

ANARCHY 96 TWO SHILLINGS OR THIRTY CENTS



PLAYING AT REVOLUTION

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Grass roots or hair roots: Reflections on the revolution game

RICHARD MABEY

WHATEVER HAPPENED, I wonder to that great Winter of Discontent which was to have been ushered in by the October 27th demonstration? Did the comparative failure of that action set off a general process of self-examination amongst direct actionists? I hope so, and in this short article I want to try and explain why, and to examine with the benefit of a few months hindsight the way that demonstration seemed to dramatise many of the contradictions inherent in contemporary direct action.

I should, in all honesty, add that I spent the afternoon in question curled up in front of a TV set, unable either to commit myself to demonstration or resist some sort of vicarious participation. But even after an hour of ITN's monstrously biased live coverage I remained convinced that I was in the right place.

Let me say right from the outset that I think the shocked debate about violence was so far from the point as to be almost hypocritical. The vast majority of our population have shown themselves to be as favourable towards the use of violence for political ends as the most militant of demonstrators. And as it turned out the violence in Grosvenor Square was infuriating not so much because it was particularly vicious (it wasn't) as because it was as feeble, undignified and pointless as kicking little boys in the pants.

I must confess that my misgivings were of an altogether less moralistic kind. They concerned not so much the ferocity of the action as its function. What was this ritual we were being asked to join? A revolutionary prelude, a sort of mass shaking of the fist? A vast

symbolic morality play, starring the Metropolitan Police as Satan, and Tariq Ali as Everyman? Or a mini-coup, an actual attempt to take over the control of certain key institutions?

The fact that nowhere to my knowledge were these questions even discussed, let alone answered, seems to me a sad reflection on our lack of any theory of demonstrations. I suspect that we may be drawn towards them for no better reason than a mountaineer is drawn towards unconquered peaks: because they're there—and, God help us, because there seems precious little else that we can do. But if our actions are to be effective, and to be more than static self-indulgent political trips, we must repeatedly ask the question: why *this* sort of action at *this* time in *this* place?

Is there any relation between parading through the streets and the pattern of political change in this country, let alone the course of a war 6,000 miles away? What is it that, in moments of crisis, draws us to make this *physical* commitment, to show our faces, to gather together, to enter the arena, to be counted?

No one can believe any longer that demonstrations influence public opinion, do serious damage to the system or persuade the authorities, having once made up their minds, to change them. Why then do we bother to stage them? I believe that unless we begin to give very serious consideration to this question, and to the relation between protest action and political change, we are in danger of mistaking the symbol for the revolution, to the lasting detriment of both. I know of only one writer who has attempted an examination of this question. Writing on "The nature of Mass Demonstrations" in *New Society* just after the Paris uprisings, John Berger said:

"The truth is that mass demonstrations are rehearsals for revolution: not strategic or even tactical ones, but rehearsals of revolutionary awareness. . . . A demonstration, however much spontaneity it may contain, is a *created* event which arbitrarily separates itself from ordinary life. Its value is the result of its artificiality, for therein lie its prophetic, rehearsing possibilities. . . . The more people there are, the more forcibly they represent to each other and to themselves those who are absent. In this way a mass demonstration simultaneously *extends* and gives body to an abstraction. Those who take part become more positively aware of how they belong to a class. Belonging to that class ceases to imply a common fate, and implies a common opportunity. They begin to recognise that the function of their class need no longer be limited: that it, too, like the demonstration itself, can create its own function."

If John Berger is right in suggesting that the real importance of a demonstration is in its effect upon the demonstrators and that action is a rehearsal for revolutionary activity rather than the real thing,

then the question of the quality of demonstrations becomes crucial. For their nature and style, their contribution towards the sharpening of revolutionary awareness, will become the nature and style of political change itself.

To me this means that any viable demonstration should be possessed of some or all of the following characteristics (though I doubt if John Berger would want to be associated with this conclusion). They should have a dignity, of a sort. The old Aldermastons, for all their shortcomings, had this. (And coming at the time of the spring festivals they had additional gifts of strength and renewal for the players.) They should show the potentiality for—if not the exercise of—self-discipline and restraint. (Let's have no more talk of "revealing the lion's fangs"; contemporary demonstrators can be provoked as quickly as any lackey into showing their "basic violence".) They should be as abundant with wit and intelligent as the Provo's happenings or that magnificently ingenuous "laugh-in" at Governor Wallace. They should *try* to be sociable. Above all they should demonstrate a close and unambiguous connection between their style and purpose.

A number of these qualities were doubtless apparent in the main body of the October 27th March. But others were so explicitly contradicted that one wonders if in any sense it was a meaningful action. It was, for a start, a discordant, fractious affair. Those of us watching at home were privileged to see something probably denied the majority of participants: the unedifying spectacle of rival groups mauling for the lead banner.

But it was the pointlessness and lack of objectives that were the march's most damaging qualities, and the ones most relevant to what we are discussing here. It was, you may remember, a protest about the Vietnam war. Yet I doubt if this was in the minds of many people that Sunday afternoon, in or out of the demonstration. The announcement of the action six months in advance, and the bloodletting it suffered at the hands of the media during that period, both served to sap its energy and reduce its symbolic meaning to the trite and vacant level of the aims stated on the briefing leaflet: to fill the street, to sweep away obstructions, etc. It's difficult to conceive of intentions more *indirect*.

But by then the objectives of the demonstration, as a result of a combination of pressures, were two stages adrift from their original mooring. Cut loose from Vietnam, they floated quickly and apologetically past the question of what the hell *is* the purpose of direct action, and came to rest fair and square on a VSC Supporters Club helmet. From its noble beginnings the march had deteriorated into a cut-price tournament. Could the visitors lick the home team and occupy the streets, or would the tight-lipped defenders grind the fraternal gathering into the gutters? The action was to "rehearse"

nothing more politically meaningful than bravura and patchy solidarity.

The media, of course, were largely to blame for this distortion. They reported the preparations for the march as if they were the preliminaries for some elaborate Teutonic duel. "London is ready" boomed the *Evening News* headline on the preceding Friday. But the organisers must share the blame for not challenging this interpretation, and for failing to examine, in all their talk about the *right* to demonstrations, why precisely they were *exercising* that right. It takes two to play a game, and the demonstrators were happy to oblige. The most complimentary thing that can be said about the melee in Grosvenor Square is that it resembled nothing so much as a rugby scrum. And apparently, at the end of the day, police and demonstrators joined in a hearty rendering of Auld Lang Syne. Did somebody mention revolution?

Now the reason why the October 27th action exhibited so many questionable aspects is, I suggest, precisely that confusion I mentioned earlier between "symbolic" and "real" political activity. The declarations of the leaders, indeed, and the whole emotional key of the march suggest that it was thought of by many as *direct* action. Let's be quite straight about this. If we believe that we can carry out real political activity in the streets, we are merely replacing one set of sham institutions by another, and are conniving in most of the practices we despise in liberal democratic systems: the centralisation of decision-making, the supremacy of the mass over the individual, and the abstraction of "politics" as some process separate from the decisions and concerns of our everyday life.

I have always felt that direct action was one of the less ambiguous phrases in the radical's vocabulary. It means, surely, precisely that: action taken in a specific, lived-in situation, to *directly* change the structure of that situation. So, sitting-in at a segregated lunch counter is direct action; the occupation and running of Hornsey College of Art was direct action; and if demonstrations are ever banned in this country, so will be marches through London. But they are not at the moment.

It is surely by constant confrontation and transformation in the institutions in which people really live, rather than by apocalyptic encounters in the political superstructure, that real and lasting change will come about. "Student", "consumer" are actual, experienced, roles; "politics" is an abstract sphere of activity which has been grafted uncomfortably on top of these. To fight—even to win—in its arena, is no guarantee that people's real lives will be changed one iota.

Thinking about these matters before the demonstration, I went

back to E. P. Thompson's essay "Revolution" in that sadly neglected book *Out of Apathy*. His remarks, made ten years ago, are profoundly relevant today:

"The class struggle tends to be thought of as a series of brutal, head-on encounters (which it *sometimes* is); not as a conflict of force, interests, values, priorities, ideas, taking place ceaselessly in every area of life. Its culmination is seen as being a moment when the opposed classes stand wholly *disengaged* from each other, confronting each other in naked antagonism; not as the climax to ever closer *engagement* within existing institutions demanding the most constructive deployment of skills as well as of force. . . . But this point cannot be defined in narrow political (least of all parliamentary) terms; nor can we be certain, in advance, in what context the breakthrough will be made. What is more important to insist upon is that it is necessary to *find out* the breaking point, not by theoretical speculation alone, but *in practice* by unrelenting reforming pressures in many fields, which are designed to reach a revolutionary culmination. And this will entail a confrontation, throughout society, between two systems, two ways of life. In this confrontation, political consciousness will become heightened; every direct and devious influence will be brought to the defence of property rights; the people will be forced by events to exert their whole political and industrial strength. A confrontation of this order . . . involves the making of revolution simultaneously in many fields of life."

There will always of course be a place for demonstrations—but only whilst they fulfil their role as symbolic rehearsals. If they become regarded as the focus of real political activity then the dangers are acute. At best, we might see the impersonality of the polling booth replaced by the gross simplifications of the mass meeting; at worst, the development of a totalitarianism of the streets. Either way the energy that is needed for the sort of revolutionary transformations that E. P. Thompson is discussing, will be drained away.

What is anarchism and is it a tenable doctrine?

JOHN HOWKINS

WHAT, PRECISELY, DO WE INTEND TO MEAN by the concept of "anarchism"?¹ Two meanings present themselves: one ontological, one historical. Neither meaning is exclusive of the other.

Moreover, no one can evolve a concept of his own authority. It is given to him or it occurs to him, and it will be backed up by his own research to a greater or lesser extent. The enquirer can, however, choose to maintain the proposition as an explicitly heuristic device or he can refashion it into a further unit of conceptualisation.

Modern historiography favours the latter in its stress on concepts which are simultaneously concretizable and imaginatively holistic. Thus in a formal sense the historical image contains the historical image; in this sense, they restrict each other and are mutually antagonistic. A priori, we cannot regard "anarchism" in the same way as we can "this book". And so we return to our starting point. The characteristics of anarchism mean that it is the one concept which most vividly challenges the tendency towards imaginative holism in both our understanding of the concept and in our method of its discovery.

Generally, it does so unsuccessfully. We can deny a concept with

EDITORIAL NOTE: The author tells us that this article was written as a reaction against the complacency and laziness of most academic enquiries into the meaning of anarchism. We found it provocative but difficult. To save the reader having to reach continually for his dictionary, ours gives the following definitions:

ONTOLOGY: department of metaphysics concerned with the essence of things or being in the abstract.

HEURISTIC: serving to discover.

HOLISM: tendency in nature to form wholes that are more than the sum of the parts by creative evolution.

ISONOMY: equality of political rights.

no more validity than we can evolve it. In part, this paper attempts to discover whether the challenge contains, in effect, the roots of a prohibition on our understanding of anarchism and perhaps other political theories: which is a problem of methodology. The paper also discusses an idea based on the liberty/equality paradox that is at the heart of the anarchist ethos: a problem of content.

* * *

Men have suggested that the answer should be contained in the question. I have suggested that the question—"What is anarchism?"—is not so meaningful.

Again, I have said that there are two main meanings of anarchism: the thing-in-itself, which is; and the thing-in-relation, which exists. Anarchism can reasonably be described as a desire for personal freedom and a complementary belief in the natural goodwill of man, and as a historical influence on the 19th and 20th centuries.

The anarchist's desire for personal freedom has produced as many interpretations of anarchism as there are anarchists. Literally, for it could not be otherwise. The anarchist sees man as a unity. He will reject the holistic collectivity. However, most of the collectivity of political theorists and historians treat anarchism as only a collective movement and ignore the individual feeling except in a historical context.

The two images of anarchism continually interact. The argument over the truth of the state of affairs is often confused with the parallel argument over the presentation of the state of affairs. We can separate them, but they are alike. Yet our attempts to understand anarchism without making such a separation are no more than a play—in this way, a theorist might compare anarchism to such ideologies as societal Hinduism, Taoism, or Buddhism. He would find many similarities. For instance, in Lao Tze, who said "Let a man seriously set to work to reform himself and he will have little time to fuss about reforming the world" and in Buddha's statement, "Overcome self by Self". Man must come first. When man is fulfilled in himself, social conventions, political institutions, and economic systems will be easily and popularly established—or merely successful. On the other hand, the theorist might say that the governments of the Occident (which have most strongly resisted the anarchist movement and are the matter of this paper) have regarded the State, not man, as the necessary premise for fulfilment. Man will obtain the Kingdom of Heaven, of the Good Life, or what he fancies, only through a period of enforced co-operation within a State. But this end is so far away that it is seldom articulated. It is not, in fact, expected. Oscar Wilde summed the difference: "The true perfection of man lies, not in what man has, but in what man is" and rejected socialism for

anarchism. All these circumstances—neat relationships, global coincidences—are fascinating. They have the tart glamour of metaphysical gewgaws. But the interpretations they support can overwhelm the event. It is the event which is central.

The event is mirrored in the concept; it can only be realised through the concept. The public and private events of the anarchist movement are themselves created by a vital and interesting picture of reality. It is hardly a definable one. John Rety, one of the editors of *FREEDOM*, said recently that “having read through most of Bakunin and Kropotkin I could find few words I agreed with”. Bakunin and Kropotkin themselves had little in common apart from a distrust of authority. They never met. The disparity is general. The lasting conflict between mutualism and collectivism, the history of the First International (1864-1877), the coalitions and splits and splits and coalitions of the anarchists and socialists, and, later, the anarcho-syndicalists, the intriguing mixture of praise and disgust and tragedy which surrounded the French assassins of the early 1890s, the dilemma of the Spanish anarchists between the wars, the Haymarket affair and the Central Labour Union, the English reaction to the Spanish Civil War and the writings of John Cowper Powys and Herbert Read—the facts of anarchism straggle across the history pages like guerrilla troops moving through jungle. There is no apparent order.

An enquiry into the anarchist idea (as a picture of reality) may provide a reasonable method of discovering an order, or lack of one. But what is the conception of an idea? How far can it be extended? Consider the idea of “justice”. In *De la Justice dans la Revolution et dans L'Eglise* (1858) Proudhon² wrote that “Nothing takes place between men save in the name of right; nothing without the invocation of justice”. Forty-two years later, in the *Conquest of Bread*, Kropotkin suggests that there is no good reason why “agreements of voluntary co-operation should not embrace all the functions of a complicated society under the common notion of justice”. The two statements (one positive, one normative) are irreconcilable. They are each contained in an exclusive category.

The paradox is only a local restatement of the truism that ideas do not exist. They occur to us; or, more properly, we discover them mirrored in concepts. The picture of an idea (i.e. the concept) can be maintained through time and space.³ I can relate the picture (it is perhaps the only rational act) to whatever my research supports as reasonable.

But if for the purposes of argument I want to say that something is a philosophical illusion I cannot treat it as a (false) hypothesis. The impasse is resolved by testing the concept of the local type “the

anarchist”. A type is defined as “A specimen or example which reproduces in a characteristic way the character of a species or general class” (Jung).⁴

In a manner of speaking, such a reduction must involve the sacrifice of anarchism. For by dissecting the anarchist to discover his philosophy, we must invade with all the mockery of public opinion his vital, almost sacred, individualism. But, Stirner might resent my method, but even he would probably have agreed with my conclusion. What is the anarchist type?

1. *Authority*. “The anarchist”⁵ is commonly suspected of holding that the “only true and valid authority stems from direct individual decisions” (Woodcock); and therefore of being in some way against the State. But consider Stirner, an anarchist generally classified as extremely selfish: “I do not demand any right; therefore I need not recognise any either. What I can get by force I get by force. . . . Own will and the State are powers in deadly hostility between which no external peace is possible.”

This idea can be extended in two ways. Firstly, as a classic form of categorical imperative, in which case there is arbitrary freedom, and therefore the possibility of the State. Secondly, Stirner may claim uniqueness, as in fact he does claim in the form of “one-ness”, and say nothing about the other. “My justice is mine,” says Proudhon. We may conclude that the same freedoms are obtainable. There are only two conclusions: either the type contains no typically anarchic attitude towards authority, or it contains the characteristic attitude towards authority of not being typically anarchic. The idea cannot be extended beyond itself and still retain the necessary matching of the ontological and historical images. Thus the idea is meaningful only for the person who expresses it. This restriction undermines what both Woodcock and Joll regard as the touchstone of “the anarchist”. Of course, the characteristic can serve to describe anarchism as a general movement.

2. *Revolution*. Many anarchists have fought for revolution. The popular image of the anarchist is of a thin ascetic figure shrouded in a black cloak, with a leer and a beard and a bomb. Yet few modern anarchists would advocate such positive resistance even in the more modified form of a collective rebellion.
3. *Violence*. “The anarchist” is neither violent nor pacifist. Tolstoy, Godwin, and Proudhon were all pacifists. Kropotkin (reluctantly), Bakunin, and Stirner were not.

4. *Dogma*. "The anarchist" may be dogmatic. He is often arrogant. For instance, in *Modern Science and Anarchism* Kropotkin describes two "currents of thought and action which have been in conflict in the midst of all human societies". Firstly, Kropotkin mentions "the tendency towards mutual aid manifested in tribal custom and convention, medieval guilds and syndics and all other institutions developed and worked out, not by legislature, but by the creative spirit of the masses". Secondly, Kropotkin mentions the "authoritarian current". He concludes by saying that "anarchism represents the first of these two currents". From this reading I could reasonably describe anarchism as the dictatorship of custom. And custom, given voice through public opinion, is more intolerant, more stupid, and more frightening than any system of law. Kropotkin would have us regard the man who defies this dictatorship of custom as a "ghost of bourgeois society" (*Conquest of Bread*). It is ironic, and immensely disheartening, that the epithet Kropotkin assigns to the "socially useless man" (*Conquest of Bread*) is the very same one that is often applied to the modern anarchist. For he, too, is commonly regarded as a ghost of the modern social democratic and interventionist State. Anarchism is not free from dogma. There is no reason why it should be.

We therefore arrive at my earlier conclusion, but from a different angle. "The anarchist" type does not exist. It merely is, in various forms. Of these forms, Stirner marks one extreme with his individualistic anarchism. Next to him is William Godwin, who would either join Stirner's Union of Egoists or lead one of Proudhon's Associations. Further across the spectrum we can see the collectivities of Bakunin, who believed that "association is no longer merely a means of controlling large-scale industry but a natural principle"; the anarchic-communists; and the anarchic-syndicalists. At the other end from Stirner is the pacifist and humanitarian anarchism of Tolstoy, Gandhi, Herbert Read, and Schweitzer.

The anarchist is concerned with liberty and equality. It is difficult to make a clear distinction between liberty and equality. The confusion largely stems from the emotional yearning to regard them both as categorical imperatives. If we accept the idea of equality, we almost invariably lose the concept of liberty; and if we maintain the idea of liberty, we lose the concept of equality. We can only make a definite choice one way or the other. Too often we are forced to find satisfaction in such slogans as "Liberté! Egalité! Fraternité!". But definitions are necessary for analysis.⁶

Liberty is the more complex concept. It contains two notions: freedom from, which is similar to a striving for more equality; and

freedom to, which is real freedom and therefore arbitrary (Fromm). A primary definition of liberty is "the greatest amount of self-determination which is feasible, reasonable, and possible". Equality can be represented as egalitarianism—i.e., a necessarily unnatural isonomy. Clearly, in some ways we are all equal, whether we know it or not. I am not concerned with the so-called natural equalities since they are necessarily restricted to being either autonomous or merely potential.

The two concepts are involved in complex inter-relations, perhaps because of the chronically holistic imagination of the anarchist in his continual search for a synthesis of practice (praxis) and belief. The inarticulate but frenetic cry, "Liberté! Egalité! Fraternité!", represented three compatible aspects of one whole. The idea of liberalism, concerned not with the source of authority as are democracy and dictatorship, but with its manner and form, broke up this unity at exactly the same time as European socialism gained that special type of momentum which led irrevocably to the State interventionism and social democratic welfare systems of modern Europe. The anarchist, then, deals in an equality tempered by nature and in a particular kind of liberalism.

As I have said above, until the first half of the 19th century liberty and equality were popularly thought to be similar, or at least reconcilable. The Frenchman could shout, "Liberté! Egalité! Fraternité!", and mean everything or nothing. He chose the equality of the guillotine, which is no equality, and called it liberty. But at least since the 1880s, and perhaps since the 1848 revolutions, the desire for whatever it is that men praise as liberty was forced to give way to the more concrete demand for economic and political equality. The political failure of the anarchist movement is simply explained: the anarchist chose liberty when Europe was beginning to turn socialist.

Equality, of course, inhibits the notion of liberty (see above). The anarchists of the 19th century wanted "freedom from": from harsh social and economic inequalities, from the capitalistic State, from enforced collectivity, from bondage. The idea of liberty was only a gloss on the fact of inequality. But the idea of liberty was always present as title, and as hope. When Kropotkin was forced to draft a statement of defence for the Lyons Police Correctional Court in 1883, he and his 67 fellows demanded "equality as a primordial condition of freedom. Scoundrels as we are, we demand bread for each and everyone of us". Kropotkin's picture of freedom was not, I think, articulate.

The confusion was and still is a dominant feature of anarchism. For example, Proudhon wanted "equality of property"; for him, "imminent justice was no more, and no less, than equality". This equality was to be attained through some kind of mutual association. Later, in his *Appeal to the Slavs*, Bakunin wrote, "The whole world understood

(after 1848) that liberty was only a lie when the great majority of the population is condemned to lead a poverty-stricken existence and where, deprived of education, of leisure, and of bread, it is destined to serve as a stepping stone for the powerful and the rich". Bakunin does not want liberty, but equality. Two years later he is in the Peter and Paul fortress, corrupted by scurvy and worn out by five years of unnatural solitude. In a secret letter to his sister Tatiana, he calls out for "Liberty!"—but again he means equality. After evading exile he joins the Land and Liberty Society, and continues to fight for equality. Later, in 1867, he is elected to the executive committee of the Congress for Peace and Freedom, held in Geneva to discuss "the maintenance of liberty, justice, and peace". It is the time of the First International (see above). In his *Letter to a Frenchman* Bakunin declares that "France must save its own freedom" and his manner is almost Stirnerian. There is no talk of equality. But later it was equality that Kropotkin made the basis of his notions of mutual aid.

The bewildering puzzle is open to at least two solutions. One interpretation suggests that as the idea of isonomic equality became more manageable and more explicit, its accompanying gloss of liberty—"Liberté!"—hardened into a distinct concept of true (i.e. anarchic) freedom. Such interpreters regard the anarchists' initial stress on equality as only an extreme reaction to 19th century social and economic exigencies. Other theorists postulate two kinds of equality: authoritarian, Marxian, equality, and mutual, Proudhonian, equality. They suggest that during the First International the two parts split. The anarchist's desire for some kind of authoritarian, socialist, equality became wedded to doctrinaire Marxism, thus leaving anarchism itself with very little revolutionary impetus. The lives of Lenin and Trotsky were perhaps shaped more by the circumstances that surrounded them at the turn of the century than by any particular ideology. Lenin's description of Trotsky as an anarchist was not meaningless.

It is thus possible to abstract complex linguistic scenarios around the words, "liberty", "equality", "libertarian", "egalitarian", "liberalism", etc. The temptation is strongest for a historian of the period 1860-1914. Suffice it to say that as the actors in European politics started to move towards the authoritarian Left, anarchism was left without her claim for an audience.

* * *

Some people say that anarchism is impractical and goes against human nature. They are right. But a practical scheme is only a scheme which fits existing conditions. And it is exactly the existing conditions that one objects to; and any scheme which would accept those conditions is "wrong and foolish. The only thing that one

really knows about human nature is that it changes. The systems that fail are those that rely on the permanency of human nature, and not on its growth and development" (Oscar Wilde). In a sense, realism looks at the facts of the present and idealism looks at the facts of the future. That is the difference, and to hear someone say that the future is impractical provokes a weird and uncomfortable feeling. My task is not to forecast the imminence of an anarchist society—to prove the efficacy of a particular programme—but to justify the validity of believing in the possibility of either of its meanings and in its usefulness. The central criteria for this judgment have been shown to be necessarily private. I cannot convey the idea. No one can. My public criteria are listed above; but the histories of the two words, "liberty" and "equality", show only the dangers of such publication.

Bakunin is describing his discovery of anarchism: "A new world, into which I plunged with all the ardour of a delicious thirst". Is it a tenable doctrine? The question fades away. It is not a "tenable doctrine". It is a "new world". And unless we are serious about *that*, the history of ideas can be no more than a delightful pastime.

NOTES

¹ *qua* concept. Each of the points raised in the first part is answered more fully in the second.

² Ignorance forces us to regard anarchism, an individualistic movement, mainly in terms of a few famous men. The selection is invidious but unavoidable.

³ I am therefore free to treat anarchism in much the same way as, say, Hobbes treated "natural law", whose sense he completely changed, and the contract theory, which he inverted to show that there can be no limits on the sovereign power.

⁴ One immediate and final interpretation is found in Camus' "two certainties—my appetite for the absolute and for unity, and the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle". It is difficult to discover what, say, Godwin really believed and what he really believed he did; and the discovery when found (and I do not think it ever can be found) is only of doubtful worth. It follows that Camus' man is he "who does nothing for the eternal".

⁵ The quotation marks distinguish him from his "real-life" brother. I assume only that an "anarchist" society contains only "anarchists".

⁶ As before, many points are treated twice: first, in the abstract, and then in a historical context. This division leads to some repetition.

Non-political politics

MANAS

PAUL GOODMAN IS A SURPRISINGLY ACCEPTABLE MAN in all but rigidly doctrinaire quarters. His work is good evidence that there could be far more dialogue among people of opposing viewpoints, if they would simply realize, as Goodman does, that uncondemning reason and good-humoured common sense are effective instruments in reaching even those who have benighted opinions. There is a fundamental radicalism about everything that Goodman thinks and does, but he doesn't really frighten anybody. He seems never to have been subject to the juvenile delusion that you are not really "radical" unless you go about threatening people with utter ruin to all that they—mistakenly or not—hold dear.

Goodman may annoy some people, and occasionally humiliate others, but he is really a temperate man and his speeches are grained—for the most part—with an essential good taste and a consideration for the sensibilities of ordinary folk. When he says particularly devastating things to an audience, he mildly apologizes by explaining why he feels driven to extremes. Paul Goodman is manifestly not out to hurt anybody; his policies as a citizen are eminently constructive; but these considerations do not prevent him from speaking the truth exactly as he sees it. He has a talent for clarity, which makes him persuasive. He is not, however, anybody's pet radical. He is invited

MANAS is an American "journal of independent inquiry" (five dollars a year from P.O. Box 32112, El Sereno Station, Los Angeles, Calif., 90032) which frequently carries material of anarchist interest. In the two comments run together here it discusses two recent articles on the new wave of anarchism among the young in America, one by Paul Goodman in the New York Times Magazine and one by George Woodcock in Commentary.

and listened to for a searching intelligence that people of widely varying opinions have come to respect.

His article, "The Black Flag of Anarchism", in the *New York Times Magazine* for July 14th, 1968, illustrates these qualities. Purists in the anarchist tradition may not admit Goodman to their fraternity, but then, they usually find things wrong with Thoreau, also. It may some day be agreed that anarchism is basically an attitude for dealing with imperfect situations rather than a counsel of perfection that will never get applied except by perfect men.

The point of this article by Goodman is that the revolt of the young, all over the world, is anarchist in the best sense of the term, although many of the participants hardly realize it, and they often make sounds and motions having an opposite significance. His positive identification is as follows:

"The protesting students are Anarchist because they are in a historical situation to which Anarchism is their only possible response. During all their lifetime the Great Powers have been in the deadlock of the Cold War, stockpiling nuclear weapons. Vast military-industrial complexes have developed, technology has been abused, science and the universities have been corrupted. Education has turned into processing, for longer years and at a faster pace. Centralized engineering is creating the world forecast in Orwell's 1984. Manipulated for national goals they cannot believe in, the young are alienated. On every continent there is excessive urbanization and the world is heading for ecological disaster.

"Under these conditions, the young reject authority, for it is not only immoral but functionally incompetent, which is unforgivable. They think they can do better themselves. They want to abolish national frontiers. They do not believe in Great Power. Since they are willing to let the Systems fall apart, they are not moved by appeals to law and order. They believe in local power, community development, rural reconstruction, decentralist organization, so they can have a say. They prefer a simpler standard of living. Though their protests generate violence, they themselves tend to nonviolence and are internationally pacifist. But they do not trust the due process of administrators and are quick to resort to direct action and civil disobedience. All this adds up to the community Anarchism of Kropotkin, the resistance Anarchism of Malatesta, the agitational Anarchism of Bakunin, the Guild Socialism of William Morris, the personalist politics of Thoreau."

There is a sense in which the great anarchist thinkers of history have given a political title to the deepest of human longings, and then, through the violence once associated with the anarchist movement—

often unjustly, but sometimes with cause—gave it a bad name. But what people who have never read men like Kropotkin, Proudhon, and Malatesta do not realize is the warm, self-sacrificing humanity of these men, and the fundamental longing in their ideals. When they erred, it was from agonized impatience—but an impatience spurred by human pain, never a vulgar self-interest. And violence, with them, never became the systematic, calculating programme of slaughter and destruction the war colleges of conventional states have made out of it. There is bitter irony in the fact that the obedient masses accept as legitimate this far uglier sort of violence, only because it is sanctioned by state authority, while acts embodying “anarchism of the deed”, such as brought Alexander Berkman twenty-two years in prison, are regarded with horror and fear. But we make no defence of the lesser of two evils here. No one’s violence needs justification, although it is often useful to learn why it occurs.

Today’s younger generation of radicals is sometimes accused of ignorance of past social history and radical movements. Paul Goodman repeats the charge, suggesting that this is a peculiar weakness of American youth, who now practice an unconscious anarchism—from a questioning mood rather than by doctrine or revolutionary credo. As Goodman says:

“The American young are unusually ignorant of their political history. The generation gap, their alienation from tradition, is so profound that they cannot remember the correct name for what they in fact do.

“This ignorance has unfortunate consequences for their movement and lands them in wild contradictions. In the United States, the New Left has agreed to regard itself as Marxist and speaks of ‘seizing power’ and ‘building socialism’, although it is strongly opposed to centralized power and it has no economic theory whatever for a society and technology like ours. It is painful to hear students who bitterly protest being treated like IBM cards, nevertheless defending Chairman Mao’s little red book; and Carl Davidson, editor of *New Left Notes*, has gone so far as to speak of ‘bourgeois civil liberties’.

“In the Communist bloc, unlike the Latin countries, the tradition is also wiped out. For instance, in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia, students who want civil liberties and more economic freedom are called bourgeois, although in fact they are disgusted by the materialism of their own regimes and they aspire to workers’ management, rural reconstruction, the withering away of the state, the very Anarchism that Marx promised as pie in the sky.

“Worst of all, not recognizing what they are, the students do not find one another as an international movement though they

have a common style, tactics and culture. Yet there are vital goals which, in my opinion, can be achieved only by the immense potential power of youth acting internationally. Certainly, as a first order of business, they ought to be acting in concert to ban the nuclear bombs of France, China, Russia and the United States; otherwise, they will not live out their lives.”

Goodman pursues this analysis in specific terms in relation to the recent protest at Columbia University, but we are not concerned with that here. His general statements have lasting value, and show his talent for getting rid of labels or going behind them. He has this to say about the meaning of “participatory democracy”—

“It is a cry for a say in the decisions that shape our lives, as against top-down direction, social engineering, corporate and political centralization, absentee owners, brainwashing by mass media. . . . Participatory democracy is grounded in the following social-psychological hypotheses: People who actually perform a function usually best know how it should be done. By and large, their free decision will be efficient, inventive, graceful, and forceful. Being active and self-confident, they will co-operate with other groups with a minimum of envy, anxiety, irrational violence or the need to dominate.

“And, as Jefferson pointed out, only such an organisation of society is self-improving; we learn by doing, and the only way to educate co-operative citizens is to give power to people as they are.” Commonsense ideas about freedom and responsibility are now quite “radical”, as anyone can see.

* * *

WHEN A MAN, pressed by some final extremity, no longer appeals or explains, but simply cries out, he is trying to say *everything* at once. What else can he do? Words have failed. The cry is the sound of his naked will to be understood. For he is a man who can find no distance at all between the world of realities and the world of symbols. The space he once used for resonating meaning has collapsed, so he shrieks with the voice of the horns that brought down Jericho. He turns into an untutored but practising magician.

There is no more obscene horror in human life than the fact that such cries can be ignored. And no bitterer irony than that they can also be imitated—even “programmed”. So society easily finds excuses for creating sound-barriers equipped with filters to transmit only what people want to hear. We have to shut out the noise, they say. The men who remain unheard must now find champions who devise amplifiers, and sometimes these champions are heroic and great, while there are others who make capital out of fear and desperation. Telling

the difference between these champions often requires a very sensitive ear. Many people won't bother to try.

Then, after a while, because of the fierce competition of these and other elaborate sound-producing devices, it becomes easy for a man to justify whatever he wants to do. Any skilful reasoner can give him reasons. A whole apparatus of explanation can be attached to every position, so that, finally, a popular distrust of all explanation results. The language of humane intent is no longer credible on the surface, and how many people will go down deep for meaning? There has been a combination in restraint of truth.

This analysis seems transparently accurate. It may not give the whole picture—what analysis could?—but it surely discloses some of the facts we need most in this age of muffled cries. The case for this analysis grows stronger every day. It has countless statements. There is for example the case made by *The Inhabitants*, a novel in which Julius Horwitz records his experience as a social worker in Puerto Rican Harlem in New York. The best thing about a humane social worker is almost certainly his intentions. He tries to drill small openings in the social combination for restraint and confusion of truth. In the following passage, the social worker who tells the story keeps an appointment:

I hurried to Service to see Miss Fletcher. Service is a big ugly room, ugly like all the loft buildings in New York. Long, attached wooden seats filled the room. And on the benches sit the people who have nowhere else to sit. No confessional box. No rabbi's study. No mother who will listen. No father. We have lost our father. That's what I thought as I hurried down into Service. We have lost our father. And no one can tell us where to find him.

I saw Miss Fletcher sitting beside the bare-top desk near the window. She held her baby across her knee, burping her. She looked up when she saw me. And I immediately saw that she had come to Service like everyone else. She had no other place to flee to.

Just as I crossed the middle of the room a Negro girl stood up and screamed. I saw her screaming at the interview desk of Mrs. Nivens. She turned towards the wooden benches to scream. The people on the benches stared dumbly at her wide-open mouth. Mrs. Nivens sat quietly at her desk waiting for the girl to stop screaming.

"Why did she scream?" Miss Fletcher asked me.

"Probably because Mrs. Nivens asked her a question that she couldn't give an honest answer to."

"Do people often scream here like that?"

"Some do it loudly, most do it quietly. But everybody screams."

Miss Fletcher took her comfort where she could find it. She sat up her baby and wiped its face with a diaper. The baby smiled.

"It's just a gas pain," Miss Fletcher said. "She can't smile yet."

"She'll learn," I said. . . .

The Negro girl screamed again. Miss Fletcher dropped the bottle she was holding. The Negro girl broke just as the bottle broke. She stood up screaming, "I'm human! I'm human! I'm human! You dirty son of a bitch, can't you see that I'm human!"

The cry of being human was the most commonplace cry in the Service. I heard it daily. It's the spatial cry of the beggar. Look the next time you see a beggar. The successful beggar always suggests he too is

human. I don't know why we should have beggars. But beggars beg you to look upon their face. And they are vicious when you turn from their face. Almost like the anger of a god. I knew one boy who begged on the subways. He had twisted legs and one arm chopped off. He dragged himself up in front of each passenger and stared into his face.

"What does she want?" Miss Fletcher asked.

"She wants to be human too." . . .

The facts behind this story are too complicated to permit isolation of those who may be personally to blame for all these cries of pain. The pain is real and the dissimulations of some of the people who cry out are practised in order to escape the pain. So, the bureaucracy of the social service has a double function: to deal with the pain, one way or another, so that these people can try to go on living, and to keep the evidence of pain at a bearable distance from the taxpayers. Not many people want to hear cries of pain, so the cries are deadened by the sound-barriers of the system. The life of the poor in the city becomes a long, low sigh.

If you have a sensitive ear, you keep on hearing that sigh. You imagine all the rest. Some men, after hearing it, find themselves unfitted for hearing anything else.

When a man cries out on the streets of a good, small town, people hear him. They ask him what's the matter. He isn't a stranger. He's one of the people and they'll help him. It is this spontaneous helping which keeps many people from ever getting into desperate situations. The barriers found in cities don't exist in this small, good town. There aren't all those terrible distances between people. They have sensibility for one another's pain. This of itself does a lot to abolish the causes of pain, making unnecessary the cries of the totally ignored.

So the complexity of the arrangements through which people relate to one another is an important factor in the causation of pain. Simple arrangements bring out the good in people; complex arrangements suppress it. The more informal or, as we say, "natural" the arrangements, the less pain they generate. This seems a fact of human life. It is the fact on which the philosophy of anarchism is based.

The proposition of Anarchism is that the State—the sovereign power which creates elaborate structures in the service of ends which are not the natural ends of human beings—is the chief source of evil in human life. The State establishes cold, inhuman distances between people. It replaces natural longings with artificial, anti-human allegiances. It suppresses spontaneous sympathies with the contracts of law. It turns men against their own best qualities and creates situations in which people find themselves unable to do what they want and ought to do. By making them feel dependent upon the power of the State, it develops fear of any life without it. Its benefits lose all semblance of human decency by being suspiciously counted by nervous

men who are terrorized by the idea of uncalculating generosity. You *have* to count, they say. Just *look* at all the problems we take care of! The State is both the symbol and the instrument of dehumanization.

Finally, being dependent for information upon the statistics of its own status quo, the State rationalizes a very low estimate of human potentiality and then administers an order based on this technical contempt for people. And it lies about what it is doing. In a brash, hypocritical way it talks about people being "good". This tends to make the people share in the contempt. So, by these means, the State and its pretentious devices become a major "reality" in people's lives. The State is thus the origin of their self-hate and of their disbelief in the possibilities of a good life for free human beings, "free" meaning without any State.

Anarchism is, paradoxically, anti-political politics. It has a theory of good—the high potentialities of human nature when liberated from the evil confinements and prejudicial influences of the State. But what is anarchism, if anything at all, before it takes on political colouring? To ask what anarchism would be, independent of its conflict with the State, may be equivalent to reading it out of existence for old-time anarchists, whose definitions of anarchism all seem "reactionary"—predicated on struggle with the Enemy. Yet some positive conceptions exist.

In an article in the August 1968 *Commentary*, George Woodcock discusses the underlying reasons for the new wave of anarchist ideas to be discerned throughout modern youth movements. As evidence of the fact of this wave, Mr. Woodcock reports:

"A political science teacher in a Canadian university wrote me of the curious results of a quiz on political preferences which he had given to the 160 students in his class on Contemporary Ideologies. Ninety of them chose anarchism in preference to democratic socialism (which came next with twenty-three votes), liberalism, communism, and conservatism. Most of the students seemed as square as students run in the late 1960's; only a small minority were overt hippies or New Leftists." Why? A little later Mr. Woodcock answers:

"What the anarchist tradition has to give the radical young is perhaps, first of all, the vision of a society in which every relation would have moral rather than political characteristics. The anarchist believes in a moral urge in man powerful enough to survive the destruction of authority and still to hold society together in the free and natural bonds of fraternity. Recent events—the civil rights campaigns, the revolts in the Negro ghettos, the behaviour of have-not countries toward their prosperous benefactors

—have shown that even in a materialist culture, non-materialist values will make an irrational but convincing clamour. The relations among men are moral in nature, and politics can never entirely embrace them. This the anarchists have always insisted. . . . The great anarchists—and here I am not considering the embittered last-ditch defenders who represented the historic movement in the 1940's—laid a constant stress on the natural, the spontaneous, the unsystematic. For them individual judgment held primacy; dogmas impeded one's understanding of the quality of life. That life, they believed, should be as simple and as near to nature as possible. This urge toward the simple, natural way of life made men like Kropotkin urgently concerned over the alienation of men in modern cities and the destruction of the countryside, themes that are dear to New Radicals."

Well, these are all pre-political views. That is to say, they represent human achievements to which political power is irrelevant, except as an obstacle. And since the goal of anarchism is conceived as the uninhibited flow of these qualities, how can anarchism be conceived of as political at all? It can't, save in its high-noon confrontation with and overt rejection of the State. *Then* it is political, and then only.

If one waters down this idea of confrontation with the State, then, for traditional anarchists, there is probably no anarchism left, but only maundering sentimentality. Yet something like this is happening, according to Mr. Woodcock, who says that the "new" anarchism is distinguished by "the absence of some of the elements which were part of classical anarchism". In particular:

"There is no longer much talk of barricades and revolutionary heroism, and while 'direct action' is a phrase continually on the lips of New Radicals, it means something very near to Gandhian civil disobedience, which the Old Anarchists would despise ostentatiously. I believe all these changes are to the good, since they represent the liberation of useful libertarian ideas from many of those elements of the historic anarchist movement which its critics, with a degree of justification, condemned. The anarchists of the past were too much inclined, despite their fervent anti-Marxism, to accept the stereotypes of 19th-century left-wing thinking: the idea of the class struggle as a dominant and constructive force in society, the romantic cult of insurrectionism and terror, and even—though this is rarely admitted—a vision of proletarian dictatorship, particularly among the anarcho-syndicalists who envisaged a society run by monolithic workers' unions. Those who openly or unwittingly advocate anarchistic ideas today have mostly shed these outdated concepts, together with much else of the ideological baggage of the Old Left. The revolutionary tactics of Bakunin are as dead as if they were buried with him among the

solid burghers of Berne. It is unlikely that we shall see a revival of a movement dedicated to pursuing them, however far libertarian ideas and impulses may spread among the young and influence their social and moral concepts."

As suggested, those who take the essence of anarchism to be absolute confrontation with the State will probably regard what Mr. Woodcock says as destructive of anarchism's identity. But perhaps this does not matter. Definitions will not change things much. The fact is that in an age of intense concentration on political remedies for social agony, the real error was seen to be in politics itself, and the anarchists proposed a single, climactic, political act of revolution to abolish politics. But surely the *essence* of anarchism lies in the capacity to recognize the evil; opposing it involves only a decision about means.

Behind this theory was a deep human longing and high faith in unspoiled human beings. It happens that you can hear this longing and shy expressions of its faith from a great many people who have never heard of anarchism. And when they do hear of it, they crawl a little further into their defensive shells. Why? Because it frightens them. They don't like the anger and the eagerness for conflict. And if the anarchists sound as if they have taken out a political patent on the pre-political qualities which they cherish, and on which the high hopes of their doctrine are based, why, then, since anarchists are often positive people, it may seem to others who listen to them that there is just no hope at all. For the anarchist seems to be saying that there can be no realization of human community, no compassionate relationships or friendly co-operation, without first engaging in searing, bloody, revolutionary struggle with the powers-that-be. As Mr. Woodcock says:

"It was a hard, no-compromise view; either completely non-governmental society, or nothing at all. The Old Anarchists never came within light years of attaining such a goal; hence the glorious record of unsuccess which is now so much to anarchism's advantage."

Its light, that is, has not failed. But anarchism's light, as with Plato's Republic, is the light of a *vision*. It has, you could say, fifty-one per cent of the truth, but it never gets the sort of practical application that might become possible through a little acquaintance with the other forty-nine. Yet, having roots in the ideals and longings of all mankind, the vision can never die. Mr. Woodcock thinks it is now being reborn in a less doctrinaire format. This is also what Paul Goodman thinks.

What, one wonders, would happen to anarchism if it attempted—would submit to—assimilation of the insights of humanistic psychology? What would happen if anarchist thinkers let themselves be drawn into non-political studies such as investigating the roots of human fear?

If fear has kept anarchism from spreading far and wide, then preaching *Götterdämmerung* or *Ragnarok* is not exactly the best means of winning friends for anarchism. What sort of constancy and courage can a man devote to a social ideal without becoming a threat to other people?

It is true, of course, that all good men are eventually seen as threats to the survival of evil. But this is an involuntary threat, not something planned, not something brandished to intimidate. . . . And who, after all, will be intimidated? Who, besides the faint-hearted who need rather to be strengthened before they will dare to try to save themselves?

Mr. Woodcock may have a glimpse of the answer to this question, still to be worked out in history:

"The liberalization of a society is, in fact, an evolutionary and not an apocalyptic process, and can only be obtained by concentrating on piecemeal changes. These changes are to be attained not by rejecting all laws, since some restraints are manifestly necessary in any foreseeable future society, but by searching out those areas in which authoritarian methods and bureaucratic methods have manifestly failed or over-extended themselves, and by endeavouring to give practical application to libertarian concepts of decentralization, voluntarism, and direct participation in decision-making."

This may be a way of saying that the systems under which men are *living* must be replaced by a combination of diverse activities, including leavening, withdrawal of nourishment, and counter-functions which absorb vital elements, one after the other, into the new structures of an emerging community life. The heart has to go on beating while the changes are accomplished.

OBSERVATION ON ANARCHY 94

Noir et Rouge, which described as a "monthly", is of course a quarterly magazine; incidentally, its most recent issue—No. 42-43, November 1968—contains some valuable material on the May movement in France.

N.W.

Demythologising Guevarra

LAURENS OTTER

THIRTY YEARS AGO the major obstacle to anarchist advance was that many people who ought to have come to anarchist ideas, and indeed many who at one time held them, were so bedevilled by the fact that the Soviet Union claimed to be a federation of workers' councils, it claimed to be what anarchist communists had always aimed to build; that they supported the Communists. The true anarchists therefore found it harder to demonstrate that Russia was in no sense libertarian, that there was no workers' control, and that all other features of an anarchist society were lacking.

This meant that the anarchists had to phrase their attacks on the Communists not primarily in terms of theory, but in terms of fact—facts about Russia—and since in most arguments neither party had been to Russia, it very often appeared as if the Communist/Anarchist argument was one of the “Yes he is”/“No he's not” variety. Indeed, so much were some former anarchists (e.g. Robert Minor in the USA) sucked into the vortex of the Stalinist movement, that Forster and other Stalinist polemicists used, when talking of what we would call anarchists, to speak of Trotskyist-anarchists, to distinguish them from the, perhaps larger, body of what we would consider ex-anarchist fellow-travellers.

It is unlikely nowadays that many people can reconcile even a nominal anarchism with admiration for Russia. But even after Hungary, an apparently intelligent founder-member of the New Left (U. & L.R.) Club and early CND activist, called himself an anarchist, but turned out to be in the CP and was prepared to justify his position, while as late as 1960 or 1961 a CP member came up to FREEDOM sellers at Hyde Park and tried to convince us that two members of the CP Executive were anarchists, that they were supported by a sizeable percentage of the membership, and we had only to get in and help to bring the CP into the anarchist camp. However the Stalinists “ye have ever with you” and the present fad is to confuse anarchism with either

Maoism or Castroism; and nowhere does this cult take on firmer shape than in the adulation of Ernesto Guevarra.

Castro came to power in Cuba, partly as the result of guerrilla actions in the Sierra, partly as the result of a general strike in Havana. In both of these he had the support of the Cuban anarchists. There were anarchists, both individualist and communist, in the mountains with Castro's resistance, and the first suggestion for the general strike came from the Gastronomic Syndicate (part of the Cuban IWMA section). It is worth recalling at this point, and emphasizing as strongly as humanly possible, that Castro had been in the mountains for several years before the strike with no particular success, and that the strike was crucial in his rise to power. After Castro had come to power his brother Raul was responsible for shooting several of those who had been Castro's companions in the mountains. Those few of the anarchists who were not so shot had to flee, and most of them are back again in the mountains still fighting for the same cause. Guevarra, with far more efficiency set about liquidating the trade union left. He did not stop at the anarchists, even social-democratic trade unionists were imprisoned or “shot while trying to escape” and the communist party willingly sacrificed their activist trade union members, when they learned that Castro, who till then they had denounced, sometimes as a Trotskyite, sometimes as a petit-bourgeois liberal adventurer, sometimes as both, was prepared to return to the system which had existed under Batista whereby the CP was the only legally permitted party, and fellow-travellers were in the cabinet.

After some years Guevarra was no longer seen in Havana, and rumour had it that there had been a conventional power split, and he'd been purged as he had made a speech which appeared to criticize Castro's international orientation. The two men had certainly been seen to quarrel in public and later to ignore each other in front of diplomats. However, most of the rumours were quieted when Castro read to a conference in Havana sections of a letter purporting to be from Guevarra saying he had gone elsewhere to continue the struggle. There were a few nasty suspicious characters who asked if they might see the letter—no one other than Castro has ever claimed to have done so.

It so happens that though General Barrientos came to power in Bolivia by means of a coup supported in the main by right-wing opponents of Paz Estensorro, nevertheless this was with the connivance of Castro, and until the two men fell out, Siles and Lechine, both Castroites, and both former Vice-Presidents to Paz, both supported Barrientos and played their part in the new regime. Even after these two had fled into exile, it appears that other Castroites remained in the cabinet. So it was all very convenient that Che should have chosen Bolivia to get shot in by government troops. (His body was seen by very few people who had ever met him. By an accident Ernesto Guevarra's

brother did see the corpse and was emphatic that the dead man was no relative of his—however, his “widow” who did not see the body, was satisfied.)

Bolivia has a whole tradition of revolutionary action. The miners who were the backbone of the initial revolution that put Estensorro into power have remained almost permanently independent of central government rule since even before the MNR revolution. Not only are the mines a staple part of the economy, giving them enormous economic strength, but they live in impregnable mountains, so that even when the central government defeats them and nominally reimposes order, this is only in one or two towns at a time and the regime has never been able to police all the mines. Furthermore they are of an Amerindian tribe with a long history of sociate and quasi-libertarian socialist relations. Most of the peasants on the other hand are either more competitive and individualist Amerindians, or another part of the country have a history of servitude and subjection that has cowed them.

According to the diaries, sections of which Castro and various other people have revealed at different times, Guevarra went to the miners asking them to follow him away from the mines to form guerrilla bands, and “they did not seem to understand the revolutionary impact of this suggestion”. The Miners’ Union did once mention that it had received a paranoid letter from someone purporting to be Guevarra with a suggestion that would have undermined their struggle, but they treated it with the disdain it deserved. So Guevarra set up his guerrillero band elsewhere—again according to the Diaries it had at its peak about 12 members, some of whom (though less than half) were Bolivians. The Bolivian government has revealed that two of these were police spies. Everywhere they went the peasants asked them to get lost as they were doing them no good and often much harm.

All their loving

CHARLIE GILLET

THE TOOLS ARE THERE FOR COMMUNICATION, BUT WE’RE NOT USIN’ THEM right. Eric Burdon, his Geordie accent still intact after five years away from home, knows the power just beyond his grasp, but flounders with everybody else in the quicksand between here and there.

It’s amazing, if you’re interested enough to think about it, that it’s possible to compile nearly an hour of intelligent comment from pop singers. How long is it since we expected, and got, the line about wanting to be an all round entertainer? Two-three years, not much more.

Yet Tony Palmer must have cut out a lot more good things than he kept for his BBC-TV programme, *All My Loving*, which showed men thinking about the relationship between them and their material, and between them and their audiences, and drawing sensitive and perceptive conclusions. Somehow pop singers have pulled at their own bootlaces and lifted themselves to the same platforms of social observation, self-analysis, and philosophical theory that a certain kind of university student has traditionally claimed for his kind. The world has, in spite of itself, become their classroom and their teacher; reporters, pen and camera in hand, serve as their note books and essay files.

So we have Donovan planning a power colony for artists, which will define the concept of beauty for the world society, and plan its dissemination. Paul McCartney, modestly, “there’s no desire in any of our heads to take over the world. . . .” And, of course, the militant: Frank Zappa, “waging a low-key war against apathy”.

All of which is, for those of us who care, very interesting. Fats Domino and Chuck Berry never seemed to be talking about this sort of thing, at least not when there were reporters nearby. But

what makes it all a bit confusing is the music itself—where does that fit?

And this was Tony Palmer's problem too, putting all these bits of wisdom in their context. "Pop does care about the way we live," he assured us, "above all about love." This came by way of an introduction to the programme, and there wasn't much time to think about it before we were into a battery of montage effects of sound, light and image which sought to hammer home the point.

But what, we can ask in the cool quiet now, is "pop"? It's an industry; but that's not what Palmer meant, because he was at pains to point out that as an industry, pop was extremely insensitive about the way we live—one publisher, we were told without knowing why it mattered, earned more in a year than all the money gathered for famine relief. No, the pop that cares is somehow the money-maker minus the money he makes, the singer as an artist whose integrity ignores finance.

Well, if you'll take that, how does this singer-artist care, about the way we live and about love? Listen to the words? Well yes, but that might not be enough. So, to make sure we notice, Palmer gives us the works—self-immolation in Vietnam, emaciated bodies tipped into heaps at Auschwitz, student-police fights in Grosvenor Square. But the music—somehow we are meant to make our own connections between those pictures and the interminable savagery of the Cream, three dervishes persistently mistaken for bluesmen and apparently admired by Tony Palmer.

The blues—now there's a music about caring. But not a word about that here, nor a whisper about soul. Instead, that curious figure Jimi Hendrix, as always looking like a dissipated Mick Jagger, and here speaking with that same disarming charm. And playing with the same sexual abandon, enacting a sordid ritual of single-bodied intercourse in the celebrated tradition (Johnnie Ray, Elvis Presley, Jackie Wilson).

For his own private reasons, Palmer perversely chose to evade any of the songs that dealt explicitly with the social images he wanted to use, so that all we were left with to make the connections was the rhythm, undeniably violent, and the interview comments, like Eric Burdon's analysis of the search for maturity among his contemporaries, who found comparable experience in war and LSD.

Burdon provided a rare chance for a genuine coincidence of picture and sound with his song, *Good Times*, whose own irony justified the use of Grosvenor Square pictures. But then that song never convinced the pop music audience, and failed to repeat the success of the earlier copies of Negro records by the Animals. What is authentic, and who cares?

The other genuine "social comment" record used in the programme was the Who's *My Generation*—and that needed nothing more than shots of the group performing the song to illustrate its message.

All My Loving was disastrous, if Palmer's introduction is taken seriously. Yet it undoubtedly entertained, and may even have been a revelation to those who hadn't realised that some of our singers can think original thoughts. Palmer's problem is that he wants to establish pop music as an art on a comparable level to painting—the current events in popular music, he insists, are the equivalent of the Renaissance. But popular music, like every other art, has its own conventions which defy comparison with any other art, and these *All My Loving* seemed anxious to deny.

Of course, not only Tony Palmer has problems with the essential character of popular music. The musicians and singers themselves are going through hell trying to discover ways of expressing what they feel in ways they can claim to be their own. (And a lot more, the Cream included, make a lot of money seeming to go through the same process.)

The first group to achieve a personal style which simultaneously assessed a personal relationship and implied social observation were the Crickets, back in 1957-58, with *That'll Be The Day*, *Maybe Baby*, and *Think It Over*. Not until six years later did Bob Dylan, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones, and a year later still, the Lovin' Spoonful, achieve comparable effects.

The Crickets were, so far as we know, innocents from Texas, college students but with no world philosophy to expound. Now, it would be no good a singer complaining (as the Beatles, in occasional despair, sometimes do), "don't read me so fast". We're waiting, minds ticking over, cash in hand, for everything you have to say.

One response to this is Dylan's, to become the enigmatic recluse, committing all there is to say to the black grooves. The opposite is Frank Zappa's, to accept the opening made for the showman, in the tradition of Norman Mailer's "Advertisements For Myself".

Zappa's interested in personal liberation from a smothering environment—yours, not his (already apparently assured). To achieve this on record, he uses tunes which have the insidious simplicity of a TV jingle and lyrics which consistently take a slightly different direction from the one you anticipate. The theme of the Mothers of Invention's latest LP, *We're Only In It For The Money*, is attack through mockery, and depending how close to home they're hitting, you're hurt, amused or bored. The targets for abuse are groups with

over-developed conventions of acceptable behaviour, particularly the American society in general, and hippie anti-society.

How does pop music stand up to this? Its traditional role (assessed in a fine essay some years before rock and roll by David Riesman) was to help fit the listeners into society; yet here are the Mothers of Invention, and elsewhere the Fugs, using it for propaganda against society.

The most noticeable loss, in *We're Only In It For The Money*, is of a coherent melodic structure placed in a dramatic context, which has always been the feature of traditional popular music, including rock and roll.

Suddenly the arguments seem familiar, transposed from that far-off debate about the nature of film inspired by Eisenstein's use of it for propaganda. Zappa's method is comparable to Eisenstein's montage technique, forcing the listener to take each bit of music in relation to the whole, not allowing him to wallow in the facile, self-indulgent solos which every other group features, and not letting any tune last long enough to let the listener relax to it. Each item lasts long enough to capture the attention, instil its message, and then gives way to the next; various themes are returned to, so that the whole LP has a particular shape.

The Fugs, with similar intentions, are much more conventional in their methods. Their recently-released LP, *Tenderness Junction* shows the group's ability to play in a variety of styles, sometimes parodying and sometimes making use of established techniques to pass their message. But where the Mothers sarcastically recommend you to drop out, the Fugs are apparently sincere when they advise, "Tune In, Turn On, Drop Out". Their daring is semantic when they chant "spurt, spurt, spurt", a long way from the much more suggestive nonsense whispering on the Mothers' album.

These two groups do care, as Tony Palmer thinks all "pop" does, about the way we live and love. But their concern for the feelings of their audience is untypical; the usual pop singer is concerned about his own feelings, as the comments of Peter Townshend and Jimi Hendrix showed. The listener makes his choice about whether he gets involved with the singer's self-involvement (helped by the efforts of managers to draw attention to the groups). And if the listener is a thirteen-year-old girl, she can, as Frank Zappa commented, divert herself by admiring the singer's "bump".

Boom

NICK WILDE

BOMB CULTURE by Jeff Nuttall (MacGibbon and Kee, 36s.).

1. Content:

BOMB CULTURE is the history of a movement, now rising above ground, by one man who followed it and was part of it, from protest to art. Confounding the "have done it all before" brigade, he finds his roots in Dada in art, and in jazz for music. Jazz is the root of pop. The Negro is the root of jazz, and "the White Negro" of Norman Mailer gives a jazz soul to protest. The music leads into Rock and Roll, and the heroes of the fifties, the "wild angels" Brando, Dean, Presley. Pop and protest came together with folk, trad and skiffle, and met Mailer again. All these and protest and CND were the way in to the Underground.

2. Nostalgia:

The book is a *Who's Who* of protest and the underground, although many names are omitted. The reader, on the fringe of the underground, enjoys reading this up-to-date history and can say: "I read that" or "I was there". Peter Fryer, reviewing *Bomb Culture* feels the emotion coming through the writing. I felt a Kerouac-like speed as Nuttall rushes headlong through the years, stops, and quotes liberally from one's own influences.

"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked." This book (*Howl*) we read at school, followed by *On the Road* and *The Dhama Burns*. The tattered Panther paperback *Protest—the beat generation and the angry young men* lies faded in front of me now.

In those days it was all modern jazz. I could name the members of the MJQ and the Dave Brubeck Quartet, as well as most of the Duke Ellington Orchestra. I read *Jazz Journal* and had seen most of Britain's top jazzmen. Now I know who the Beatles and the Stones are, and a dozen other groups. Is Brubeck still going?

I remember Stigma in Better Books, and how everyone seemed to be there on a Saturday afternoon. I remember an ice-cold two-hour

wait outside the Roundhouse when thousands were admitted one by one. I saw the Pink Floyd for 2s. 6d. in Notting Hill Gate. I remember *IT*'s first appearance, *Heatwave* and *Cuddons*. I heard Ginsburg at the ICA.

3. *Protest:*

Alex Comfort in his review of this book in *The Guardian* described the Underground as "an important feature of our time, perhaps the most important". The book is about the replacement of organised protest by individual protest in art form. From the H-bomb, says Nuttall, "no longer could teacher, magistrate, politician, don or even loving parent guide the young". The politicians, in public or on television, still regard violence in a London street as infinitely worse than the genocide in Nigeria, and appear to give some support for others in upheaval against their "evil regimes". But you can't do without governments, they say. You'll have chaos. "What have we got now?" we ask.

Artists and organisers were the leading protesters. Some remain, while others (e.g. John Braine) have crossed over to the other side of the house. The organisers are still with us. Pat Arrowsmith is in prison. As the movement subsided Nuttall sees the coming together of pop and protest: Bob Dylan and the Beatles leading the field until their brand of pop or rock music can be described as the musical event of the year by *The Times*, while The Cream receive universal acclaim. This music has led the underground above ground, so that the underground is a kind of product. The audience is widening: "How it is" and "All my loving", Tony Palmer's film on BBC 1. Cream on Omnibus. Doors on ITV. The Living Theatre on BBC's Release.

4. *Anarchist:*

In *Bomb Culture* the Living Theatre is noted. These actors live as an anarchist group, and have travelled Europe as such. They are described as aggressively anarchist-pacifist, and their theatre has influenced much of the contemporary avante garde. The Underground is spreading its message. It is an anarchist culture.

Near the end of his discussion of this book Alex Comfort says, "Ultimately the aim of the Underground has to be to reassert both rationality and feeling. At the moment none of us has thought this through far enough to put a sharp intellectual point on it, and, in the pressures of the present world, the feelings won't wait. The intuitive action of people, particularly students, has so far shown itself humaner and saner than that of organised society. As an anarchist I take the view that this is to be expected, but it places great demands on the humanity and reason of us all."

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