in the Dominican Republic next door at the same time and in much the same way. Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot describes the establishment of 'an army to fight the people' as the worst of the legacies of the occupation, which 'left the country with two poisoned gifts: a weaker civil society and a solidified state apparatus'. Current plans simply continue the process, which has its counterparts through Latin America and is firmly founded in explicit doctrine.

Haitian historian Dantes Bellegarde describes the period from the mid-nineteenth century to 1929 as one of ongoing peasant insurgency, finally defeated by the occupying army with its overwhelming force advantage. In earlier years insurgents could retreat into the interior beyond the range of naval bombardment, but the methods of aerial bombardment of civilians pioneered by Wilson, then extended by British imperialists, 'rendered that tactic obsolete', Bellegarde-Smith observes. The much-lauded infrastructure projects, such as road construction by forced labour, also served the purpose of centralisation of power and pacification.

Since then the US has run Haiti without much interference. The educational system, meanwhile, was taken over by other outsiders, primarily the Catholic church and US Protestant organisations, who are not held responsible for the results, including some 80% illiteracy by 1988. The United States trained and armed the security forces, including the elite Leopard counter-insurgency units of the Duvalier dictatorships. 'Development projects' initiated and funded by the US accelerated the displacement of subsistence agriculture in favour of export crops and the agribusiness industry. Haiti was considered a fine place to invest because a 'skilled labour force with excellent work attitudes is abundant and available and at remarkably low cost' (Report of the Haitian Assembly Industry Association to US corporations). Ample terror was available to eliminate such deviations from free market principles as unions, minimal wage laws and safety regulations. As democracy is restored by Clinton's intervention, Aristide's earlier proposal to increase the Haitian minimum wage has become a 'non-issue', World Bank official Axel Peuker observes, and

other social measures are 'not on the agenda', he said, as we march towards 'democracy and capitalism'.

Throughout this period 'economic health' improved in the technical sense, along with starvation, infant mortality and other human disasters, while real wages plummeted. By the early 1970s people began to flee, as hundreds of thousands had under Wilson's occupation and as they do en masse elsewhere in the Caribbean domains of US power – for unknown reasons. The refugees were forcefully returned under Carter, increasingly so under a Reagan-Duvalier agreement. The recent record is familiar.

Meanwhile ecological destruction continues as a consequence of development policies and prevailing systems of social control. Some analysts predict that the remaining forest cover may disappear in a few years, leading to erosion of the remaining fertile soils and disappearance of the water supply. Within our lifetimes, the paradise that Columbus found and that enriched Europe may become a desert virtually devoid of life.<sup>23</sup>

It's never too late to arrest that fate. If it comes about, the powerful will have no difficulty absolving themselves of any responsibility; those who have benefited from a good education can write the script right now. If it comes about, we will have only ourselves to blame.

#### Notes

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11. See my 'Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship' in *American Power and the New Mandarins* (Pantheon, 1969) reprinted in part in James Peck (editor), *Chomsky Reader* (Pantheon, 1988).
12. Steven Greenhouse, *New York Times*, 19th September 1994.
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20. Freed, *Los Angeles Times*, 24th September 1994; de Cordoba, *Wall Street Journal*, 16th September 1994; James Harding, *Financial Times*, 27th September 1994. See *Z*, July 1994.
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23. Bellegarde-Smith, *Haiti: the Breached Citadel* (Westview, 1990); Farmer, *op cit*; my *Year 501* (South End, 1993) and *Z*, July 1994, and sources cited.

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## Denis Pym

# Capitalism, Science and Emergent Community

The four most recent issues of *The Raven* (numbers 24, 25, 26 and 27) have been devoted to religion and science. We can assume these subjects matter to anarchists and libertarians. In this article I will select bits and pieces from three of these issues to make two points. Reading it presupposes a familiarity with recent publications of *The Raven*. Now the two points.

The impression I formed from these issues is that the revival of religion and the 'triumph of market forces' are leading us to go soft on capitalism. The role of modern corporate capitalism in both science and religion is too often played down or overlooked. Is it indifference or do we feel guilty about our salaries, wages and pensions, the dole – our sponging off the largesse of western capitalist culture – so we become reluctant to bite the hand that feeds us? Thankfully, elsewhere the editorial section of *Freedom* keeps blasting away at the everyday absurdities of business and state.

People with scientific attitudes and skills no doubt have a role to play in the long awaited revival of community in western societies but the place of industrial science in it cannot be central.

### *Capitalism and the revival of religion*

In *Raven* 27 Colin Ward comments on the failure of writers in the radical tradition to predict the threat of militant religious movements to the secular state at the end of the twentieth century. However, no social commentator with these sympathies would have wanted to foresee the triumph of the market economy dominated by transnational business ethics which is a determining factor in the upsurge of religious fervour. The revival of Islam, the most threatening of the fundamentalisms to western domination, is tied to the universalisation of the consumer society and the subtle imposition (i.e. mostly without warfare) through the God of Trade of western material values.

When Solzhenitsyn tells the Russian parliament their people are

being forced to choose between poverty and crime he might just as well be speaking for people all over the old Soviet Union and now China as well. Transnational business is moving in for the kill and hell-bent on forging links with whatever organisations will assist it. Mostly these are local mafias and sections of the good old communist party. Such unholy alliances are set to exploit the natural resources of these lands and walk rough-shod over ordinary people. Meanwhile the western media and politicians twitter on about saving democracy. Is it surprising that people, trained in dependence on the state and faced with the choice between poverty and crime, should seek comfort in religion?

It has long been a part of my paranoia that capitalism and its agencies are silently at war with the relational everywhere. Proponents use technology to denigrate our relations with each other, with our tools and machines as well as with nature. We can observe this nasty game in the romanticisation of human relations in films, television soaps and advertisements, in the idea of psychological obsolescence – old but still serviceable machines and tools should be replaced rather than maintained and the promotion of travel and holidays abroad as the opportunity to shit on paradise. The effect is to undermine personal judgement, because the person as unhinged, free-floating atom makes an excellent employee and consumer.

Well, look again at Bob Potter's (*Raven 27*) description of the fundamentalist personality. In brief such a person is rootless, isolated and unable to form meaningful relations, self-centred and yet obsessed with personal inadequacy, seeking refuge in exclusive élites and specialist groups. His/her anti-intellectual disposition can be observed in the desire to confirm rather than explore faith. Such a person is deeply fearful of the unknown and the ambiguous and is likely to experience mental illness.

Didn't the Nazis make a point of manning their concentration camps with people so disposed? Closer to our experience isn't this description every advertising man and woman's dream of the perfect consumer: the person who had abandoned judgement about tool or product, needs to be told what is good for him and yet believes without question he can never have enough of a good thing.

### ***Science and capitalism***

In the two issues on Science (numbers 24 and 26) nobody is more optimistic than Nigel Calder of the capacity of science to deliver us



from a range of pressing problems. I found myself taken in by his optimism about biotechnology, green machines and the like, but I couldn't for the life of me see how the science I know was going to spark the Sussex Liberation Front.

As soon as I began to doubt Calder's confidence my views on his article changed. If science is 'now the big time' why does he ask me to 'give it a chance'. More than 95% of scientists are employees funded by the state or private corporations. Their researches are heavily dependent on high-tech. Probably 90% of them would be unable to continue their projects if support was only available from personal and local sources. So it is not science which is the big time but business and the state. As Brian Martin reminds us in his article on anarchist science policy, scientists are the servants and legitimators of power. Like many other large-scale enterprises the science juggernaut is consuming vast resources. As to whether its net effects on humanity and the planet are positive or negative, the argument is evenly joined. According to *The Ecologist's* team (number 26) the application of western science and technology has been to the detriment of life in the world's poorest countries.

It isn't until the reader gets to Sal Restivo's piece at the end of Science 2 that he is confronted head on with the problematic context in which scientists work. While this great tool remains the property of state and capital 'no convergence between science and anarchism is possible'. Any examination of the link between science and anarchism ought to start right there.

Scientists do their organising bit for their paymasters by holding closely to a professional, bureaucratic monopolistic view of scientific affairs. Membership is tight, rules obeyed, the rituals of enquiry publicly upheld, prevailing assumptions accepted save by the adventurous few (nothing about these souls in either volume).

Calder supports these authoritarian tendencies when he identifies 'human fallibility as the weakness of science'. Well, as a chap who knows his science he might just as readily have claimed human fallibility as a major force in scientific breakthroughs. What about Descartes, Newton, Einstein, old Uncle Tom Cobbley and all those other driven geniuses? Calder goes on to illustrate his point by relating a story about one of the dubious sciences, anthropology. It's that Margaret Mead saga and her being conned by the Samoans over their sexual promiscuity. Had Calder been a touch more courageous he might have illustrated human frailty in 'nonsenses like cold fusion' (his words). I've no idea whether or not cold fusion is a nonsense, but

energy is a subject much closer to mainstream science and 'cold fusion' if it is on, turns just about every assumption in this field on its head. Calder's example and attitudes here advertise his sympathies with orthodoxy. What has become of the science which undermined 'the authority of religion, aristocracy and imperial power'.

When Lynn Olson began her article in 'Science 1' with an outline of the central ritual in scientific enquiry, I thought we were in for yet another elaboration of the one-best-way. Unfortunately this ritual is now the property of government and is used to cover up disasters, breakdowns in morality and the excesses of capitalism. 'Wise men' even cynically deploy the libertarian ideal of self-regulation as a standard 'solution'. However, by sticking to the rudimentaries of scientific scrutiny (proposing, testing, evaluating) Olson is able to acknowledge the existence of 'a scientific attitude' before the age of enlightenment. *The Ecologist's* team do the same for contemporary oral societies. They call it vernacular science. Reason does not dictate which methods and tools we employ to scrutinise the subject in hand. It upholds the ingenuity and resourcefulness of men and women through space and time.

I found myself closer to Calder than Olson on the question of declining resources. Resources might most usefully be viewed as dependent variables, with human ingenuity driven by our strengths and limitations creating or identifying and unlocking them. If there is a crisis it is to be found in the declining resourcefulness of western man as both employee and mere consumer.

### *Science and community*

Brian Morris's (number 26) anarchist science policy represents a carefully considered view from within employment of how we might go about squaring the activities of scientists with a less hierarchical, less monopolistic, less exploitative world. Martin knows the task is difficult, seeing science as 'one of these institutions most resistant to popular participation and control'. His expectations of what scientific research is about are no less realistic: '... science cannot be used to provide a definite answer to real-world questions; vested interests cannot be eliminated; facts and values can't be separated, therefore no decision can be left to experts'. He goes on to detail policies and tactics to make science more open and more prepared to take community interests on board. However, this is not small science in the community, it is about big science making concessions to community interests.

To break the monopoly of science over scientific research as with other occupational monopolies we must first break the monopoly of employing institutions over the creation of wealth. The state exists to make it work for people and not just power. We can take a plank out of old social credit policy and establish a minimum wage and basic income for *every* adult citizen. People should share equally in past technological achievements. Financially, the effect would be a token. It would nevertheless be one step towards recognising employment is over-rewarded. It would legitimise too the efforts of a small but significant number of people who draw the dole as support while they strive to establish themselves in the locality where they live. I am referring to those who seek a way of life based on getting their social and economic activities together.

### 'Community'

I have already used the word community without making clear what I think it means. Maybe we ought to begin by asserting that it no longer exists. In small pockets of life everywhere, people would dispute this. Even non-anarchists are unlikely to embrace local government or the affairs of the parish council as being 'of the community'. It doesn't necessarily include Brian Martin's trade unions; women and environmental groups either. These activities are too much defined and abstracted by industrial institutions.

An entity called community certainly comes to life in the face of common threat – a new motorway near our homes or the proposal to build a factory near a posh residential area. Even less often in Britain, people may come together to meet common needs – a village shop, recreational facilities, a youth club. These infrequent public displays of community may impress the media and government but they are essentially gestures, visible images of something more basic. I am thinking of those less visible, more 'mundane', everyday activities among people working and playing in and around home and neighbourhood – the activities of housewives, kids, old folk, the self-employed, parental exchanges over children, neighbours passing the time of day and helping each other out. It is to such activities, I believe, that the description community belongs.

The community economy as an alternative to the world of employment exists here too. It is founded on the oral tradition, household, human resourcefulness, the maintenance ethic, anarchist principles of organisation, the use of tools and technique to extend

rather than replace human skills and energy, the reintegration of people's social and economic affairs, and so on.

Its prospects are enhanced as we are able to acknowledge and act upon the trivialising, demeaning and fraudulent aspects of modern employment, including scientific activities. Progress comes when we recognise that although the community economy is succoured by the old industrial order, its roots reach into a different tradition to one which both precedes the industrial and is re-emerging. It grows out of the crises of western civilisation and is aided by a shift in historical awareness from eye to ear and to a new balance in the sensorium which is already pushing out the old visual literary order. This phenomenon is helped also by the electronic feast but a different course to that which we associate with the so-called information society.

Professionals and scientists share a difficulty in coming to terms with this emerging order. It rejects the basis of their power and influence. This difficulty can be illustrated in a concept like space or the spatial. Technically educated people typically recognise only the visual meanings of the concept – a perception which gives authority to social and physical distance and the abstraction of the visual. However, as we get closer to the subject of our attention the purely visual representation of reality gives way somewhat to an awareness of what we hear, smell, feel and taste. Ivan Illich used the expression *convivial* to describe living in such a context. I prefer the word *intimacy* because it demands more of us; more obviously depends on physical proximity between people, and between people, machines and nature. It reflects too on the limitations in this respect of so many of our informing devices.

We may, as some people now think, live in an information age dominated by the knowledge industry, but this does not mean we know about anything that matters. Ecologists notice people employed by those western institutions which deal with the third world assume the ignorance of people in peasant societies. We in the west may be able to read newspapers, watch television, use the telephone, purchase a lottery ticket and even operate a personal computer. Collectively we know precious little about the sources of our food, energy, shelter, modes of transport, disposal of excrement and the dead, etc. Nor are we able to maintain the instruments and devices which deliver such essentials. We can put this down to living in a sophisticated society; however, when it comes to ignorance about the basis of life, the informed consumer has no equal. We have been conned and we have conned ourselves in the myth of progress.

### *Some observations on 'community'*

A few observations on those informal socio-economic networks to which I am party. My observations derive entirely from the semi-rural area where I live. Though I cannot claim to be an effective member of any of these networks, I have over the course of twenty or so years been able to observe their operations, thanks in no small measure to the active participation in them by members of my own tribe.

- The key people are predominantly self-employed males, their partners (who frequently engage in some kind of part-time employment) and their offspring. With employment opportunities declining in towns and cities everywhere more young people are remaining in and around the locality than twenty years ago. I estimate one in three homes in this area house at least one self-employed person. This makes the number of self-employed here twice the national average. Either the locality is exceptional (unlikely) or government statistics don't coincide with the way I perceive the economic status of those around me.
- The central economic activities of those networks I observe are manual and low level technical, e.g. builders, arts and crafts, farmers, traders, contractors, gardeners, printers, machine maintenance and repair.
- Only a small proportion (under 10%) have scientific/professional qualifications and/or work in such fields. Only two gain economically from the local use of their technical skills. There are no telecommuters that I know of in a population in excess of 700 people. This, of course, does not mean there are none but that their relations are with the formal economy and those who sleep and come to die in the locality – the gin and tonic brigade.
- The social organisation of these networks is founded on the anarchist principles of personal responsibility, trust and mutual aid. Organisation resides in people's heads. The dominant economic drive is for survival, the preoccupation with getting by, not profit. Those self-employed people who are devoted to making money are *always* loners and isolates – on the fringe of the fringe.

## Murray Bookchin

### A Meditation on Anarchist Ethics

In the late winter of 1989, one Ulrike Heider appeared at my home in Burlington, Vermont, for an interview, armed with a tape recorder, clothing for a weekend visit – and apparently a butcher's cleaver, looking for as much blood as she could draw from an unsuspecting victim. Citing an old anarcho-syndicalist whom I knew as a reference and her plan to write a book on American anarchists as her aim, she was housed, fed, kept warm from the rigours of a Vermont winter, and treated in a comradely way. She was even taken to a small village, Charlotte, to attend a town meeting, to see how a form of face-to-face democracy functions even under the restrictions of the centralised American governmental system.

After three or four days of probing and note-taking, expressing a minimal number of her own opinions, she returned to her home in New York City and proceeded to write a book in her native German, *Die Narren der Freiheit* (*The Fools of Freedom*) – possibly one of the most malicious, fatuous, and basically immoral books I have encountered on the left in decades. I say this quite soberly, having experienced some most unsavoury distortions of my work on the part of deep ecologists, socialists, self-styled anarchists, and, of course, the liberal bourgeois press. But seldom have I encountered such blatant character assassination and such deliberate distortions of ideas – not to speak of her willingness to read German traditions into the American context. This book, alas, has now been translated – with suitable modifications, additions, and deletions – into English under the title *Anarchism: Left, Right, and Green*,\* and has been reviewed by the *Guardian* in Britain.

I realise that Ulrike Heider has a book and a literary career to market. She also professes to be an anarcho-syndicalist. How then, one may ask, can she effectively advance her career? Simple: Defame a relatively well-known anarchist, even under the pretence of praising him in the opening paragraphs. Distort his views from beginning to

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\* *Anarchism: Left, Right and Green* by Ulrike Heider, San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1994, 153 pages.

end, then ignore all passages in his works that contradict the distortions. Pull his words out of context, even when that context explicitly countervails the views that are imputed to him. When a quoted passage contains a sentence, phrase, or even a single word that fails to conform to the distortion, remove it and replace it with ellipsis points. Make his peripheral remarks seem of central importance to his ideas, and give his overarching themes little serious treatment or even mention. When quoting him, omit the quotation marks that he put around potentially misleading words and phrases, and treat his obvious metaphors as if he intended them literally.

Create specious contradictions where there are none between his various works to make him seem intellectually unstable and opportunistically 'contemporary', as though he often bends with the winds of public opinion. Employ guilt by association by claiming to find similarities, no matter how tenuous, between his views and those of Oswald Spengler; the proprietarian Murray Rothbard; the late General Bastian of the German Green Party; and of course, the Bolsheviks and the Nazis. Mingle imagined ugly characterisations, often ad hominem in character, with words actually quoted from his writings, so that they all seem to come from his mouth or pen. Confuse his critique of 'New Left' Maoism and Stalinism with an embrace of American nationalism, and his rejection of working-class 'hegemony' in overthrowing capitalism with 'hatred of the proletariat' [*Arbeiterfeindlichkeit* in the German original]. Attribute views similarly distorted to his companion, Janet Biehl, even if her own words must be tortured out of shape in the process.

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Frankly, I find it degrading to have to deal with this kind of 'polemical' sewage. But where someone has made a terrible stink, it is a civic duty to get to its source and clean it up. This is especially necessary when the sewage has found a place on the pages of the *Guardian*, a periodical that is doubtless notorious for its love of anarchists. Hence an overview of her distortions, with some detailed examples, is very much in order.

But where to start? Having placed the proprietarian disciple of Friedrich Hayek, Murray Rothbard, in an anarchist 'pantheon' of her own making – despite Rothbard's furious attacks on any alternative to capitalism and naked greed – Heider devotes some eighty pages to the libertarian Left: notably seventeen to her mentor, Sam Dolgoff, nine to Noam Chomsky, and forty-two to me. If Heider's attention

seems disproportionately directed toward me, its purpose becomes obvious once one enters into the bulk of the polemic, particularly her 'method of critique of ideologies' (page 7) and her ethics.<sup>1</sup>

**Method 1:** Give descriptive characterisations that have nothing to do with your subject's actual point of view and use them to immediately prejudice the reader.

Example: Since I *describe* the ultra-leftist 'Third Period' of the Communist International in the early 1930s – of which I was a part as a Young Pioneer and later a member of the Young Communist League (ages 9 to 15) – as 'extremely revolutionary', Heider, who apparently doesn't know the First from the Second from the Tenth Period in the history of the Comintern, blanches with shock. 'To my surprise', says this breathless voyager into the labyrinth of the Left, 'this eco-anarchist [Bookchin] critic of communism painted a remarkably positive picture of the Communist Party of his day' (page 56). My 'picture', in fact, was neither positive nor negative but simply descriptive. Perhaps the better explanation for Heider's 'surprise' is her awesome ignorance of Communist history of the 1930s.

Accordingly, anyone who reads Heider with a modicum of knowledge about the Old Left may be 'surprised' to learn that 'it was not until the Hitler-Stalin Pact' (which, as we know, was concluded in 1939) that the Stalinists 'became the reformist party of the Popular Front era' (which *actually* began in 1935). Her chronology, with this four-year omission, thereby erases the ideologically vicious rationale for the counter-revolutionary role played by the Communist Parties of the world during the Spanish Revolution of 1936, a role conducted *precisely* in the name of the Popular front. Further, she muddies the issue of the Party's tacit support for the Nazis between 1939 and 1941, after which Russia was invaded by the Third Reich (pages 56-57).

**Method 2:** Use innuendo.

Example: 'One wonders ... and wonders ... and wonders' – Heider's favourite phrase, by which she sugar-coats her venom as curiosity. Should a victim of Heider's 'wondering' fail to have been an anarchist at birth, let him or her beware! If I cite my teenage admiration for Trotsky because he 'stood alone against Stalin' in 1937, Heider climbs upon her high horse in the closing years of the twentieth century and maliciously inquires: 'One might ask, of course, *why* that hero stood alone' (page 58). To those who do not know, be assured that Trotsky did not 'stand alone' in 1937 only because he was 'the butcher of Kronstadt and murderer of anarchists', as Heider would



have the present generation believe. Apart from a small number of anarchists and independent leftists, relatively few American radicals knew about Kronstadt or Bolshevik atrocities against anarchists. Trotsky 'stood alone' in the late 1930s because Stalin had corralled nearly the entire liberal establishment into collusion with him in the name of his allegedly 'anti-fascist' Popular Front strategy. The smugness with which Heider looks down from her lofty perch of more than a half-century later on a time when the intersecting forces of liberalism and Stalinism assumed a highly complex form bespeaks an ahistorical arrogance of dazzling nerviness. Her 'curiosity' and snippy remarks would make me steam with fury, had I not immunised myself from this kind of trash during my experiences in the Stalinist movement of the thirties.

Presumably, one must be born an 'anarchist': indeed: 'What it was exactly [!] that converted [!] Bookchin to anarchism in the early 1960s' – actually, in the late 1950s – 'is not entirely clear to me', Heider observes with a sniff (page 59). May I suggest that she could have received an answer in detail (my 'conversion' was not a flighty affair) if she had asked me personally, when we met, instead of making it into a cryptic and possibly sinister mystery in her book.

Method 3: There is always a way of establishing that your subject is a 'nationalist' – if he is American, possibly by overhearing him or her whistle 'Yankee Doodle'.

Example: This is one of Heider's most treasured methods of slander. 'Bookchin did not *at that time [during the late 1960s] expound Americanism*', writes Heider in an insidiously tantalising manner, as though I ever 'expounded Americanism' at any time (page 59, emphasis added). What Heider is referring to is my opposition within Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to its largely pro-Maoist leadership. Having planted this toxic little seed in the mind of the reader, Heider later drops to all fours and howls 'nationalism' at me because I suggest that in the United States it is important for the Left to build on American, specifically Vermont, *face-to-face democratic* traditions (in contrast to the centralist and statist Maoist notions of the 1960s) in order to establish some meaningful contact with the general public, even the proletariat. No one would have accused Friedrich Engels of being a 'nationalist' for invoking the radical traditions of the German people in his famous *The Peasant War* or Bakunin for invoking the radical implications of the collectivist *mir*, which he associated with traditional forms of Russian peasant

land-ownership. But Bookchin? Heaven forbid!

**Method 4:** Play the race and the 'Third World' cards! They seldom fail.

Example: 'Unlike Dolgoff and Chomsky', Heider writes, '... Bookchin *never* seems to have been interested in the issues of race or the Third World' (page 59, emphasis added). How the hell does she know? Did she query me about my activities in the Congress of Racial Equality during the early 1960s? Or my work as a shop steward in a predominantly African-American iron foundry? Or my work in the Puerto Rican community in New York's Lower East Side? Did she share my jail cells when I was arrested for civil rights' activities during the 1960s? As for the 'Third World', perhaps I should have demonstrated my concern for it by supporting Fidel Castro, as so many of Sam Dolgoff's confreres in the anarchist Libertarian League did. Or perhaps I should have cheered for Ho Chi Minh, as so many anarchists of Heider's generation did. Or perhaps I should have sagaciously quoted from Mao's infamous Little Red Book, as so many anarcho-syndicalists were then doing.

**Method 5:** Consider every change in theory to be evidence of fickleness and instability, rather than the development of ideas over the course of time, and overtly or implicitly accuse your subject of trying to court popularity under new social conditions.

Example: At the end of the 1960s, '[b]urned out by the big city', Heider writes, Bookchin 'moved into his yellow house in Burlington' (page 60). Sinister! – a retreat to the rural world of Vermont! In fact, I was not 'burned out by the big city', and I departed for Vermont very reluctantly, mainly because much of the New York Left, including key members of my *Anarchos* affinity group, had debarked variously for Vermont, California, and all points of the compass after the collapse of the New Left in the city.

Moreover, because I *tentatively* supported a self-styled 'socialist', Bernard Sanders, during his first term as mayor of Burlington, and tried unsuccessfully to win him over to a libertarian municipalist position, Heider now snidely writes that I now 'prefer to overlook' this terrifying error. How would she have known about this 'oversight' if I hadn't told her about it, with self-critical amusement? That I subsequently became Sanders's most vigorous left-wing opponent for a decade, writing sharply critical articles on him, remains unmentioned in her book, despite the fact that I discussed it with her in detail. Heider, needless to emphasise, regards all of this as evidence

that I 'turned [my] back on urban activism' and that 'At each juncture [which?]' Bookchin 'attacks former colleagues and friends [who?], espouses new theories ... [with a] kind of flexibility [that] makes him seem the exact opposite of such anarchists as Dolgoff and Chomsky, whose political positions have remained consistently rock solid' (page 61). Really! I never knew that anarchism was a 'rock solid' dogma or that the development of ideas in the face of changing conditions was apostasy! If development is to be dismissed as 'flexibility', then I gladly plead guilty.

Method 6: When all else fails, blatantly misrepresent your subject's work and viewpoint, tossing in a few more innuendoes for extras. Example: Heider says, without mentioning names, that I have declared the 'classic authors of the anarchist workers movement to be representatives of the "libertarian municipal tradition" of [my] own historical construct' (page 64). I have never declared such a thing, although I have pointed out that Bakunin supported the participation of anarchists in municipal elections, and that Bakunin and Kropotkin saw the commune or municipality as the locus of a libertarian society.

But here Heider cannot resist the opportunity to compound a blatant falsehood with one of her innuendoes: 'the theoretical proximity of [libertarian municipalism] to the ideology of the [pre-fascist and quasi-fascist, as she puts it in a footnote] *Volksgemeinschaft* cannot be overlooked' (page 64). Such an innuendo could apply quite lavishly to the communal orientation of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin – indeed, to exponents of every form of social anarchism that is not fervently committed to the factory-oriented libertarian theories of anarcho-syndicalism. With ignorance infused by venom, Heider must add that I suffer from 'nostalgia, nationalism [!], and disavowal [!] of the labour movement' – this last a flippant misreading of my disavowal of the theory of proletarian *hegemony*, a largely Marxist notion to which Heider seems to adhere.

Thereafter, Heider lets another person, Howard Hawkins, speak for me as though his words were my own – despite the fact that I expressed strong public differences with Hawkins years before the English translation of her book appeared. What she cannot impute to me directly, she imputes to me through someone whose views, unknown to her readers, I have been obliged to criticise. In fact, it is Hawkins who has changed his views by supporting participation in state and national elections – but it is *I* whom Heider considers politically fickle.

**Method 7:** Caricature the person you are attacking, and then mock him for being the caricature you have created.

Example: Heider was taken to visit the annual town meeting in rural Charlotte, Vermont, which is composed of ordinary working people, farmers, and a scattering of professionals, all neatly dressed for a special occasion. Heider, with incredible arrogance, apparently cast her Olympian eyes over the 'lily-white' meeting and with unerring instinct knew to be 'the most conservative ... I have ever attended in the US'. No one there, she assures her readers, would have responded positively to a proposal to end 'capitalism' or to fight for 'equal rights for African-Americans' (page 67).

After the meeting, when Heider returned to my home and asked me why no people of colour had been there, I informed her of the simple *statistical* fact that Vermont is the 'whitest' state in the United States (over 99 percent) – a simple bit of factual information that Heider wilfully decided I *approve* of, making my remark incontrovertibly *racist* (pages 67, 68). Responding to such an allegation is beneath contempt. In fact, Vermont is not only one of the 'whitest' states in the United States, it is also one of the poorest. Nor are Vermonters in the habit of raising black and red flags, generating insurrections against capitalism, or any more than most young leftists I encounter today, singing the 'Internationale'. But its town meetings have done a good deal more than meetings in many places in the world to belie Heider's comparison (in the German edition of her book) of Charlotte citizens with supporters of the Christian Democratic Union.

For example: in 1982, the Charlotte town meeting, together with scores of other Vermont town meetings, voted for a freeze on the production of nuclear weapons in the United States. This step led directly to the American nuclear freeze movement. Like other Vermont town meetings, Charlotte's has vigorously supported the rights of gays, women, and people of colour. It voted overwhelmingly for a Jewish woman of Swiss birth to be governor of Vermont, and for the self-styled 'socialist' Sanders to be the state's lone congressman. It generally supports the most decent and humanitarian measures that are raised in Vermont town meetings. Nor is Charlotte plagued by skinheads who beat up immigrants and celebrate the birthday of Hitler in its taverns. Christian Democrats? Please, madam, learn the facts or else desist from commenting.

Yes, I celebrate the remaining revolutionary traditions of Vermont, fragmentary as they may be, and I do not hesitate to tell residents of the United States that they are worth retaining and developing. Nor

do I take it amiss that Bakunin and Kropotkin celebrated what they took to be Russia's democratic town traditions, nor that the Spanish anarchists took great pride in the radical traditions of the Iberian peninsula. May I add that I also celebrate Greek rationalism, philosophy, art, mathematics, and certain political achievements, which hardly makes me a Greek nationalist, and many aspects of the German philosophical and cultural tradition, which hardly makes me a German nationalist.

**Method 8:** When your subject uses words that might contradict the image you are trying to create of him, a bit of creative editing of his words can be helpful.

Example: Two illustrations from the original German edition of Heider's book are striking cases in point here. First: In *Die Narren der Freiheit*, during her discussion of my essay 'Listen, Marxist!' Heider remarks, 'From his critique of neo-Bolshevik caricatures of the worker and from his lament for the reformist integration of the class struggle, Bookchin made a confusing leap of thought to a critique of workers and class struggle as such'.<sup>2</sup> This 'leap' would be confusing only to those who demagogically insert such a 'leap' into my work. Let me emphasise that the 'leap' appears only in Heider's mind, not in that or any other essay I ever wrote.

Yet Heider goes on to quote from 'Listen, Marxist!' a passage in which I called it reactionary 'to reinforce the traditional class struggle by imputing a "revolutionary" content to it'<sup>3</sup> – but she coolly removes the words I have italicised here and leaves the reader to believe that I am opposed to class struggle *as such*. In the present English translation of her book, Heider has corrected these quotations. (Probably not coincidentally – these were points that I *specifically* objected to in a criticism I wrote of her German book in 1992, published in the German anarchist periodical *Schwarzer Faden*.) Nevertheless, even in the present English version, she asserts to the English reader that I think 'class struggle' is 'the root of all evil' (page 73).

Second: In the German edition Heider quotes a passage from my book *Urbanisation Without Cities* in which I included trade unions as among the types of organisations that anarchists believe to constitute the 'social'. Apparently leaving the word *union* in the quoted sentence would have contradicted her image of me as bearing a deep enmity toward the working class. To rectify this situation, she tells her German readers that 'Bookchin describes the concept of the social as encompassing "the family, work place, fraternal and sororal groups,

religious congregations ... and professional societies".<sup>4</sup> Although her ellipsis points may have ecologically saved a millimetre or two of space on the page, it must have required a sturdy willfulness on her part to use them to replace only one word – *union*! Again, on page 85 of the English edition she restores the word *union* to this quotation, but it is likely not coincidental that this was another point to which I *specifically* objected in my criticism of the German edition.

Moreover, I have long argued that capitalism has greatly developed, perhaps overdeveloped, the vast technological bases for abundance or a 'post-scarcity society' – and I have also clearly emphasised that capitalism itself stands in the way of using its technology for human good. Heider confuses the necessary conditions for a post-scarcity society with its sufficient conditions. In her own inimitable words: Bookchin 'says that economic need is no longer a problem' (page 73). But that this were so! That we *could* have a sufficiency in the means of life *if* capitalism were removed is cynically transformed into the notion that we *do* presently have a sufficiency in the means of life *even under capitalism*. Need I emphasise that capitalism is based precisely on enforced scarcity, without which a profit system would be impossible? That Heider does not seem to understand this fact unfortunately reveals her ignorance not only of radical theory but of the very 'historical materialism' that she invokes against me, as we shall see.

So who is it, in Heider's view, that I hold 'really to *blame* for capitalism' (page 73, emphasis added)? It is 'the working class', says Heider, since I wrote in 'Listen, Marxist!' that 'a precondition for the existence of the bourgeoisie is the development of the proletariat. Capitalism as a social system presupposes the existence of *both* classes' (page 73).<sup>5</sup> The truism that wage-labour cannot exist without capital any more than capital can exist without wage labour is transformed, in Heider's ever-puzzled mind, into a potentially reactionary assertion: 'Is [Bookchin] saying that it may have been a mistake to try to unseat the bourgeoisie?'

That the inter-relationships between wage labour and capital is a concept that was developed in the socialist and anarchist movements of the last century seems to totally elude her. But (Heider tells her readers) 'for Bookchin, class struggle becomes the root of all [!] evil' – which is Heider's unique interpretation of the basic radical concept that class society *as such* is *one-sided* and the class struggle that it generates is symptomatic of its diseased condition. This is a view that is traditional to all radical theories that wish to abolish class society

and thereby the class struggle itself. One might think that Heider would have understood this basic idea before she undertook to write about social theory – or would that be asking too much?

Apparently it would, since my reminder to Marxists that ‘the history of the class struggle is the history of a disease, of the wounds opened by the famous “social question”,’ becomes in Heider’s contorted mind a condemnation of the struggle by oppressed classes as such. *Precisely* because I regard class society as a disease, indeed, as evidence of humanity’s one-sided development, Heider, who reads with her fist rather than her brain, suggests that I want to *retain* the bourgeoisie (again: ‘Is he saying it might have been a mistake to unseat the bourgeoisie?’) and suggests that I think ‘the proletariat [should] have been booted out first’. Let the reader not think that I have made up a word of this! These coarse formulations appear in all their splendour on page 73 of Heider’s warped and sick book.

**Method 9:** Try throwing *everything* up for grabs and run wild in whatever direction you can. If you pile up enough distortions, *some* of them are bound to be accepted.

Examples: Like many Marxists and anarchist alike, I admire much of work of Charles Fourier. If you are Ulrike Heider, however, you will trot out only the absurdities that this remarkable but wildly imaginative utopian presented and impute them to me (page 69). Do I advance the principle of ‘unity in diversity’ in my ecological writings? Splendid! Heider simply denigrates ‘diversity and variety’ as an ‘old liberal [pluralistic] postulate’ (page 70). Do I cite ‘prey and predators’ as means of stabilising *animal* populations? ‘Dangerous ground, this’, Heider exclaims, that could lead to ‘social-Darwinist’ conclusions about population control (page 70) – as though I were not a militant opponent of attempts to deal with population as a mere numbers game. Indeed, living as I apparently do in a ‘fog of utopian promise’ for my advocacy of decentralised communities and ecologically sound practices, I am guilty of advancing a ‘daring blueprint for techno-utopia’ in my 1965 essay ‘Towards a Liberatory Technology’, when ‘only a few months earlier [I] had been so opposed to technology’ – a contradiction for which she adduces not a single line of support from my writings (page 71). Because I draw on aspects of the past to offer alternatives for the future, my ‘vacillation between past and future is more extreme than Kropotkin’s’ – whose ‘vacillation’, presumably, is pretty bad (page 72).

**Method 10:** If all else fails – lie.

Example: In the introduction to my book, *The Spanish Anarchists* (written in 1972 or thereabouts and published in 1977), roughly *three paragraphs* allude to certain cultural similarities between the Spanish movement and the 1960s counterculture. On page 59 I described the efforts of the Spanish movement to combat alcoholism and sexual promiscuity among its members in order to prevent the degradation that had historically occurred among working people in all periods of industrialisation as traditional social relations were eroded – and as was occurring in Spain itself. This is a fairly standard observation that appears in all accounts of Spanish syndicalism in the last century.

But Heider smells ‘counter-cultural’ heresy here, and all her alarm bells go off. I am, it appears, ‘most [!] impressed by the Spanish anarchists who took up vegetarianism, anti-alcoholism, nudism, and ecological gardening’, she declaims. My ‘heart warms to the communalist-localist village anarchists and their clan-consciousness’ and to the Iberian Anarchist Federation’s (FAI) ‘*grupos afinidad* [sic]’, rather than to those who were ‘organised in unions or workers’ councils [sic]’ (page 90).

That most of the 325 pages of *The Spanish Anarchists* are devoted to detailed descriptions of various peasant and working-class *sindicatos*, their organisational forms, their strikes, their insurrections, and their daily struggles *totally* evaporates from Heider’s description of the book. Indeed, her readers learn that Bookchin ‘sees the *entire* FAI (Federación Anarchista [sic!] Iberia [sic!] as a consolidation of affinity groups’, *all* of which was structured around affinity groups, and that I see the ‘climax [!] of the Spanish Revolution [!]’ as ‘the CNT congress in Zaragossa, at which the *utopian faction* [!] of the anarcho-syndicalists won the day’, as Heider writes with a minimal knowledge of Spanish spelling or of the Spanish movement. In fact, the Zaragossa Congress of the National Confederation of Labour (CNT), of early May 1936, occurred some two months before the outbreak of the civil war, and its work is hardly exhausted by the word *utopian*. The congress, in fact, readmitted the reformist *Treintistas*, many of whom were to reinforce the conciliatory policies of the CNT leadership toward the State and the bourgeoisie as the war went on.

Worse still: ‘Here Bookchin is in agreement with the *utopian* Malatesta, for whom the unionist version of anarcho-syndicalism is a defection from “pure” anarchism. Following the argument of the historian Vernon Richards, which was bitterly challenged by Sam Dolgoff, Bookchin interprets the CNT’s wavering between revolution and compromise with historical reality [!] as reformist *Realpolitik*’



(page 90). As it turned out, in the years following the civil war, the majority of the CNT itself finally decided that its greatest blunder had been exactly this reformist *Realpolitik*. Put bluntly, Heider has literally described anarchism as a 'utopian' fantasy if it is not rooted in a crude economic syndicalism, and gallingly dismisses any anarchist theorist or vision of a libertarian society that is not oriented overwhelmingly toward factories and trade unions!

\* \* \*

I have cited these 'methods' and 'examples' primarily to show the ethical level on which Heider functions. There are more, and still more, and more after that. There is her claim that I have discarded social revolution for cultural revolution, as though the two were radically incompatible with each other (pages 73-74). There is her accusation that I think that 'the capitalist bourgeoisie [sic] has the ability to deal with crises and class struggle and that classes *within* capitalist society will disappear' – a nonsequitur if there ever was one (page 74, emphasis added). There is her complete failure to comprehend the difference between the *potentiality* for an ethics in natural evolution and the absurd notion that nature itself is ethical, a view that she tries to attribute to me (pages 76-77). There is her imputation that I regard human beings as 'passive' in relation 'nature', which is *precisely* the view of many deep ecologists, who I have been challenging for more than a decade on precisely this point (page 77). There is her caricature of my view that maternal love gives a child a rational sense of otherness. In Heider's tunnel vision this is evidence that I consider the 'mother-child symbiosis' to be 'an ideal and a permanent condition' of 'inequality, helplessness, and power', marked by the 'passive-exploitative greed of the infant and the omnipotence of the mother over her helpless offspring as an eternal, unalterable condition!' (page 77). Heider's exclamation mark does not help me understand who is dominating whom here – whether the 'omnipotent' mother or the 'exploitive' infant. In any case, both are pitted in eternal mutual combat.

Dare I invoke the simple anthropological datum that the kinship tie and what Heider calls 'Stone Age women' played 'a pivotal role' in prehistory, and Heider, chilled to the bone, declares that such formulations 'in their German translation have a frighteningly familiar [read: Nazi – M.B] ring' (page 79). Dare I suggest that band or tribal elders formed the earliest type of hierarchy, ages ago, because of their physical vulnerability, and Heider worries that this – yes, you guessed

it – ‘could lead the naive reader to believe that euthanasia might be useful’ (page 80)! Be warned that Heider is deeply concerned that my emphasis on usufruct in organic society – a word whose meaning she appears not to understand – deplorably suggests that I ‘reject Engel’s [sic!] version of original communism *because* it allegedly [!] includes the ideas [sic!] of collective property’ – not only a dazzling nonsequitur but a grotesque miscomprehension of my views (emphasis added, page 81).

Apparently, our ‘anarcho-syndicalist’ has quite a vulgar, economistic Marxist dimension. As though we were all sitting adoringly at the feet of Ernest Mandel, Heider cries that I distort Marx when I suggest that (in her paraphrase) he ‘proposed to subject nature to man in the manner of a patriarch, *thus* despiritualising not only labour, but also the product of labour, the commodity’ (page 81). The word *patriarch* here, I may add, was spun out of Heider’s head, not out of mine, as is the crude formulation she imputes to Marx. Dare I suggest that work or labour would be ‘playful’ in a free society – that is, an aesthetic activity – and I am immediately characterised as steeped in a ‘utopian imagination’ – a notion that seems to cause Heider to retch. We are even treated to a largely incoherent defence of Marx that reveals a bumbling level of economic understanding. Thus, Heider declares that I ‘ontologise the commodity and its “essence”, that is, its utility [read: use] value’ (page 82), which, of course, would turn it from a commodity into a functionally useful object! Put in simple English, this means that I want to fight for a society that produces goods to meet human needs (‘utility value’), not commodities that yield profits. Exactly what the rest of the verbiage in Heider’s ‘critique’ is supposed to mean, I am obliged to leave to her and to Sam Dolgoff, her mentor on anarchism, who is now, alas, beyond our mortal reach.

\* \* \*

Having suggested that I believe that elderly people (presumably including myself) should commit suicide, I am also a strong advocate of inequality because I write that the notion of ‘justice’ is based on the false ‘equality of unequals’. This is an inequality that is physically and socially created, let me emphasise, and that either unavoidably exists from person to person because of physical infirmities from one stage of life to another and/or is imposed by hierarchical and class rule. This condition, I go on to emphasise, must be remedied by the realm of Freedom, creating a substantive ‘equality of unequals’. Alas,

Heider *never* cites this contrast: It is enough for her that I dared acknowledge the existence of inequality of *any* kind, irrespective of the need to rectify it in a rational society. 'Any theory [!] of "inequality",' she declaims, 'whether in the name of liberation or feminism, whether *justified* by notions of "diversity" or "complementarity", is intrinsically undemocratic and beats a path straight to the political right' (page 91).

I am not at all sure I know what Heider is talking about. Does she really think we are all really 'equally' strong, healthy, wealthy, and powerful, as legal fiction would have it, in this presumably 'just' but eminently unfree society? Are we to impose upon ill, elderly, and weak persons the same social responsibilities that we impose on healthy, young, and strong persons? Anyone today who defended such a notion of 'justice' – whether they called themselves socialist, anarchist or liberal reformist – would indeed be on the political right. In a society based on the ideology of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, with their indifference to human suffering precisely in the name of juridical 'equality', no attempt would be made to equalise the differences that burden the very young, the very old, the disabled, the ill, and so on.

Still further: In my book, *The Ecology of Freedom*, Heider writes, 'capitalism is neither mentioned nor criticised' and anarchism 'is discussed only as a negative example of what we *don't* want' – a pair of blatant fabrications whose inclusion in Heider's book must surely rest on her hope that her readers will never examine my book. Indeed, from an espouser of utopias, I turn into a committed advocate of negative liberty. Heider, it would seem, is *totally* indifferent to the fact that I discuss the nature of a future society in considerable detail in the last two chapters of the book.

As to my writings on the city, the farrago of distortions, misstatements, and whole fabrications that mark her discussion are too dizzying to examine in detail. Heider says I 'banish ... the city from the history of ideas' (page 85) – even though I have written several books on cities, including *Urbanisation Without Cities*, a massively historical as well as interpretive defence of the city against urbanisation. Thus it would appear that I am a ruralist pure and simple. That I examine in detail in *Urbanisation Without Cities* the historical development of various liberatory traditions in cities gives her occasion to mockingly paraphrase its message as 'Long live the past!' (page 83). The reader learns that my view of history is 'idealistic' largely because I challenge Marx's 'historical materialism' (page 84).

Moreover, I make little more than a 'half-hearted attempt' to criticise Athenian 'misogyny, xenophobia, and slavery' (page 85); and I allude to the 'noble ancestry' of Greek democrats – an allusion that Heider turns into a 'stress' and that obviously means that I *favour* aristocracy (page 85). I 'seem ... to identify [!] with Aristotle's horror of the "rule of the many over the few" or *even* of "the poor over the wealthy"' (page 85) simply because I mention those notions – hence I am *against* democracy and favour oligarchy, the rich, and presumably patriarchy. Indeed, I need only *mention* a thinker and discuss his or her ideas – and Heider feels free to attribute them to me.

The quagmire of Heider's dishonesty seems almost too limitless to plumb. Having unburdened herself of these totally contrived falsehoods; having suggested that I think the elderly should be put to death; that I consider the working class to be the real source of present-day social problems; that I abandon Marx's "historical materialism" (God forgive me!); that I favour the rich over the poor – Heider then goes on to apprise her readers that my 'urban ideal' is the village (page 87); that I 'despise industry more than industrial exploitation' (page 87); and that my model is 'the tribe, village, handicrafts, small trade [!], small capitalism [!]' (page 87). Once again we hear Heider repeat the refrain whenever she comes across views of mine that diverge from Marx's: '*One cannot help* but be reminded of the caste particularism of the fascists, their differentiation between working capital and greedy capital, their glorification of the past, and their moralistic vision' (emphasis added, page 88).

Let us, then, reverse Heider's distortions and opine in Heiderian fashion: '*One cannot help* but be reminded that Heider is an economic determinist, that she regards the loving relationship between mother and child as exploitative, that she believes in the "domination of nature", that she wants to ignore the lessons of the past, and that she has no moral vision at all.' I will leave it to the reader to tally up the vulgarity and viciousness of her 'criticism' – and her unspeakable demagoguery.

\* \* \*

In fact, Ulrike Heider's political ideas, as I have already suggested, seem to be guided by a vulgar Marxism, which she tries to defend in the name of anarcho-syndicalism. Indeed: 'I am influenced by the method of critique of ideologies as it was first developed Marx's *The German Ideology*', she writes in her English introduction, 'in which he revealed the false consciousness of his contemporaries and explained it out of the objective historical situation' – which 'situation', for Marx

– and Engels (who also had a big hand in the book) was largely economistic. To drag in virtually all the leading figures of the Frankfurt School as further influences on herself, plus Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and Karl Korsch is to make a mockery of a brilliant albeit disparate body of thinkers. Considering the low level of Heider's criticism, I would regard her invocation of their names as a pure pretention.

Heider essentially disposes of Noam Chomsky in some nine perfunctory pages, largely filled with biographical and, more warily, with a few theoretical synopses. Poor chap: he is, in Heider's eyes, a 'fellow traveller' of anarcho-syndicalism (page 37). Which disposes of Chomsky. Her enormously overwritten account of the proprietarians or 'anarcho-capitalists', on the other hand, seems like nothing more than filler material. Her tract would seem like little more than a diatribe against me if she did not add on nearly sixty pages to give it book length. Having known Murray Rothbard, the centrepiece of her account, for a time, I find that I agree with Sam Dolgoff, who Heider quotes, that he and his ideas are 'repulsive'. Although Rothbard eschews any anarchist orientation whatever (he even attacked me as an anarchist with vigour because, as he put it, I am opposed to private property), Heider tells us that he 'is *viewed* in anarcho-capitalist circles [which?] as the latest addition to their hall of fame' – which includes, I suppose, such 'anarchists' as the Austrian School of laissez-faire economics and that avowed paragon of 'selfishness', Ayn Rand. Thereafter, Heider fills page after page with clumsy disquisitions on Max Stirner, Benjamin Tucker, Carl Menger, F. A. Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and greater and lesser heirs of Adam Smith. Thus the 'book', having filled enough pages to qualify as more than a mere pamphlet, can now be unleashed on the public with a fetching and basically misleading title.

One may reasonably wonder which tried, fast, and unswerving anarchists Heider actually *does* admire. After all, she disposes of Malatesta as a 'utopian' (page 90); of Fourier as a quack, 'often comically naive' (page 91); and of Kropotkin as a queasy 'vacillator'. Let it not be said, however, that Heider is without heroes. The looming figure in Heider's book is really Sam Dolgoff, a man I knew well from 1965 to 1976. I helped him prepare his book on Bakunin after he despaired that he would never be able to publish it, and I personally presented it with a strong recommendation to my editor, Angus Cameron, of Alfred A. Knopf, which did publish it.<sup>6</sup> I should add that it was I who suggested that Dolgoff edit a book on the Spanish

collectives (he initially wanted to write an account of Bakunin's relationship with Nechayev), and I wrote the preface for it, which he then censored because I expressed my disagreement with the CNT's entry into the Madrid government.<sup>7</sup>

In Heider's book, many of Dolgoff's more ungracious attitudes resurface in her treatment of the Spanish anarchists, as well as Malatesta, and Vernon Richards (whom Dolgoff detested for his criticism of the Bakunin book and of the CNT-FAI's entry into the Madrid and Catalan governments in 1936). Inasmuch as Dolgoff is no longer with us, it would be unfair to criticise him for views that he cannot personally defend. In fact, despite her admiration for him, Heider essentially reduces Dolgoff to a crusty schoolteacher who 'grades' anarchists from Bakunin to Isaac Puente (a man largely unknown outside of Spain) on the degree to which they were 'realistic' syndicalists rather than 'utopian' anarchists. In Heider's eyes, Dolgoff suffered from only one major failing: he shared 'the counter-culture's romance with Native American tribalism' (page 36), which she coolly extrapolates from the fact that Dolgoff hoped that 'Third World' peoples would not abandon the more cooperative features of tribal life. In all fairness to Dolgoff, I believe this to be either a typical Heider distortion or else an example of her fatuousness.

More disquieting is the favourable account she gives to Dolgoff's political pragmatism – which, if accurate, would be very disturbing. She glows as she observes that Dolgoff 'prefers [!] anti-fascism to principled adherence to dogma' (page 29) – that is, to revolution – as though conducting a revolution in Spain in 1936-39 were in contradiction to the struggle against the Francoists, as the Stalinists were to claim. He regarded it as a 'malicious defamation', she observes approvingly, to accuse the CNT leadership of discarding its anarcho-syndicalist principles when it entered the Madrid and Catalan governments and the FAI of turning into an expressly electoral party machine (page 29). She invokes the old canard, which she imputes to him, that the take-over of Barcelona and much of Catalonia by the CNT's rank-and-file militants could be equated to 'establishing an anarchist dictatorship' (page 29), presumably comparable to the top-down party dictatorship established by the Bolsheviks – as if the CNT-FAI had not *relinquished* power won by its rank-and-file in Catalonia to the thoroughly discredited State, increasingly infiltrated by the Stalinist minority in the country (page 29). Dolgoff, Heider proudly tells us, supported American participation in the Second World War 'as a necessary evil for

destroying Nazi rule' and was 'puzzled how liberal academics like George Woodcock or anarchists purists like Marcus Graham ... could be so relentless in their opposition to the war' (page 28). If all of these compromises with the State are necessary, then why bother to be an anarchist at all? Throughout the twentieth century, nearly all the 'lesser evils' that Heider says Dolgoff adopted were palmed off by Social Democrats as excuses for reformist practices.

In fact, Dolgoff, we learn from Heider, was 'the last anarchist'. She finds him to be a man who 'never wavers as he sails between the Scylla of anarchist nostalgia and the Charybdis of anarcho-futuristic daydreams, always arriving back into safe harbour' (page 37). Perhaps – but I doubt if Dolgoff would have chosen to be shipwrecked on the rocks of Heider's extremely crude pragmatism, which is no different from the most opportunistic practices of the German Greens – all her professions of anarcho-syndicalism to the contrary notwithstanding.

But now that 'the last anarchist' is no longer alive, 'one wonders' (to use a Heider literary stylism) how anarchism can possibly survive. Indeed, how qualified is Heider to judge who is an anarchist – past, present, or future? An overall view of Heider's book indicates clearly that it combines a crude economic Marxism with an extremely narrow-minded syndicalism, in which a future, presumably rational society would be structured around mere trade unions and factory operations. There is every reason to believe that the word *anarchism*, with its historic commitment to the confederation of municipalities – the famous 'Commune of communes' – is in her eyes completely 'utopian' and that she merely hijacks the word to add colour and pedigree to her simplistic trade-unionism – a world that, by her own admission to me, she personally knows little about.

Finally, and by no means unimportantly, 'one wonders' as well what happened to *ethics* along the way – especially among radicals who profess to be anti-authoritarian, ethical socialists. Herein lies a question that is worth meditating upon today, especially when so many self-styled anarchists lie, distort, and edit ideas with moral standards comparable to those of junk bond dealers and corporate raiders.

**27th September 1994**

#### Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all page numbers cited at the end of quotations herein refer to the English translation of her book.
2. 'Von der Kritik an der neobolschewistischen Karrikatur des Arbeiters und der Klage über die reformistische Integration des Klassenkampfes macht Bookchin einen verwirrenden Gedankensprung hin zur Kritik des Arbeiters und des Klassenkampfes

schlechthin.' Ulrike Heider, *Die Narren der Freiheit* (Berlin, Karin Kramer Verlag, 1992) page 90. All references to the German edition are henceforth indicated by *NDF* followed by the page number.

3. For the original passage in 'Listen, Marxist!' see Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley, Ramparts Press, 1971; republished in Montreal by Black Rose Books, 1986). It appears on page 186 of this book – and not on page 208, contrary to Heider's footnote, one of several erroneous page citations.

4. 'Bookchins Beschreibung des sozialen bezieht sich auf 'Familie, Arbeitsplatz, brüderliche und schwesterliche Gruppen, Religionsvereinigung ... und Berufsorganisationen', in *Die Narren der Freiheit*, page 105. The passage she quotes is from my *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*, republished in Canada as *Urbanization Without Cities* (Montreal, Black Rose Books), page 32.

5. Although Heider tells us this quote comes from page 242 of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, it is actually found on page 220.

6. Sam Dolgoff (editor), *Bakunin on Anarchy* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1971).

7. Sam Dolgoff (editor), *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' Self-management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-39* (New York, Free Life Editions, 1974; republished in Montreal by Black Rose Books). I should add that all this publishing activity happened after the old Libertarian League, to which we had both belonged in the mid-1960s, dissolved and Dolgoff found himself in a political limbo, even offering to turn over the correspondence of the defunct League to my Anarchos group. Still, we had political differences from the very day I joined the Libertarian League (in 1965) to its self-dissolution and long afterward. Thus it was not because of our political disagreements that Dolgoff and I 'parted company', as I believe he says in his memoirs. Quite to the contrary, we retained a very close relationship well into the 1970s. His account of our relationship in his memoirs is simply false.



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## Nicolas Walter

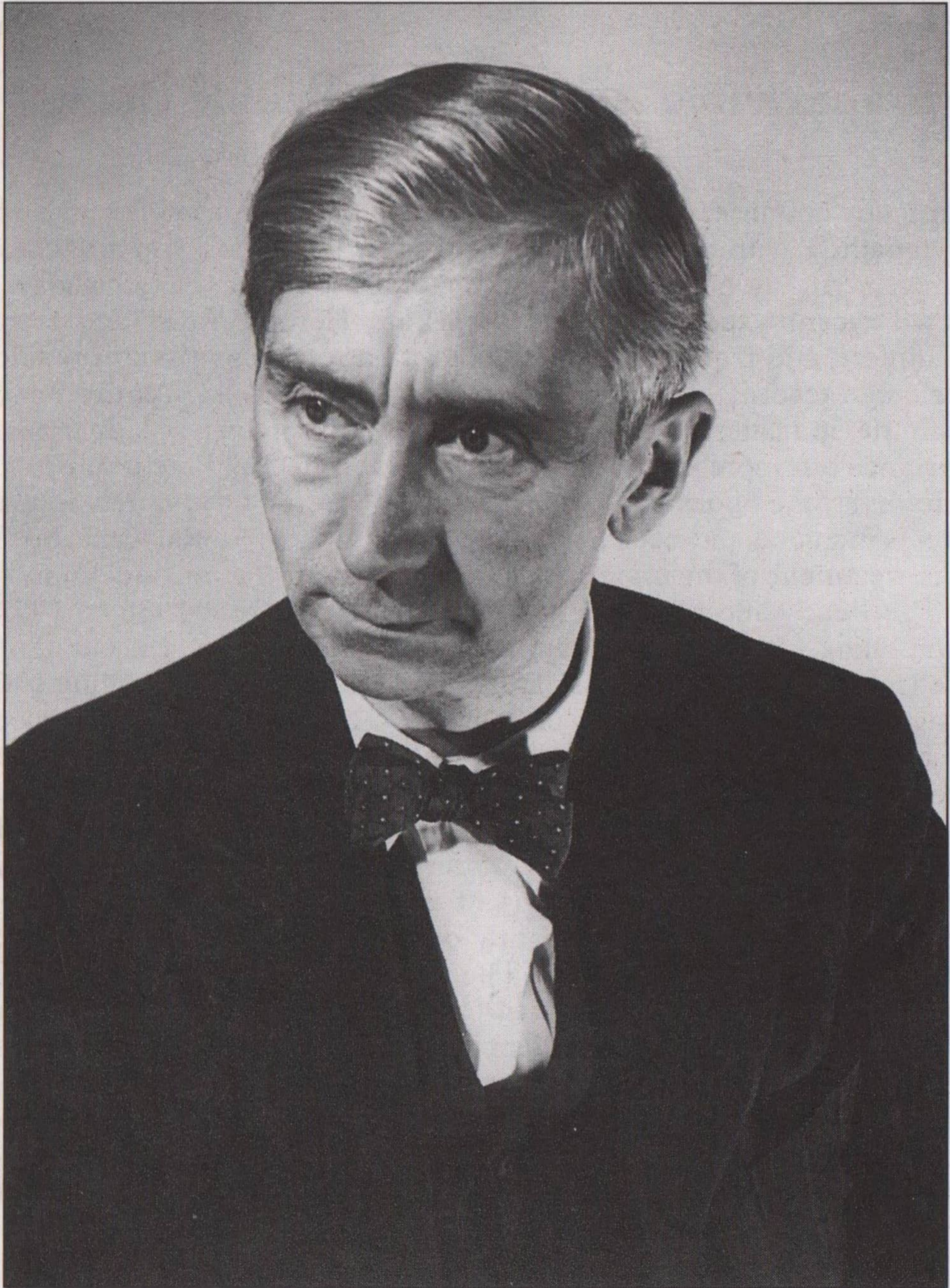
### Remarkable Authors: Admirable Books\*

In many countries it has been normal for prominent intellectuals to sympathise with anarchist ideas and even to support the anarchist movement, but not so much in this country and not at all nowadays. Two recent exceptions to the rule are Herbert Read and Alex Comfort, and David Goodway's collections of their writings provide valuable records of their involvement with our cause. As the Read subtitle indicates, the emphasis is not just on general anarchist writings but more specifically on those published by Freedom Press. However, the books have wider interest because of the variety of the items included and because of the quality of the editorial work, both the treatment of the material and the content of the introductions.

The Read collection contains 39 items dating from 1938 to 1953 and filling 178 pages, with an introduction of 26 pages; the Comfort collection contains 29 items dating from 1943 to 1986 and filling 136 pages, with an introduction of 23 pages. The two books make a nice set, and it is only a pity that this hasn't been made clearer; thus the cover designs are excellent but dissimilar, and the sources of the various items are indicated differently – on the contents page for Read and at the end of each item for Comfort (not all of the latter have been traced). (Incidentally, the copyright situation of both books is rather unclear.) The books are elegantly designed and efficiently printed. The prices are very reasonable. The introductions are models of their kind – well informed, well researched, well written and well worth reading. Goodway gives excellent accounts of Read's and Comfort's distinguished careers – the former a critic and educationist but also a poet and novelist, the latter a gerontologist and sexologist but also a poet and novelist too. He traces their different paths towards and within and from anarchism and places their personal contributions in context. The double achievement is attractive and impressive.

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\* *A One-Man Manifesto, and other writings for Freedom Press* by Herbert Read, edited by David Goodway, Freedom Press, £6.00, and *Against Power and Death: The Anarchist Articles and Pamphlets* by Alex Comfort, edited by David Goodway, Freedom Press, £5.00.



**Herbert Read, 1893-1968** (photograph by Vernon Richards, 1948)

With such prolific writers there are inevitable problems over criteria for inclusion in such collections. The Read book includes several things which were published by but not really written 'for' Freedom Press – three radio talks, for example, and a major public lecture. On the other hand it excludes several other things which were published by Freedom Press – especially the pamphlets *The Philosophy of Anarchism* (1940) and *Existentialism, Marxism and Anarchism* (1949) and the introduction to *Kropotkin: Selections from His Writings* (1942) – as well as many other anarchist writings over a period of more than thirty years which have been recycled in various other collections. Most of these items are covered in the introduction – though it doesn't mention the lecture on 'Anarchism in the Affluent Society' which Read gave in the 1960s. Similarly, the Comfort book doesn't include all 'the' anarchist articles and pamphlets he produced, but excludes many reviews and articles in various papers which haven't been reprinted, and especially the Freedom Press pamphlets *Barbarism and Sexual Freedom* (1948) and *Delinquency* (1951). Again, many of these are covered in the introduction though it doesn't mention the introduction to Harold Barclay's book *People Without Government* (1982). Whatever one might feel about what is and is not in the books, however, they contain generous samples from their remarkable authors.

Herbert Read (1893-1968) was attracted to anarchism at an early age, but then in turn to Guild Socialism, Social Credit and Leninist Communism, before he finally turned to anarchism in reaction to the Spanish Revolution. He was recruited to the cause by Emma Goldman, willingly wrote and spoke for the movement for fifteen years, and continued to produce anarchist material for another fifteen years. He came to anarchism very much as an intellectual, and his writing always tended to abstraction. The first items here date from the Spanish Civil War, but one would hardly know it. They are curiously and characteristically remote from practical issues, beginning with a denunciation of war when the Spanish anarchists were fighting for their lives and a discussion of revolution in almost total isolation from events in Spain and elsewhere. Later comes the pamphlet *The Education of Free Men*, written at the time of the 1944 Education Act, but consisting almost entirely of an academic discussion of theorists from Plato to Freud and containing almost no personal insights or constructive policies. The longer exposition of his educational theory – *Education Through Art* (1943) – which is not included, proposed that creative art should be the basis of the

educational system, which sounds attractive but seems just as dogmatic as the traditional emphasis on literacy, numeracy and competitive games (especially for children without relevant talent).

Read always wrote well, and there are many fine pieces scattered through the book, but one may wonder how some of the longer writings might have been received if he hadn't been a famous intellectual. *The Philosophy of Anarchism* is very philosophical indeed, and so is *Existentialism, Marxism and Freedom*. His defences of the *War Commentary* editors in 1945 are generous but strangely gentle in the circumstances. The title essay, 'A One-Man Manifesto', was an appeal for unilateral disarmament in 1951, which suffered from being issued in the worst days of the Cold War, a few years before the rise of the nuclear disarmament movement, and from being too introverted, foreshadowing his marginal part in that movement. The Conway Memorial Lecture on *Art and the Evolution of Man* (1951) was a fascinating contribution to a neglected series, but has little to do with anarchism. Perhaps the most significant item from the anarchist perspective is the 1947 lecture on 'Anarchism: Past and Future', setting out his programme for the movement; even here he seems to be rather out of touch, when he sees the main elements of anarchism as personal freedom, mutual aid and non-violence, and forgets direct action, and when he recommends the study of history, anthropology, sociology and psychology, and forgets politics.

Read was permanently alienated from the anarchist movement by his acceptance of a knighthood in 1953, and the book ends with his weak defence; it might have been better either to omit it or add some of the criticisms it was replying to. He later became an increasingly isolated survival in an increasingly indifferent world, though he continued to write excellent essays to the end. The final impression is of a very charming and civilised person, too much so for the rough and tumble of radical politics, who brought a touch of high culture to anarchist journalism (though Goodway goes too far in repeating the claim that he wrote 'some of the finest prose of our time').

Alex Comfort (1920- ) turned to pacifism and then to anarchism during the Second World War, and published anarchist and pacifist material in many places for nearly half a century. Where Read tended to abstraction, Comfort tended to rhetoric. His writings are highly intellectual but also highly emotional. His version of pacifism is aggressive anti-militarism, his version of anarchism is passionate individualism, and both are based on personal disobedience to all forms of barbarism. The first items here were some of the most

remarkable comments on the war, worth reading alongside the very different contemporary views of George Orwell, say, or J.B. Priestley. His defence of the *War Commentary* editors became an eloquent denunciation of the Establishment. After the war he continued to produce powerful anti-war propaganda and played a central part in the nuclear disarmament movement. He seems to have lost patience with the anarchist movement in about 1951, concentrated on scientific popularisation and wider libertarian propaganda, and achieved fame and fortune in the 1970s with *The Joy of Sex* and *More Joy of Sex*.

His main contribution to anarchist theory is his psychopathology of power, fully expressed in his book *Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State* (1950), and Goodway gives a good account of this (though he makes a rare mistake in repeating the common misquotation of Action's dictum, 'Power tends to corrupt – not 'All power corrupts' – 'and absolute power corrupts absolutely'). Comfort continued to produce a vast amount of material, and there are several fine pieces scattered through the rest of this book, but something went wrong somewhere. His creative gifts seem to have failed in the 1950s, and his social and scientific writing steadily deteriorated after the 1960s. His ideas became increasingly mystical and his writings became increasingly mystifying. His contribution to the centenary issue of *Freedom* (1986) was disappointing in general and included some strange details, such as a reference to the (imaginary) influence of William Godwin on Thomas Jefferson. His Conway Memorial Lecture on *Science, Religion and Scientism* (1990) fell well below the level of his previous work (and of Read's forty years earlier).

Comfort is a much starker figure than Read. He sets humanity against the universe, and the individual against society. Read was a brave soldier (twice decorated) in the First World War, and Comfort was a brave conscientious objector in the Second World War, but Comfort seems far more belligerent. The final impression is of a very clever and angry man, too much so for either academic or political life, who brought a touch of real distinction to anarchist and pacifist journalism (and did perhaps produce some of the finest prose of our time).

Goodway attempts to identify the specific versions of anarchism held by Read and Comfort, but while his expositions are always fascinating his conclusions aren't always convincing. He says that 'Read's anarchist political theory was unremarkable'; but it was surely remarkable in its dependence on aesthetics (the main preoccupation



*Alex Comfort, born 1920 (photograph by Vernon Richards, c.1948)*

of his whole career) and on psychoanalysis (first Freud and then Jung). He says that 'Read's undeniably original contribution to anarchism was as an educational theorist'; but he was surely anticipated by several predecessors, from Ruskin, Wilde and Morris onwards.

Goodway sees Read as a precursor and Comfort as a pioneer of the so-called 'new anarchism' postulated by George Woodcock. They both certainly advised anarchists to turn from political revolution to social science, and this was more or less the programme of *Anarchy* magazine during the 1960s; however, the entry of anarchist intellectuals into the academy has proved to be a rather mixed blessing – and anyway this line of development had been anticipated by Kropotkin and Landauer half a century before. But Read always identified himself with traditional anarchism, and Comfort always distanced himself from the collectivism which dominates 'new' as much as 'old' anarchism. They both withdrew from the anarchist movement in the early 1950s, but it isn't clear whether this was a shift from 'old' anarchism or from anarchism itself – I suspect the latter. It is noticeable that both men seldom suggested any action that was both positive and practicable.

In the end it is hard to identify the permanent places of these two figures. They shared the old-fashioned sense of superiority of their respective groups – artists for Read, scientists for Comfort – and Goodway shows how they tried to use art or science to justify their anarchism. They may have failed, but they were right to try. Anarchism stands or falls to the extent that it succeeds in satisfying the human need not just for life and liberty but for beauty, and in satisfying the scientific test of truth to nature and human nature. Read clearly influenced many people and even converted some to anarchism (though I have never understood why), and Comfort clearly influenced many people and also converted some to anarchist antimilitarism. But when they are re-read at length they emerge as typical examples of bourgeois intellectuals – though Read liked to pose as a peasant – who never quite appreciate the routine burden of everyday life for ordinary people.

One irony which isn't raised by these collections but arises from their whole work is that Read and Comfort thought of themselves primarily as creative writers, but their poetry and fiction have dated badly. Read was best known as an almost compulsive advocate of modernism in art, but this has proved to be largely a dead end. Comfort is best known as an advocate of free and joyful sex (Goodway rightly

emphasises the libertarian implications), but this has proved to be literally a dead end in the age of AIDS and anomie. Those who knew them remember them best for their personalities, which will fade; but some of the best of them has been carefully preserved for us in these two admirable books.

**This review was first published in *Freedom*, 23rd July 1994**

Dear Derek Stanford,

You ask for a précis of my beliefs. Here is a letter-length version of them.

I start by being a biologist. I believe that man has one unique property, his power of intelligent foresight ('Prometheus' means that, of course) which makes him able to deal intelligently with his environment and at the same time gives him a great capacity for anxiety and fear.

I believe that there is no evidence that any of the things which human beings value (freedom, beauty, etc.) have any objective reality outside man, but that they are none the less valuable for that. They exist only while he asserts them against a hostile universe, and as long as he himself exists.

I believe in one ethical principle, the solidarity of man against death and ... against the human allies of death – those who side with Power. I recognise two obligations – to do nothing to increase the total of human suffering, and to leave nothing undone which diminishes it. For that reason I personally think I should split my time between letters and applied science, and do.

The emphasis on death in my *Elegies* is only one side of the statement, and isn't a reflection of pessimism, unless you think humanism pessimistic. 'Lazarus' represents my attitude to the other side of the subject, but there is a limit to the rate at which I write. I feel that art is concerned to state the problem, and science and direct action (not 'politics' but mutual aid) to solve it in so far as it can be solved.

I think this view is at root scientific, and if I find contrary evidence I'll certainly alter it – publicly – but at present it explains more observed facts than any other theory of reality which I know.

I don't know if these notes may make my ideas clearer. I hope so.

**Alex Comfort**



## Three Criticisms of Nicolas Walter's Review

### I

*Jan Weryho*

Dear Editors,

I have always appreciated NW's book reviews, whether in *TLS* or *Freedom*. So, I have very much enjoyed his review of the collected anarchist articles by Herbert Read and Alex Comfort ('Remarkable Authors: Admirable Books' in *Freedom*, 23rd July 1994). I haven't read anything by Alex Comfort, but I have read and admired a few things by Herbert Read. NW expresses surprise that some people have been converted to anarchism by his writings. Being one of those few, I should like to share my experience with NW, although it is necessarily very personal and may offer no parallels with Read's other 'converts'.

Around 1959 I picked up a copy of Read's *Philosophy of Anarchism* (7th imprint, 1949) from your bookshop, then near the British Museum. I was struck by the opening sentence: 'The characteristic political attitude of today is not one of positive belief, but of despair'. Despair indeed was my feeling as a Polish refugee in England! After the suppression of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 the neo-Stalinist night had fallen upon all of Eastern Europe. I could no longer identify with Polish emigré anti-Communism which by then had degenerated into near-fascism. I was disgusted with Western capitalism. I abhorred British and American imperialism, although at that time I did not consider them as evil as the Russian one. Every Pole needs a political idea to live by, just as every Englishman needs a sports team to support. Here was a light of hope in the sea of despair!

Unlike some people, I never had any doubts about the desirability of anarchism, but I did have some doubts about its feasibility. Here a very reasonable, obviously highly learned man was telling me it could be done. Rather naive, you will say. Yes, but I was in my twenties!

Also, as a religious believer, I appreciated Read's sympathetic treatment of religion (chapter 3, pages 19-25). It was in marked contrast with the fierce attacks on religion (not just on corrupt,

authoritarian clergy, but on the very idea of religion) in *Freedom* of the time. Read was too much of an aesthete not to have appreciated the contribution of religion to art and culture.

I had thought of meeting Mr Read, but was too shy. Too bad, because all non-anarchists who knew him agree that he was a very nice man.

*The Philosophy of Anarchism* was my introduction to Read's writings. I had not at that time heard of Read as an art historian, a literary critic or a poet. Since then I have come to very much admire his writings on art history and literary criticism. I have read just a few of his poems. I thought they were good, but not particularly great. Maybe I should have read more? NW calls Read a novelist. To my knowledge he had written only one novel, *The Green Child*. I have not read it.

Like most anarchists I was shocked by Read's acceptance of a knighthood. A Canadian anarchist friend dismissed it: 'probably Mrs Read wanted to become Lady Read'.

NW calls Read a 'bourgeois intellectual'. Maybe I am a bourgeois intellectual (or just plain bourgeois) and maybe this is why Read's interpretation of anarchism has appealed to me.

**First published in *Freedom*, 20th August 1994**

Though I maintain that all the necessary principles of anarchism are to be found in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, nevertheless in examining the historical development of socialism during the last hundred years in search of the cause of this sad deviation, I think we are bound to discover that in certain questions of revolutionary tactics, Bakunin and not Marx was right.

The difference between Marx and Bakunin (apart from a difference of temperament) was really a difference in their conception of revolution. Marx conceived revolution as an historical process – a violent change, no doubt, but a change brought about by a trained and disciplined class-conscious proletariat.

Bakunin, on the other hand, conceived revolution as a spontaneous act – an explosion of forces that could no longer be repressed. Marx thought out a plan of campaign, with every step consolidated on an economic basis. Bakunin saw elemental passions directed to the immediate destruction of evil and to the equally immediate establishment of justice. This aspect of Bakunin's creed has since his time received a powerful reinforcement in Sorel's theory of direct action and the general strike.

**Herbert Read**

## II

### Tony Gibson

Dear Editors,

I have just read Nicolas Walter's review (*Freedom*, 23rd July 1994) of Alex Comfort's collection of writings published by Freedom Press as *Writings Against Power and Death*, and am somewhat astonished by some of the statements he makes.

Right at the end he writes, referring to both Herbert Read and Comfort: 'Those who knew them remember them best for their personalities, which will fade; but some of the best of them has been carefully preserved for us in these two admirable books'. The uninitiated might suppose that Walter is referring to two dead men whom some of us used to know. Having been talking to Comfort this morning, I can assure readers that he is still alive and kicking and he tells me that he will shortly be bringing out a new book of poetry.

In another part of his curious review, Walter writes: 'His creative gifts seem to have failed in the 1950s, and his social and scientific writing steadily deteriorated after the 1960s. His ideas became increasingly mystical and his writings became increasingly mystifying'.

The reality is that after the ending of his unsatisfactory marriage with Ruth Harris, Comfort went off with Jane Henderson (whom he subsequently married) and hence got over his migrainous condition and the long periods of depression in the 1960s which inhibited his creativity. So began, in the 1970s, the period of his greatest significant scientific productivity and the publication of books that have had the widest revolutionary significance throughout the world. I agree with Professor Arthur Salmon that the peak of his scientific creativity and accomplishment was towards the end of the 1970s. In 1978 Salmon wrote: 'Comfort is generally recognised as the foremost gerontologist of the twentieth century'. For the record, during the 1970s and 1980s Comfort was publishing in no less than fourteen scientific and medical journals known to me, and probably in other journals unknown to me. I really cannot understand why Walter should presume to set himself up as a judge of the merit of scientific writing.

I have used the term 'revolutionary' of Comfort's writings in the 1970s, and no doubt those who think of revolution solely in terms of street barricades will raise their eyebrows. But he has been the leading

figure in two inter-related revolutions in human thought and behaviour. He was chiefly responsible for the revolution in gerontology that occurred in the 1970s that has altered very materially the power relations between the generations, and which will have its full impact in the twenty-first century. His popular book *A Good Age* (which I am surprised that David Goodway does not mention) is a spin-off from the new scientific gerontology. He revised it in 1990, and it was re-published by Pan Books.

As to the other revolution to which Comfort has made so distinguished a contribution, the sexual revolution, Walter makes a very significant remark that reveals the depth of his own misunderstanding of the nature of revolution. He writes: 'Comfort is best known as an advocate of free and joyful sex (Goodway rightly emphasises the libertarian implications), but this has proved to be literally a dead end in the age of AIDS and anomie'. The implication here is that Comfort has been the apostle of sexual promiscuity, and *that* is what his two popular sex books are about. Walter's reference to AIDS implies that now God has put a stop to all that nonsense by threatening us with a fatal disease, so Comfort's revolutionary endeavour has proved 'literally stone dead'. Check mate! I can best advise interested readers to read what Comfort says about AIDS in the revised 1987 edition of *The Joy of Sex*. As I see it, freedom and revolution imply responsibility, and that has always been the essence of Comfort's anarchism.

I strongly applaud Freedom Press for publishing this selection of Comfort's early writings, but I am afraid that the impression that Walter gives that he more or less fizzled out after the 1950s is quite grotesque.

**This letter was first published in *Freedom*, 17th September 1994**

### III

## Dachine Rainer

Dear Editors,

Like Tony Gibson (*Freedom*, 17th September 1994) I too found Nicolas Walter's review of Alex Comfort's collection of writings published by Freedom Press, *Writings Against Power and Death*, 'astonishing'. It came as a disquieting surprise that Walter was so perfunctory, unjustly damning, albeit sometimes with confused, reluctant praise. I found this review baffling and distressing, not only for the many reasons Tony Gibson gave, but for additional ones.

Recently I re-read one of Comfort's earliest stories, *The Martyrdom of the House* published by Holley Cantine the year before I joined him (1945) as co-editor of *Retort*, the New York anarchist magazine. I remembered the emotional impact of that story, but not quite how powerful a precursor it was of his novel *The Power House* published not long after (reviewed in *Retort*). It is a study of the psychological underpinnings of manipulation and could only have been written by an anarchist. For years the arrival of a new Comfort was a source of unalloyed pleasure to *Retort*'s editors, and to this day his books, lectures, conversation remains an exciting event.

Alex told me earlier this year that *The Power House* has been out of print these many decades. Establishments have a sense of smell about keeping good art and anarchist politics under wraps. Really Walter's belittling services – or misunderstandings – are not required. What can he mean of Read and Comfort when he writes of 'their involvement with *our* cause'? Both men regarded themselves as anarchists; Herbert Read died one, Alex remains one. Yet, in typically loaded language, Walter speculates on 'their shift from "old" anarchism or from anarchism itself. I suspect the latter'.

What are the grounds for his suspicion? Anarchists come in several sizes and shapes. Do we all have to look like Nicolas Walter? If one doesn't, does he or she – and in particular these two self-acknowledged anarchists (Read from about the age of 40, Comfort 20) become 'typical examples of bourgeois intellectuals'? How? Why does Walter think so? His couldn't be vestigial Marxism could it? Is it because Alex hit a financial jackpot with *The Joy of Sex*? A non-anarchist would have been unlikely to hold these views – or that Sir Herbert demonstrated that man is fallible. We've known this for

some time. Tolstoi, or in our times Holley Cantine, devoted a great deal of their time in furious struggles towards 'exemplary behaviour' and like most of us, could be fallible as all hell! I can't see that the reputation of an anarchist should be diminished for all time by an infrequent fall from his – and our – political and moral values. (I draw the line at wars; no anarchists is entitled to support one, ever.) I think that Read's knighthood is of minimal importance, nothing to turn him 'bourgeois'. As Walter says, Read as a political theoretician is not 'convincing'. His aesthetic views are unreliable, having sat on artistic matters in the court of the Communists; his educational theories are sound anarchism, if not particularly original.

On the whole, there is little comparison between Read and Comfort, so to what end does Walter write a twinning review comparing them? And moreover, does as like as not, get it 'arse backwards'!

I've just mentioned war. Walter writes: 'Read was a brave soldier (twice decorated) in the First World War'. Decorated by whom? The very English establishment about whom Comfort, in the very next war, was to write: 'We seem to be in the hands of a government which wishes to cover itself in detail with every infamy it has denounced in the enemy'. Can it be that Nicolas Walter differs? It is not anarchists only who came to regard World War One as a not particularly useful exercise for man; subsequent wars similarly. Opportunities for genuine bravery in the military were minimal and now are obsolete. What is brave in relation to the most demented of human activities exists in the act of saying 'No thanks!' Comfort, like Cummings and some of the rest of us, is a 'no thanks' anarchist. It is cowardice that causes one to acquiesce to the state's intentions for one's own destruction and for that of one's fellow man; cowardice, and possibly stupidity, if one accepts prevailing propaganda. Comfort did neither, and it is for this that Walter writes 'Comfort is a much starker figure than Read. He set humanity versus the universe, the individual versus society'? Anyone unable to distinguish between *society* and *state* is clearly not to be trusted with determining who is and who is not an anarchist.

Yet, Walter persists: 'Comfort ... a brave conscientious objector, but Comfort seems far more belligerent ... a very clever and angry man ... pacifist journalism ... Comfort tended to rhetoric ... highly emotional ... his version of pacifism is aggressive antimilitarism ...' Loaded words? I should say so. Comradely? Or at least acknowledging that Alex Comfort belongs to our common cause? I think not.

Instead Walter writes that Comfort 'steadily deteriorated since the 1960s'! But this aspect of the Walter piece Tony Gibson has treated with incontrovertible ease.

Tony questions Walter's competence to judge the merit of Comfort's scientific writing. Additionally, who is Nicolas Walter to set himself up on the subject of *quantity*? How much is one required to produce, how long live or work, to satisfy Walter's notion of an adequate amount? Had Alex stopped at 35 – although the opposite is true, that at 74, we have reason to believe that Comfort will never stop – what then? We all know of Bonington, Giorgione, Keats, Pergolesi, all incomparably great artists. My favourite poem in English is the 'Tom O'Bedlam Song'. We know nothing else by this great poet, or whether he wrote any more. This has never diminished my admiration. What is Walter trying to prove by his forgetfulness of the enormous accomplishments of Comfort's past forty years? Why his denigration? Why such preposterous allegations?

I wish my style and manner was as gracious as Tony Gibson's, for although he is clearly angry – any anarchist might as well be who has long regarded Alex Comfort as having attained to a select pantheon of anarchists and humanists – Gibson remains cool. Where he writes 'Walter's implication here is that Comfort ... is an apostle of sexual promiscuity' I am inclined to be more overt. Walter's suggestion that Comfort advocates sexual promiscuity (*and* irresponsibility) is sly and invidious and consistent with his tone throughout which is loaded with innuendo or outright pejoratives.

Tony refers to Walter's review as 'curious'. The motivation must be! The word I would use is 'relentless', interspersed with praise, some of it grudging. What is one to make of 'Comfort's ideas became increasingly mystical and his writings became increasingly mystifying'. If one was obliged to limit description of Comfort to one word I would say 'clarity' not mystification. Is it that Comfort would not qualify for membership of Walter's 'Rationalist Society'? It may be that 'mystic' is accustomed to misinterpretation, and worse, but it oughtn't to come from amongst ourselves. No one has any absolute answers to a number of major questions; and I see nothing wrong with any honest attempt by any philosophical exploration, provided only that it is lucid, at an interpretation that makes sense of the universe, and of the seeming senselessness of life and death in its myriad forms ... of Shakespeare could complain 'Ripeness is all', surely the problem of meaning is not a simple one. Alex or any other person is free, even obliged, to examine the mystifications given us; for these are not

necessarily ones we create. Or this: 'Read ... converted some to anarchism' but 'Comfort converted some to anarchist antimilitarism'? What, for goodness sake, is anarchist militarism? Then why continue reducing Comfort's anarchism to pacifism? This is untrue and unjust.

There is nothing about Alex Comfort, nor about this admirable collection, that ought to inspire anything less than enthusiasm. I want to know how and why Nicolas Walter has become our pre-obituarist. He is less than grateful at the existence of the, albeit flawed, giants among us. I found his attack on George Woodcock in *The Raven* on the occasion of his 75th birthday commemorations offensive (Woodcock was distressed needlessly by them). Walter is treating Read and Comfort in a similar tone.

Herbert Read wrote two books of great sensitivity and beauty, *The Green Child* and *The Innocent Eye* (neither he nor even Comfort, remarkable as he is, may be artists or anarchist theoreticians of the stature of e e cummings, but they are among the English best). We were pleased to print poems by both and to review happily all their works sent to *Retort*. (I was somewhat less than delighted when Read began to send his then young son's poetry.) Read's main contribution as an anarchist was probably in educational theories (it is not Read who is dogmatic, it is Walter). Read is more a proselytiser than an original; Read was sound, and Walter could do no better than understand these theories, so that he never again feels free to use a phrase (he does in this review) like 'children without relevant talent', for what is relevant is not the degree of talent a child possesses but whether he is free to evolve to his full capacity, intellectually and imaginatively, as artist and human being. This subject has been treated exhaustively in this century; some of it foolishly, but much the best contributions have been made by anarchists. (Walter might try Cantine's *Art, Play and its Perversions*.)

As I've said, I found Walter's review 'astonishing' but that may not be strictly so. I've been asked to review a biography of Dwight Macdonald and I shall begin by observing that this seems to be a period when outstanding individuals are being rubbished by persons who don't understand and/or never knew them. The most outrageous example I know was Humphrey Carpenter, an omnipresent media pseudo-academic, in his 1,000-page railway guide (with all the schedules misguided), posing as a biography of Ezra Pound. The Macdonald biography, not as glaringly off, is of this genre. One cannot fathom why any of them are doing it, except for doctoral theses or money or both.



I like to think that for anarchists writing for *Freedom* and *The Raven*, both are of minimal interest; and that they are immune to discreditable passing trends, but are they? Is there a motivation that has escaped me?

**This letter was originally submitted for publication in *Freedom* but was considered too long and in any case more suitable for *The Raven* – The Editors.**

### **Bombing Casualties**

Dolls' faces are rosier but these were children  
their eyes not glass but gleaming gristle  
dark lenses in whose quicksilver glances  
the sunlight quivered. These blenched lips  
were warm once and bright with blood  
but blood  
held in a moist bleb of flesh  
not spilt and spattered in tousled hair.

In these shadowy tresses  
red petals did not always  
thus clot and blacken to a scar.

These are dead faces.  
Wasps' nests are not more wanly waxen  
wood embers not so greyly ashen.

They are laid out in ranks  
like paper lanterns that have fallen  
after a night of riot  
extinct in the dry morning air.

**Herbert Read**

(included in *Visions of Poesy: an anthology of twentieth century anarchist*

## Tony Gibson

### Anarchists and Utopia

*Journey Through Utopia* was first published in 1950 by Routledge & Kegan Paul for the Marie Louise Memorial Committee, then in the USA by Schocken Books (1971) and reprinted by Freedom Press in 1982.\* German, Italian and Spanish translations were published in Berlin, Pistoia and Buenos Aires respectively. The author died suddenly and tragically in 1949 at the age of 31, and it stands as a monument to a quite remarkable woman who, had she lived, would have been an important contributor to the anarchist literature of the twentieth century. As it is, the book is acknowledged to be one of the best studies of utopias that has ever been written and it deserves to be far better known than it is.

The word 'utopia' was coined by Sir Thomas More in 1516, and as L.T. Sargent explains:

He played with the word 'topos' (place) and the prefixes 'u' (no or not) and 'eu' (good). As a result the word 'utopia' came to mean a non-existent good place. Later, an additional prefix was added ('dys' meaning bad), thus dystopia means a non-existent bad place.<sup>1</sup>

Sargent has produced a bibliography of over 3,000 utopias and dystopias published in the English language between 1516 and 1985, and this does not include books *about* utopias and dystopias, such as the present work. We may therefore comprehend the enormous task that Berneri tackled in writing this book, because not only did she take her study back to Plato in the fourth century BC, but she included writers such as Rabelais and Diderot who published in languages other than English, sometimes making her own translations.

Readers of her book might well begin it by turning to the section at the end which is headed 'Bibliography', and here Berneri explains at some length the problems that confronted her in planning this work. She acknowledges most of the standard works that are regarded as being in the massive literature of utopian writing, and explains how

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\* *Journey Through Utopia* by Marie Louise Berneri, published by Freedom Press, 339 pages, ISBN 0 900384 21 2, £4.50 (post free inland)

she has constructed her book. She has divided it into six sections dealing respectively with the utopias of antiquity, the Renaissance, the English Revolution, the Enlightenment, the Nineteenth Century and Modern Utopias. Thus she traces the utopian idea right through history from Plato's *Republic* to modern times, and she criticises them from a libertarian standpoint. It is extraordinary that a woman as young as she, who was not working under the aegis of any university, should have produced a work of such extensive scholarship, and moreover to have made it so relevant to the problems of our present age. The original book has been on my bookshelves for more than forty years and I frequently re-read parts of it. In each age the utopias that were written reflected in some form the conflicts of that historical time, and the preoccupations of their authors. Mostly they were men who we would now regard as being of a highly authoritarian outlook, who planned societies in which human happiness was supposed to depend upon everything being properly regimented and disciplined.

Bernerri makes perfectly clear that what is ideal for one utopian writer is by no means an acceptable state of affairs for other utopian theorists. It may surprise many modern readers to know that in Sir Thomas More's ideal state there were slaves who worked in chains and the death penalty was used. The 'free' citizens enjoyed only a limited freedom and were not at liberty to travel as they wished without obtaining special permission from the authorities. The people of Utopia also conducted ruthless wars and employed all the trickery and terrorism common to all warring states. His Utopia was, in fact, what we should now refer to as a totalitarian regime. She mentions that there has been some controversy over More's *Utopia*, some commentators regarding it as an amusing satirical work and not representing the ideas and ideals of its author.

The two exceptions to the generally grim picture of government regimentation are Diderot's *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*,<sup>2</sup> and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*.<sup>3</sup> Diderot was a man of the eighteenth century Enlightenment and the chief editor of the *Encyclopedie*, the work that was one of the many instruments that led to the toppling of the old feudal order in France. Already in that century European adventurers had penetrated into the Pacific and continued there the work of despoliation that was first initiated on the American continent. Louis Bougainville in his voyage of 1766-1769 had explored the Pacific islands, including Tahiti, and described it in detail on his return. Diderot wrote an imaginary account of his visit and departure from Tahiti from the point of view of the islanders, and

more by implication than description indicated the free and happy way of life of the islanders and the tragic consequences of their being exposed to the evils of European 'civilisation'. He was a true prophet of what eventually happened to the societies of the Pacific islanders, and stressed the evil influence of the Christian missionaries.

*News from Nowhere* is William Morris's idea of a possible anarchist society, and Berneri devotes 26 pages to quoting from it and discussing important points. Before mentioning these two writers' books, she deals with the other nineteenth century utopias which were mostly socialist blueprints. She notes that it is difficult to distinguish between what are rightly known as 'utopias', as they had come to be known, and socialist programmes. Writers such as Engels, who regarded themselves as 'scientific socialists', affected to despise those like Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen whose schemes differed from that of himself and Marx. He referred to them as 'utopians' because they envisaged the emancipation of the whole of humanity rather than just the 'proletariat' which, according to his dogma, had first to achieve emancipation as a class before future development could occur, and their projects were thus, in his opinion, impossible of achievement.

It is to be noted that Berneri, a passionate opponent of the Stalinist regime in the USSR,\* died long before the Marxist tragedy had been worked out and collapsed there and in Eastern Europe. She points out that none of the utopias of the past which depended partly on the institution of slavery ever envisaged using slave-labour to anything approaching the degree that it was employed in the Soviet Union. She writes:

It is surprising, in view of the obvious advantages which this method [slavery] presents from the point of view of governments, that it had not been applied on a great scale until the present day. But when it was applied it was on a scale and with such results that even More could not have foreseen. Armies of slaves numbering hundreds of thousands have, in the last twenty years, built the Baltic-White Sea canal, double-tracked the Trans-Siberian Railway, erected engineering works in the heart of Siberia, mined uranium, dug underground factories; have, in a word, achieved feats before which the construction of the Pyramids look like child's play. (page 83)

At the time she was writing this book, Western thought had not quite recovered from the war-time 'honeymoon' with the USSR, when the media had been assiduously building up the Stalinist regime as though it were a democratic system. Hence writing as she did she was well

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\* Author of *Workers in Stalin's Russia*, 88 pages, published by Freedom Press in 1944 and long out of print – Editor

ahead of her time and by no means popular with a powerful section of the fellow-travelling literati, as typified by Kingsley Martin, then editor of the *New Statesman and Nation* which had a large and influential circulation. Although Freedom Press have extracted some laudatory sentences from the criticisms that appeared in a few literary journals to print on the back cover of their 1982 edition, the book was received somewhat coldly by the critics when published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, instead of receiving the very warm acclaim it deserved. George Orwell had earlier written his masterly *Animal Farm*, published in 1945, which was a very direct satire on the USSR but which received a very mixed reception from the critics, some even writing as though the book was aiming its satire at Nazi Germany. He had had a good deal of difficulty in getting it accepted by any publisher because of the pro-Stalinist atmosphere of the time. Orwell followed it with *Nineteen Eighty Four* which appeared a year before Berneri's book, but too late for her to comment on it.

In her section on the utopias of the nineteenth century, she includes two books that are, in fact, satires on the utopias of the time, Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*<sup>4</sup> and Eugene Richter's *Pictures of a Socialistic Future*<sup>5</sup>. She makes the surprising statement 'Erewhon cannot properly be described as a utopia'. Yet she is well aware that in all ages there have been books that satirised utopias, and she quotes from Aristophanes' play *Ecclesiazusae* which pokes fun at Plato's *Republic*. She also mentions Swift's satires, but refers to his *Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms* as representing its author's ideas about an ideal society, although principally concerned with inveighing against the evils of human society, and indeed human nature. She fails to note, however, that Swift's account of the country of *Brobdingnag* is in a sense a utopia, since the satire is mixed with an account of what was, in Swift's opinion, a country where the laws were perfect and power was not abused.

Beneri points out that the present century, in contrast to the last, has not spawned utopias. The outstanding utopian writer of this century is undoubtedly H.G. Wells, and his contribution is *A Modern Utopia* (1905) and *Men Like Gods* (1923); she devotes considerable space to discussing the schemes of this remarkable author, who also experimented with fictional accounts of possible social organisations in the future. Wells was undoubtedly of an authoritarian outlook but he made considerable efforts to reconcile ideas of authoritarian socialism with the needs of personal freedom as he was aware of the necessity for talented people (like himself!) to have a large measure

of personal autonomy if they were to make their best contribution to the community. Wells also differed from most of the earlier utopian writers in that he proposed a social order that was not static but permitted evolution to alternative forms. He criticised William Morris's *News from Nowhere* on the grounds that to achieve such a happy society we would have to change the nature of mankind. He wrote:

Were we free to have our untrammelled desire I suppose we should follow Morris to his *Nowhere*, we should change the nature of man and the nature of things together; we should make the whole race wise, tolerant, noble, perfect ... wave our hands to a splendid anarchy, every man doing as it pleased him, and none pleased to do evil, in a world as good as its essential nature, as ripe and sunny as the world before the Fall.<sup>6</sup>

Strangely enough, Wells' second utopia, written after a lapse of eighteen years during which Europe had experienced the horrors of World War One, was much more liberal than his earlier scheme, and this possibly reflects his own personal development during this period, although in his later life he reverted to a more intolerant and pessimistic outlook. Berneri commented that:

*Men Like Gods* is the last utopia in the 'classical' tradition, and one may well ask oneself if Wells will prove to be the last of the utopian writers. The interest in utopian literature, on the other hand, is far from dying out. Lewis Mumford has dedicated a comprehensive study to *The Story of Utopias* combining a critical analysis with some interesting suggestions of his own. More recently Ethel Mannin in *Bread and Roses* has surveyed various conceptions of utopias and given us the vision of her own utopia. These writers continue to assert the will to utopia, and echo Oscar Wilde's famous remark: 'A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing'. (page 308)

According to I.F. Clarke:

Since the appearance of H.G. Wells the tale of the future has continued to respond to the conditions of society, and to the potentialities of science. The fearful experiences of the First World War carried over into a series of new, admonitory projections ... The old-style utopian visions, the steel-and-concrete varieties of brotherly love vanished. The new fiction presented a sequence of devastating wars ... at their best the new writers spoke out for all mankind against the dangers that menaced the world in their time.<sup>7</sup>

In actual fact neither Berneri nor Clarke are completely accurate, since there have been utopias written in the recent decades; even Aldous Huxley, famous for his dystopia *Brave New World* that was

published in 1932, followed it in his old age with a bland utopia *Island* in 1962, a book that received little critical notice. However, it is highly instructive to go through the 3,000 books mentioned and briefly categorised in Sargent's massive bibliography, century by century, and see how the balance between utopias and dystopias has changed. In the nineteenth century the utopias outnumbered the dystopias, but in the twentieth century the balance has entirely changed; dystopias far outnumber the rare utopias, and the great majority of imaginative writers, both good and bad, are prophesying doom.

What saddens me is that modern writers in the field of anarchist and similar literature seem so unaware of the utopian writings of the past. It seems that they are constantly seeking to re-invent the wheel because they have simply not got the background knowledge such as is presented in this book. Berneri is remarkably fair-minded and modest in that she keeps her own opinions in the background, although her comments on and criticisms of other writers is remarkably acute. However, she writes with passion and commitment and it is quite clear where her own sympathies lie. I do urge readers to buy this book, to read it and to re-read it, and to keep it as an invaluable work of reference and of inspiration too. Some of Berneri's passionate vision comes through, and we should not let the writers of dystopias discourage us from striving to carry on the noble tradition that she represented.

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*Brian Morris*

## **Tolstoy and Anarchism**

My old sociology tutor once remarked that people under 35 are advocates of social change, while people over that age tend to be keen on social control. Certainly there seems to be a general idea around that as the years go by people become more and more conservative in their thinking. Tolstoy is a clear exception to this rule; the older he got, the more radical he became. As a consequence in the last years of his life he consistently expressed a religious form of anarchism.

Tolstoy's politics, which combined christianity, pacifism and anarchism, has always been a source of disquiet to his many biographers, and to many Marxists too. They laud the power, the realism and the sincerity of his literary imagination, but when they turn to his politics they seem to fall into despair! Lenin thought Tolstoy a genius and one of the greatest writers in history. He praised his passionate critiques of the state and the church, and his unbending opposition to private property. Tolstoy expressed, Lenin wrote, as no other writer did, the deep feelings of protest and anger that the nineteenth century Russian peasants felt towards the Tsarist state. Yet when Lenin came to consider Tolstoy's 'Christian anarchism' he was harshly dismissive. Tolstoy was a 'crackpot', a 'landlord obsessed with Christ', someone who failed profoundly to understand what was going on in Russia and who preached non-resistance to evil, asceticism and an emotional appeal to the 'spirit' that were in essence reactionary, misguided and utopian.

A recent biographer, coming at Tolstoy from a very different angle, expresses a similar disquiet. Clearly acknowledging Tolstoy as one of the great literary figures, and sympathetic to his subject, A.N. Wilson is completely at a loss when he comes to consider Tolstoy's politics. Tolstoy's critique of 'property' Wilson thinks is 'silly' – failing completely to understand that by 'property' Tolstoy meant the capitalist system, and he goes on to suggest that most of Tolstoy's political writings are a 'complete nonsense'. Wilson clearly fails to understand Tolstoy's critique of the state when he opines that Tolstoy has little to offer in our understanding of the First World War,



Russian communism and Nazism – all of which exemplify the evils of government that Tolstoy in fact wrote about.

Like Gandhi, who was his equally famous disciple, Tolstoy came to his anarchism by way of a mid-life crisis. For when he was around 50 Tolstoy began to seriously question the meaning of his life. The outcome was a series of books in which Tolstoy began to formulate his anarchist ideas, drawing on some of his earlier experiences – the trauma he experienced in Paris in 1857 when he witnessed with repulsion a public execution, his meeting and discussions with Proudhon in 1861, and the realisation he gained from a serious study of the Bible that the basic teachings of Jesus were absolutely opposed to violence of any kind. The books were *My Confession* (1881), *What I Believe* (1884) and *What Then Must We Do?* (1886). In 1894 Tolstoy published his major work on Christian anarchism *The Kingdom of God is Within You* and for the rest of his life continued to write letters, essays and tracts on anarchism. But it is worth noting that because of the association of anarchism with violence and bomb-throwing, Tolstoy never in fact came to describe himself as an anarchist. In recent years several anthologies of these writings have been published, the most useful being the collection *Government is Violence: essays on anarchism and pacifism*, edited by David Stephens (1991).

In the bookshops now is a paperback edition of *What Then Must We Do?*, re-issued as a 'Green Classic' by the publishers of *Resurgence*.<sup>\*</sup> It has a short introduction by Ronald Sampson, mainly devoted to contrasting Tolstoy's anarchism with Marx's revolutionary socialism – Marx, along with his ardent followers Lenin and Trotsky, being an advocate of the Jacobin theory of revolution. This theory Tolstoy himself, long before the Russian revolution, had suggested would inevitably lead to another form of oppression, based as it was on the mistaken belief in the value of revolutionary violence.

This old book of Tolstoy is still of interest, even though it has a dated quality about it. It is part autobiography, part social critique, part political tract, and it is specifically addressed not to a general reader (you!) but to 'our caste' – the Russian landed aristocracy of the late nineteenth century to which Tolstoy belonged. To understand, and to get the most out of the book, this historical context and this focus has to be kept in mind.

The first part of the book describes Tolstoy's experiences in Moscow

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<sup>\*</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?* (originally 1886) reprinted by Green Books, Bideford, 1991.

around 1880. Apart from his earlier war experiences in the Crimea, and a brief visit to Europe some twenty years before, Tolstoy had spent most of his life on his country estate Yasnaya Polyana, situated about a hundred miles from Moscow. There he lived a life of leisure and wrote his famous novels, surrounded by a large family and servants. His experiences when he went to live in Moscow were, in contrast, profoundly disturbing to him. For there he found people living in great poverty in the overcrowded tenements, people who were sick, hungry and destitute. Prostitution and drunkenness were rife. It all came as a deep shock to Tolstoy: it all seemed strange and foreign to him. What did all this mean, he asked himself. Brought up in a culture which suggested that there was nothing intrinsically wrong with riches and luxury, which were God's gifts, Tolstoy initially felt that one could eliminate suffering simply by philanthropy. He tried 'doing good' by charitable activities. Such charity however was resented and seemed to come to nothing, and was simply a form of self-deception. So he began a search for the causes of the poverty and the human degradation that he had observed, and to try and rid himself of the 'delusions' under which he had been living. And Tolstoy came to the simple conclusion as to why people are cold and hungry and destitute: namely, that it is due to exploitation. He writes:

I see that by violence, extortion and various devices in which I participate, the worker's bare necessities are taken from them, while the non-workers (of whom I am one) consume in superfluity the fruits of the labour of those who toil (page 61).

Making some telling criticisms of classical economic theory, Tolstoy argues that the power of some people over others does not arise simply from money but from the fact that the labourer does not receive the full value of his or her labour. The separation of the factors of production – land, capital (tools) and labour – which the economist takes as a basic law of production is in fact historically derived, and is a form of enslavement. To be deprived of land and the tools of production, Tolstoy writes, is enslavement. Economic science largely serves to justify this system. It is thus a pseudo-science, devising excuses for violence.

Attempting to look at the issue from a historical and world perspective, and examining specifically American imperialism in Fiji, Tolstoy comes to suggest that basically three forms of enslavement have historically arisen. Although they form a historical sequence, they are, he feels, all evident under existing capitalism.

The first mode of enslavement was that evident under the system of slavery found throughout the ancient world. This was simply based on personal violence, the enslaving of humans by the sword. Such violence was so intrinsic to the economic structure of the ancients that even the greatest intellect of the age, Plato and Aristotle, failed to notice it. They simply took it for granted. This mode of enslavement has never been abandoned and continues to be embodied in contemporary state structures – with its legal system, prisons, military conscription and work discipline. It is naive to think, Tolstoy maintains, that personal violence went out with the abolition of slavery.

The second form of slavery, begun in Egypt and reaching its apotheosis in the feudal system, involved depriving people of land and coercing the workers to pay tribute, either in labour or in crops. This Tolstoy describes as a 'territorial' method of enslavement.

The third and final form of enslavement is based on a monetary system, and this has involved the intensification of governmental power. This system of slavery – which Kropotkin described as 'wage-slavery' – is impersonal, and is based on the property system, which Tolstoy sees as the root of all contemporary problems, or 'evils' as he calls them. And property is simply 'a means of appropriating other men's work' (page 217).

It may be possible, he writes, under slavery or feudalism to compel a person to do what he or she considers bad, but it is not possible to make them think that while suffering violence they are free or what they are compelled to do is for their own welfare. This, however, is precisely what is happening under the present property system, for Tolstoy argues that the primary function of science is to hoodwink people, to make them feel they are free when they are not, that the state exists for the good of the people when in reality it is a form of violence that upholds 'monetary' exploitation. Science, like art, is as necessary to humans, Tolstoy suggests, as food and drink, and has always been a part of human existence, helping us to understand the world in which we live. But science nowadays no longer serves the general welfare: it has become, like the religions of old, a 'superstition'. The 'business' of science, Tolstoy writes, is now to conceal existing reality: its aim

... is to maintain superstition and deception among the people and thereby hinder the progress of humanity towards truth and welfare (page 100).

Henry George's project of land nationalisation, whereby all land

would come under the jurisdiction of the state and people would pay ground rent rather than taxes – an idea that still has currency among some green economists – Tolstoy argues is no solution at all. It still involves slavery and state violence. Thus Tolstoy came to conclude that:

... the slavery of our time was produced by the violence of militarism, by the appropriation of the land and by the exaction of money (property) (page 109).

Addressing members of his own aristocratic class – and himself – Tolstoy suggests that if we really are concerned about the sufferings and the poverty of others, the answer is simple: we should get off their backs, stop exploiting the working people. If I pity a tired horse on which I am riding, he writes, the first thing I must do if I am really sorry for it is to get off and walk on my own feet.

This is what he tried to do in his own life. He gave up his inheritance and class privileges, refused to participate in any governmental activities and attempted to live and work as a simple peasant. For this he has been derided and ridiculed, especially by his academic biographers.

One might have serious misgivings about the ‘individualism’ of Tolstoy’s religious anarchism, and about his misogyny – which comes through forcibly in the final chapter of the book where he writes of the law of a woman’s nature is to bear lots of children. One might also chaff at Tolstoy’s preaching stance, and the moralising tone of much of his political writing. But the central message that comes through his book *What Then Must We Do?* is an important one, and it is one that still has contemporary relevance. For his passionate plea to renounce violence, in his sustained critique of the state and contemporary capitalism, in his emphasis on the importance of agricultural labour – and the need to earn one’s bread by the sweat of one’s own brow – and in his suggestions that we critically examine much of what goes under the name of ‘science’, Tolstoy, as Ronald Sampson has long reminded us, offers us a way forward. He suggests a variant of the only rational solution to the poverty, the hunger, the political repression and the ecological degradation that constitutes the present ‘world order’, namely anarchism.

Tolstoy may have been a crusty, guilt-ridden, sexist and somewhat cranky old soul, but in the present state of manifest crisis – if you look beyond your own backyard – there really is no alternative to the kind of anarchism he espoused and tried to articulate. As Sampson says: ‘We simply cannot afford to go on ignoring Tolstoy’s message’.

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## Freedom Press

# Ourselves and Black Rose Books Montréal

### *Introduction*

Nearly three years have passed since we were informed by Black Rose Books that as from 1st January 1992 we would no longer have 'exclusive distribution rights in Britain and Europe'. There followed an exchange of correspondence which ended the following January (1993) when Freedom Press returned the slow-selling Black Rose Books titles, as we had advised them we would do in the event. The value of those books more than covered the outstanding invoices (see facsimile of our statement, January 1993).

Because all kinds of rumours were being circulated by Black Rose Books about Freedom Press' financial probity as well as 'complaints' from booksellers that their titles were 'difficult or impossible to get' from us, I felt obliged to summarise the correspondence and produce facts for all to see. *Ourselves and Black Rose Books* was duly compiled and even typeset, but never published! At Freedom Press we had more urgent things to do.

However since we are still being asked why we no longer distribute Black Rose Books and the 'financial probity' issue has still not gone away and, last but not least, none of Black Rose Books anarchist authors seem to have protested on learning that our role as 'exclusive distributors' in this country and Europe had been passed on to the ex-Communist Party of Great Britain's distribution organisation, we feel that publication of the correspondence is not just an academic exercise but even valuable anarchist propaganda.

After all, if we are aiming at a society where differences and problems can be dealt with by discussion *and without recourse to the law*, then anarchists should be the first to put their theories into practice in their day-to-day relations. When Freedom Press were appointed to take over the European distribution for Black Rose Books we accepted unconditionally and without any written contract since we understood Black Rose Books to be comrades. We would have also

thought it reasonable for them to end the arrangement if Freedom Press were not doing a good job as their distributors. At one stage Black Rose Books told us that we were selling four times more books than our predecessors (a compliment qualified however in the later acrimonious period when we were told how inefficient were our predecessors!).

Then out of the blue in September 1991 we were given three months notice to end the arrangement. No complaints (but they were to follow by way of justification) and no explanations. Just on the grounds of good business!

When Black Rose Books anarchists authors read the document that follows we trust that they will have the integrity to address their protests direct to Roussopoulos, Nataf, Laurier and Co! And if any reader wishes to do so the address is: Black Rose Books, CP 1258, Succ. Place du Parc, Montréal, Quebec H2W 2R3, Canada – and we would appreciate having a copy!

VR  
December 1994

For five years Freedom Press had been the exclusive European distributors for Black Rose Books of Montréal. At no time during this period did we have complaints as to our efficiency in handling orders and payments were always made within the credit period allowed by their Canadian distributors, the University of Toronto Press.

A letter from a Ms Rebecca Laurier for Black Rose Books dated 7th September 1991 included the following paragraph:

Whereas all the other conditions between us can remain the same, this is to inform you that as of 1st January 1992 we cannot offer you *exclusive* distribution rights in Britain and Europe.

Since we received no further details, on 10th January 1992 I addressed a letter to Dimitrios Roussopoulos, not to Ms Laurier, who I assumed was employed in the Black Rose Books office and was transmitting decisions taken by Mr Roussopoulos. After all, I had been corresponding over the years with a Mr Jean Nataf and Ms Laurier never 'introduced' herself nor explained what had happened to Mr Nataf. I should have perhaps smelt a rat right from the beginning but was still prepared to assume they were honourable people.

The main point of my letter of 10th January was that if we were no longer to be their exclusive European distributors we could no longer carry a large stock of their back list. At the end of December 1991 we had in stock 102 Black Rose Books titles, value £7,000 at retail prices, *and all paid for.*

A month later I received a reply not from Mr Roussopoulos but from Ms Laurier (10th February 1992) which opened ominously:

Mr Richards, In reply to your letter of 10th January, I would like to say that I deeply resent and protest your attempt to 'go over my head and that of the committee I work with' by trying to appeal to what your rumour mill thinks is a hierarchical authority here. Black Rose Books is not Freedom Press. There is no such creature here, try as you may there is no higher 'authority' for you to appeal to. Or is your problem that you are not able to deal with a woman. I have heard on more than one occasion how 'old anarchists' have difficulty dealing with their sexism.

It was followed by more complaints, some personal and others questioning Freedom Press's efficiency. Ms Laurier justified our not being their exclusive European distributor on the grounds that it was an 'obvious' decision in view of 'continuous complaints from the UK and Europe that Black Rose Books titles are too difficult or impossible to get' that they had to 'seek improvements in distribution'. Ms Laurier also informed me that:

If you want to return books to University of Toronto Press for credit against what you owe ... that is your choice ... *In the meantime University of Toronto Press has been informed by us not to ship you any more books [my italics]*

Thus the large order we had placed with University of Toronto Press for some 800 Black Rose Books volumes was blocked.

To add to the confusion was a postscript:

P.S. Be informed that Murray Bookchin will be coming to the UK for a speaking tour that will take him to Cambridge, Leeds, London and other cities, May 8th-23rd. We have already been contacted by the organisers because they want to and expect to sell many hundreds of his books. We asked the organisers to contact you for supply.

On the one hand we were being denied supplies of Black Rose Books titles and on the other were expected to be able to supply the very titles included in the order which Ms Laurier had stopped!

In my reply to Ms Laurier (24th February 1992) I refused to be drawn by her catalogue of personal complaints, apart from pointing out that:

I am not an 'old anarchist sexist'. I am old, which may explain some of my impatience, but am not a 'sexist'. I have always much preferred women to men!

I then raised five business matters with her. In one I pointed out that the order we had placed with University of Toronto Press which had been blocked by her included a firm order for £500 from our Scottish distributor. I also drew her attention to the fact that the Spring catalogue 1992 had left us out as European distributors but no successor was included.

Ms Laurier's (16th March 1992) reply is significant and short enough to be reproduced in full.

In reply to yours dated 10th March, we hope that you will settle your account with University of Toronto Press including the settlement of 'any outstanding problems', e.g. hardcovers received instead of paperbacks. In the latter case, we would assume that you should send back the hardcovers at University of Toronto Press's expense and request credit.

When we receive information from University of Toronto Press that the above matter has been settled to their satisfaction we will deal with other matters.

You misunderstood my letter of 10th February. As of January 1992 we have no exclusive distributor in the UK and Europe. We are not planning to have an exclusive distributor in this region until the fall of 1992. Full stop. [underlined by Ms Laurier]

My reply (23rd March 1992) drew her attention to the fact that:

Now your letter just received has once more changed the whole situation in that you are making out that you have stopped supplies until we settle our account with University of Toronto Press to their satisfaction! You are now implying that you have had complaints from University of Toronto Press that we are bad payers, just as you wrote in one of your letters that you had received complaints from far and wide from booksellers who couldn't get service from us. I challenged you to produce names and addresses so that we could get in touch with them, and you have produced nothing. As to University of Toronto Press, we have never received any complaints from them – how could they since the statements show that we pay regularly. So it is quite clear to us at Freedom Press that you have no intention of working amicably with us – if at all.

In that case I must make it clear to you that the cheque for University of Toronto Press which I said I would order when I wrote to you (which I did and proof of which is the enclosed photocopy) and which with sundry other cheques totals Canadian \$4,000, will only be sent when you instruct University of Toronto Press to fulfil our order, outstanding for the past two months thanks to your intervention.



As to the Bookchin lectures, I had this to say:

You may not know but David Goodway has made himself financially responsible for these lectures and was relying on a large sale of the Bookchin volumes. Whatever you do we will not let him down, but we just haven't got the numbers of copies of the Bookchin titles needed, assuming that the meetings are a success. I am obliged to inform both David Goodway and Murray Bookchin of the situation created by you.

There is still time if you give immediate instructions to University of Toronto Press to dispatch our order by sea for it to be with us in time for the first meeting at the beginning of May. Otherwise it means dispatching by air freight and this is very expensive.

And on the subject of a new exclusive distributor for Europe, I commented as follows:

We know that we have been doing a good job with Black Rose Books titles and would like to go on handling your books. We are not prepared, however, to be tossed around when you and your committee think you may have found distributors who will do a much better job than we have done. You conclude your letter with an underlined sentence: 'We are not planning to have an exclusive distributor in this region [UK and Europe] until the fall of 1992. Full stop.'

Well, what can I tell you for sure is that the next move is up to you for if you continue to freeze our supplies of Black Rose Books titles we shall freeze outstanding payments to University of Toronto Press and when you appoint a new exclusive distributor in the fall of 1992 we will return all unsold back titles to University of Toronto Press for credit, and of course we will remove your titles from our catalogue. Full stop!

Ms Laurier's reply (31st March 1992) is reproduced in full.

Further to yours of the 23rd instance, a correction of fact (if such concerns you). We did not *threaten* you, we have a perfect right to change our policy about who is our sole distributor in the UK. We have done so giving you plenty of advance notice. To say that we threaten you is a lie.

You are now being dishonest in that you are refusing to pay your bills to our distributors. Furthermore, you are now blackmailing us. All we can say is that now that you have shown us your true colours we are more than assured that our decision not to send you books on a consignment basis was justified.

We will not be pushed around by you. If you want to buy books from us you must pay your bills.

In her letter of 24th April Ms Laurier slightly modified her tune:

We will be happy to sell you any quantity of books you order, once your outstanding account ... is settled.

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H ACCOUNT NUMBER NO DE COMPTE 277230 PAGE NO. 1 DATE 92/12/31

TERMS OF SALE: NET 30 DAYS FROM DATE OF INVOICE. THIS STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT SHOWS OUTSTANDING ITEMS AS OF THE DATE INDICATED ABOVE. REMITTANCES RECEIVED WITHIN 5 DAYS OF THIS DATE MAY NOT BE REFLECTED.

CONDITIONS: 30 JOURS NET DE LA DATE DE FACTURE. CET ÉTAT DE COMPTE DÉMONTRE TOUS MONTANTS EN SOUFFRANCE À LA DATE INDICUÉE CI-HAUT. LES REMISES ENVOYÉES DÈS 5 JOURS DE CETTE DATE SONT PEUT-ÊTRE PAS INDICUÉES.

IF INVOICE AND ACCOUNT NUMBER IN ALL CORRESPONDENCES - THANK YOU  
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0	91	10/24	4	6/06532	<i>Please have your account paid by January 15/93, before any action is taken.</i> <i>Thank you</i> <i>Clive Williams</i> <i>416 667-7774</i>				15835
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12	91	07/24	1	1004826					28760
	91	11/21	1	1059181					39402
71	91	12/18	1	1070327					10427
71	91	12/18	1	1070336					27337
TOTALS TOTALS				1,632.46				OVERDUE - EN, SOUFFRANCE 368200-	

CODE: 1. INVOICE FACTURE 2. CREDIT CREDIT 3. DUPLICATE PAYMENT PAIEMENT DOUBLE 4. CHARGEBACK, DISALLOWED DEDUCTION PAS PERMIS 5. PREPAID ORDER COMMANDE AFFRANCHÉ 6. UNRECONCILED INAPPLIQUÉ 7. PAYMENT ON ACCOUNT ACOMPTÉ 8. DEBIT MEMO MÉMO DE DÉBIT 9. PART PAYMENT ACOMPTÉ/PART.

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 and books and pamphlets  
 on Anarchism.*

*Retail and wholesale  
 booksellers.*

January 1993

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT WITH BLACK ROSE BOOKS &  
 UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS AT January 1993

Books supplied October 1992 by UTP reference Invoice 1177227 never submitted Can\$ 4167.00

Statement of Account November 30 1992 from U.T.P. 1632.46

Contra

Transport charges for books not ordered by FP (see our letter January 10 1992 para 4 \$158.35  
 26.10.92 US\$ 100 credited as Canadian? difference \$18 18.00 1456.11

BRB titles returned in 19 cartons at 40% 5623.00

Balance in FP's favour 6000.00  
\$377.00

The \$377.00 Credit Balance should be passed on to Our Generation Magazine for copies sold. [unsold copies in Cartons [11] & [12] and in Carton 8 and one or two others to fill space]

Top: facsimile of the last statement received from University of Toronto Press showing an indebtedness of only Canadian \$1,632.

Below: Freedom Press' statement in final settlement including the value of the nineteen cartons of Black Rose Books titles returned.

On 12th May I addressed a three-page letter to Ms Laurier summarising our one-sided correspondence. A brief note from one Anna Hadji (Black Rose Books, 21st May) acknowledging mine informed me that Ms Laurier was out of town 'on a speaking tour and will not be returning until 27th June'. But before Ms Laurier's return I had reason to write her a second letter, having received a copy of a letter she had addressed to AK Distribution in Stirling (23rd April 1992) offering them Black Rose Books titles on the same terms as to Freedom Press so long as they paid cash with order. The relevant point is that AK Distribution not only are Freedom Press's distributors in Scotland but were also *our* distributors for Black Rose Books in Scotland!

I quote part of my letter to Ms Laurier (12th June):

Your letter [to AK Distribution] is libellous. In the first paragraph you say that 'relations between Black Rose Books and Freedom Press have broken down. This is due to the fact that they owe us some \$4,000 for books that were shipped to them and have already received, but are now refusing to pay for.' As I have shown you with documents, 'relations' have broken down simply because you took umbrage when I addressed a letter regarding the exclusive distribution in Europe of your titles to Mr Roussopoulos and not to you. Check the correspondence. When you stopped our order you made no mention of outstanding invoices – simply because there were no outstanding invoices, as I demonstrated with a photocopy of the University of Toronto Press statement. You stopped our order because I pointed out that if we were not to be your exclusive European distributors we would have to return some titles that had stopped selling other than the odd copy. After all, we do stock over 100 Black Rose Books titles. Who else do you think would do so if they did not enjoy exclusive distribution rights?

In your letter to AK Distribution you write: '*Freedom Press are no longer distributing our books exclusively.*' In your letter to us you said that you would be taking the decision in the fall. I pointed out that we needed to know what our position would be since we are preparing a new catalogue ... But it is obvious that you are simply playing for time, in the hope that you can do without Freedom Press simply because your pride was offended when I addressed my letter to Mr Roussopoulos instead of to you. I have no pride about winning this issue. I want Freedom Press to handle your titles because they complement what we publish. But I am convinced that by having a number of distributors though you may in the short term sell more copies of new titles in the long term the back list will suffer (and all the new titles soon become the back list so far as commercial distributors are concerned).

One last point. In your libellous letter to AK Distribution you write: 'The loss of the money from Freedom Press plus a further loss from another anarchist outfit in Australia has put a real strain on our finances'. When you

first wrote to me and said that Black Rose Books were pressed for money I immediately wrote back that I would order a dollar cheque which would be sent to University of Toronto Press as soon as you instructed them to process our order. And I demonstrated to you that I was as good as my word when, with my next letter, I included a photocopy of the cheque for \$3,500 in favour of University of Toronto Press which I repeated to you would be posted to them as soon as you instructed them to deal with our order. For further proof of my goodwill, and Freedom Press's financial probity, once you tell me that you have instructed University of Toronto Press not only will I send them the cheque in question but I will have ready another cheque for Canadian \$5,000 on account of the new order which will be posted to them the very day we receive the books. Please tell me which other distributor, commercial or, as you slightly describe Jura Books and ourselves, 'anarchist outfits', would make such an offer after the kind of abuse to which I personally and Freedom Press have been treated by you?

Then out of the blue Jean Nataf reappears! A letter dated 1st July is too good not to be reproduced in full – especially in view of what was to follow!

Dear Vernon, I have taken the correspondence from Rebecca and the distribution committee to you. With this I hope that our relationship will improve.

1) Black Rose Books wants to withdraw any remarks that Rebecca made that you find incorrect in previous correspondence. This is being done sincerely by me, and I hope that this is satisfactory.

2) Black Rose Books does not want Freedom Press to be its exclusive European distributor.

3) It is our understanding that the books you already received from here were sold to you and are therefore not subject to return. I have reviewed all our correspondence and this is my understanding.

4) Black Rose Books will continue to honour the same terms of our agreement with Freedom Press until further notice, that is the same discount policy, etc.

5) When I receive word from you that the \$3,500 cheque to University of Toronto Press is on its way, I will instruct our distributor here to send you books.

6) I would like to express my appreciation at your willingness to send a cheque for \$5,000 once you receive your new order of books in London.

I hope this is satisfactory for now, and I would like to send you in conclusion, my best wishes.

I immediately replied (3rd July).

Dear Jean, Thank you for your letter of 1st July, and I can assure you that your concern that the Black Rose Books / Freedom Press relationship will improve is mutual. When I was up in London on Thursday I showed your

letter to four of Freedom Press's most active comrades – Donald Rooum, Charles Crute, Harold Sculthorpe and Kevin McFaul – and we were unanimous in that as a matter of principle I should not release the cheque for \$3,500 until you had instructed University of Toronto Press to release the order we placed with them back in January. My dear friend, if anarchists haven't principles what else have we to guide our actions? Ms Laurier has consistently blackened the name of Freedom Press (forget about what she had to say about me) not only in our correspondence but to third parties, e.g. AK Distribution, and perhaps others I don't know about. In point 1) you are prepared to withdraw 'any remarks' she made 'that you find incorrect in previous correspondence'. Not only do you make no apology to Freedom Press and to me, but in point 5) you go on insisting that you will only release our order of January when you 'receive word [from me] that the \$3,500 cheque to University of Toronto Press is on its way'. Do I have to underline the sheer impertinence of such a demand?

So my point is that if you are big enough to recognise that Ms Laurier had made a fool of you all (presumably you have, otherwise it's difficult to understand why *you* are now dealing with our little problem) and make the first move, which is to release the order I placed with University of Toronto Press in January forthwith, then as soon as I hear from University of Toronto Press that the order is on its way I will send them the cheque for \$3,500 and, as offered in my last letter, will send a further \$5,000 as soon as the order is delivered to us in London. If you insist in your demand for the money before you give the go-ahead to University of Toronto Press then you will not get a penny. We will settle with University of Toronto Press by returning dead stock.

Needless to say Mr Nataf's reply (1st August) hardly answers the points I raised, but there is one significant paragraph:

Finally, you ask what the reason is for us not wanting Freedom Press to be our *exclusive* distributor in Europe any more. The reason is that we want to improve our European distribution as a whole. We have studied a number of options. Some of these options have already shown very good results. In the coming months we will try more of these options. But I would like to thank you, nevertheless, for your various suggestions and ideas. Thank you also for having asked Black Rose Books some years ago to distribute our books and I hope you will continue to sell them. Should our hopes not materialise we may ask you to become our exclusive distributor in your region in the future.

He also assured us that (at last) he had instructed University of Toronto Press to dispatch our order of January. In fact it did not arrive for another four months. I replied (26th August 1992):

The delay in dealing with our order for all these months is crippling. Not only do we have an order for over \$1,000 from our Scottish distributor (who Mr

Roussopoulos tried unsuccessfully to play against us) but we have a whole batch of orders that we cannot fulfil – probably another \$1,500 worth. Surely you can do something to speed up the service at University of Toronto Press – assuming that they have been told to get on with the order.

... But I see from the fourth paragraph of your letter that it is wasted breath on you people. The crudeness of your approach is summed up in that paragraph: you are looking around, you are studying ‘a number of options’ and, to quote your words, ‘should our hopes not materialise we may ask you to become our exclusive distributor in your region in the future’. If you think that you can push us around in this matter you and your ‘committee’ will have another think coming to you. As far as I am concerned you can stuff your Black Rose Books up your ass. We are at the moment producing our autumn list and in view of your attitude it will not include Black Rose Books titles unless you are prepared by return post to say that Freedom Press will go on being your exclusive European distributors.

Mr Nataf didn't rise to the insults – far from it. A letter of 7th September announced that ‘in response to your letter of 26th August ... the shipment of books is now on its way to you from University of Toronto Press’. And needless to say Mr Nataf was hoping to get the \$5,000. He also informed me that there were ‘some price changes due to increased costs of recent reprinting and shortage costs’. Apart from the fact that none of the titles had been recently reprinted when we received Black Rose Books' new catalogue for 1993, we discovered that there were no price changes and that Mr Nataf was trying to take us for a ride!

On 14th September 1992, I acknowledged Mr Nataf's letter and pointed out that I would send Black Rose Books the \$5,000 which ‘I will be doing to shame you people for the shabby treatment we have received this year from your Ms Rebecca Laurier. As I pointed out in my reply to yours of 1st August, your approach about exclusive distribution is just as contemptible and I'm hoping that you have realised this and that I shall be hearing from you soon that we are to continue to be your sole European distributors. *If this will not be the case then we shall be returning all the slow selling back list ...*’ [my italics].

A month later (13th October 1992) Mr Nataf acknowledged receipt of mine. His main concern was to get his hands on the \$5,000, but his last paragraph is worth quoting:

Since I have taken over the correspondence between Black Rose Books and Freedom Press, I believe that I have tried very hard to introduce a new tone in our relationship. Throughout I have not suggested that our position about Freedom Press being our *exclusive* European distributor has changed. It was

over a year ago that we gave you notice of this change, and we have not changed our thought on this matter. I know that you have tried to persuade us to change our minds, and we have taken into account all of your arguments, but we believe that it is best for us not to have Freedom Press as our exclusive distributor. You are welcome to be a distributor and if you place your orders with us in Montréal we will continue to give you the high discount that you have received in the past.

With the arrival of the books in October (ordered in January!) I dispatched \$3,700 to University of Toronto Press as promised, with an accompanying letter which included the following paragraph.

So far as the balance is concerned, I pointed out in my letter to you some months ago that the main issue with Black Rose Books was their decision that Freedom Press would no longer be their European distributors and I said that in that case we would not be prepared to carry a paid stock of 100 Black Rose Books titles and would therefore be returning those titles that are selling only the occasional copy. All our 'troubles' stem from that decision! And since Black Rose Books have not changed their minds, so neither have we! I shall get in touch with them in the next day or two to try and get a definite answer, and if it is still that we are no longer their European distributors we will be returning to you the slow selling titles.

To Mr Nataf's letter of 13th October, which was not dispatched until 27th and explains the delay in my replying (16th November), I referred to his ingratiating last paragraph with the comment that 'It convinces me that you haven't even read my letters for it is a fact that you never *actually* reply to my letters'.

And in the last two paragraphs of this letter, to which I have never received a reply, I point out:

Now that I am on the subject of Black Rose Books catalogues: At one stage you wrote that you could not afford to mail your catalogue to European booksellers, and I said that we would be only too glad to do so (see my letter to Ms Laurier, 24th February 1992) and requested that we should be sent 300 copies. I added: 'To save you expense the catalogue could be passed on to University of Toronto Press for dispatch with our order'. No response. In fact this year we have received just one, I repeat *one* copy of your spring catalogue! Most outsiders would surely not disagree with us when we maintain that Black Rose Books, for reasons still not explained, have been concerned to get rid of Freedom Press as their exclusive European distributors. And most outsiders would, I am sure, agree with us that having handled Black Rose Books titles for the past five years with enthusiasm and success, the publishers who pretend to be anarchists should have at least explained why they were terminating this 'gentlemen's arrangement'.

Because I cannot accept that people who profess to be anarchists should behave as you people have. Yes, not just Ms Laurier but you, Jean, and Mr Roussopoulos who cannot even visit us when he is in London, who cannot reply to my letters directed to him, but can address letters to AK Distribution in Scotland with 'Dear Comrades' offering them supplies on the same terms as to Freedom Press (as long as they pay cash with order!). I am proposing to prepare a dossier of our correspondence which I shall circulate to CIRA in Lausanne, to the Institute in Amsterdam and to as many of your authors as I can contact. In addition, a summary will be sent to anarchist journals worldwide. After all, we shall only be confirming what the late Fredy Perlman put in print about your business ethics.\*

The last chapter of this sordid affair can now be written, for in January of this year (1993) Freedom Press received a single copy of the Black Rose Books catalogue and learned for the first time *that they had appointed an exclusive European distributor*. It is not Freedom Press but what used to be the Communist Party of Great Britain's distribution organisation! It retains the same name, but presumably the leopard has changed its spots as in Russia, and the bosses of Black Rose Books think that they will distribute their anarchist literature more effectively than Freedom Press has been doing. Or will they?

We defend our record. In the three years 1989, 1990 and 1991 our payments to University of Toronto Press covered sales of £50,000 at retail prices of Black Rose Books titles. The saga of the Bookchin lectures must be left for another occasion, but it was Freedom Press who, thanks to Charles Crute, organised the bookstalls and sold £1,500 worth of Black Rose Books!

In January we did what we informed Black Rose Books a year ago we would do if we were no longer to be their exclusive European distributors: we have now dispatched by sea, at their expense, nineteen cartons of Black Rose Books titles (value Canadian \$6,000 wholesale) which are the slow selling ones. But we still have a stock of their anarchist titles that are in print. As to the future, we don't know, since their new distributors had not had the courtesy to even get in touch. A bad conscience perhaps?

**Vernon Richards**  
**April 1993**

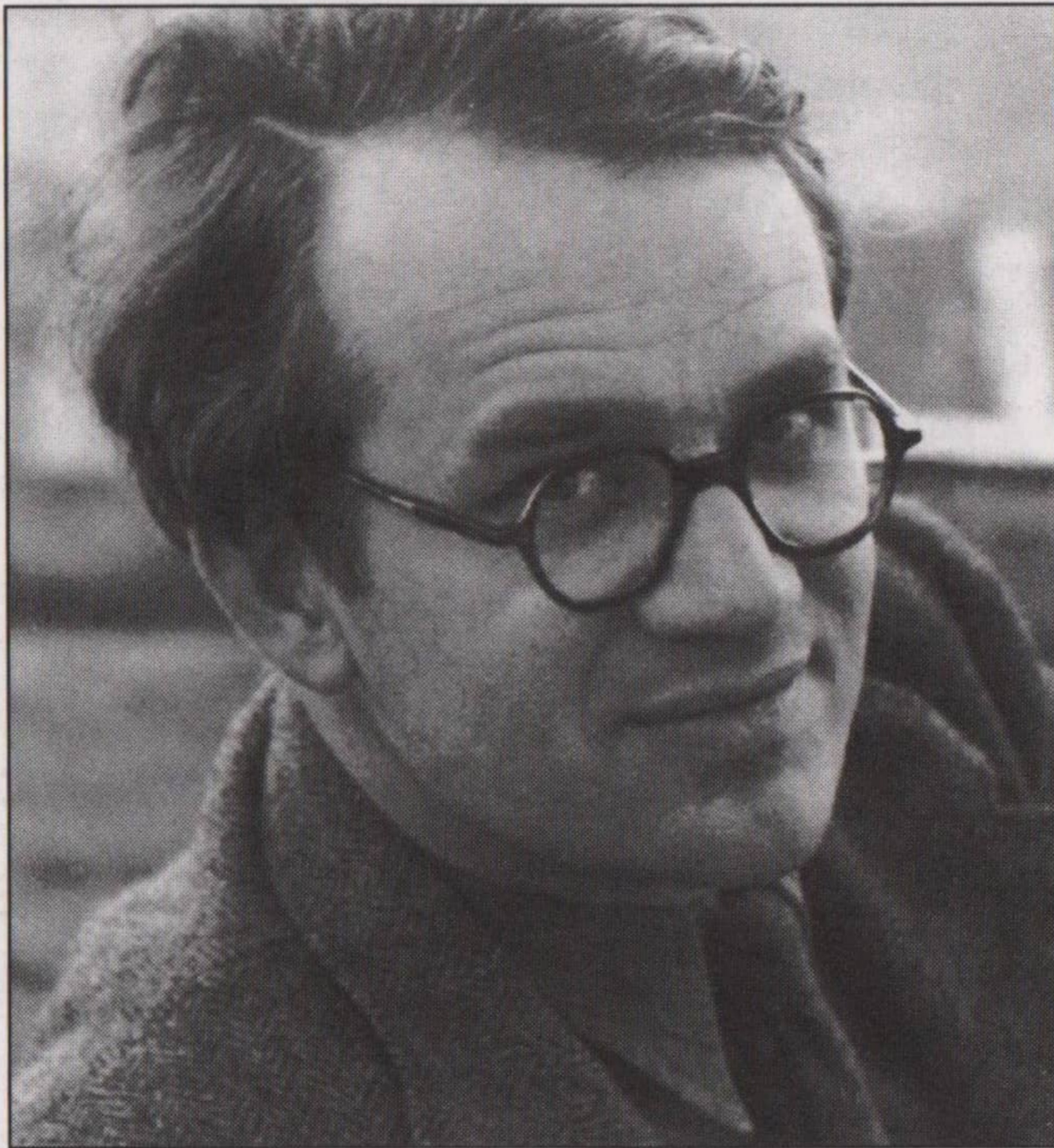
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\* See 'Letter to Dimitri' in *Having Little, Being Much* by Lorraine Perlman (Black & Red, Detroit, £4.50 from Freedom Press).



## George Woodcock

As we go to press we learn that George Woodcock has died at the age of 82. Our journal *Freedom* for 25th February 1995 contains tributes by Tony Gibson, Robert Graham, Nicolas Walter and Colin Ward (price 50p post free).



*George Woodcock (1912-1995) photograph by Vernon Richards*

**Corrections to Raven 27 on Fundamentalism:**

Bob Potter's article 'Explorations of Fundamentalism' (pages 257-274) contained some typesetting errors, the most serious of which are:

Page 264 – 'During the period 1980-1992 in the United Kingdom Jehovah's Witnesses increased their membership by 54%' [*not* '549' as printed].

Pages 268-269 – [The first two of the five possible attributes that can make a group attractive]

1. They are *fixed* communities. To have a conversion [*not* 'conversation' as printed] is nothing much – the real thing is to be able to continue treating it seriously!
2. Experiences are *shared*. Members do more than share ideas – their creed becomes a living reality, constantly being re-confirmed [*not* 're-conformed' as printed] in every day's experience.

## *Donations*

Our thanks to all those readers whose initials and donations are listed below. Though income from sales and subscriptions increased by over £1,000 in 1994 we are losing some £800 on each issue of *The Raven*, so your donations are most welcome. For now the outstanding balance is being met out of Freedom Press reserves, but it does mean that one new Freedom Press title must wait!

### **Raven Deficit Fund:**

**20th September 1993 - 31st December 1994**

Orpington, CP, £12; Oxford, JB, £7; Hay-on-Wye, BR, £5; Valparaiso, Indiana, LO, £25; Kent, MI, £6; Hebden Bridge, HS, £50; Lewes, BM, £11; Abingdon, BM, £11; Cheltenham, TKW, £26; Sheffield, JC, £320; London, PL, £50; Lancaster, JA, £10; Exmouth, PD, £5; Walsall, PO, £3; Pinner, LOM, £4; Stockport, DW, £5; Japan, TS, £6; Bolton, DP, £2; Perth, ZK, £10; California, LM, £6; Beckenham, LM, £40; Keighley, RG, £3; London, DLL, £6; Bristol, AFC, £50; Leeds, GL, £2.40; Edmonton, Alberta, HB, £100; Hay-on-Wye, BR, £5.50; Berkeley, AG, £16; Beckenham, DD, £35; Vallejo, California, DK, £16; Cheadle, CJ, £3; Spain, JH, £5; Upminster, IMP, £26; Newport, NHF, £4; Farnham, Mrs T, £5; Oxford, MH, £6; Whitley Bay, AP, £8; Beckenham, DP, £30; New York, PA, £17; Lancaster, JA, £3; New York, FT, £35; Bristol, JN, £4; Kirkby, AW, £5; Wrexham, PE, £5; New York, FT, £50; Tamworth, BS, £3; Galry, FEG, £6; County Durham, JG, £8; Romford, MB, £3; Beckenham, DP, £40; Leeds, CO, £7; London, DF, £10; London, SB, £6; Leicester, MFG, £6; Beckenham, DP, £20; Ashford, MJ, £2; London, NC, £10; Bruges, T de M, £6; York, DFH, £3; London, DR, £50; Salisbury, RM, £7; Beckenham, DP, £20; Skipton, IMP, £5; Stirling, AD, £8; Colchester, AG, £26; New York, LT, £35; Abingdon, MB, £10; London, PL, £15; New York, GLP, £2; London, JP, £5; New York, PC, £10; Lewes, BM, £16; Exmouth, MD, £3; Keighley, RG, £3; Castle Douglas, MA, £8; Colchester, TO, £10; Nottingham, RB, £3; London, DLL, £6; Beckenham, DP, £15.

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## Keep an eye on *Freedom*

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance, and vigilance means keeping yourself informed. To avoid the depredations of caterpillars, keep inspecting your organic cabbages for butterfly eggs. To prevent the government from becoming more powerful, keep noticing what new laws are proposed. Information is the essential prerequisite of action.

On the other hand, the price of *Freedom* the anarchist fortnightly is still only 50p. But it is a good idea to keep informed about it. Produced by unpaid, opinionated volunteers, it changes in editorial style from time to time, so if you have not seen it for some time (or even if you have never seen it) write for a free specimen copy now.

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