

CONSPIRACY CONTINUES

IN the wake of the Brixton festival, cases are beginning to be brought to court only now. Anarchists in the area are finding themselves increasingly under surveillance. Several comrades are actually being charged for offences allegedly committed during or as a result of the festival. 121 Bookshop, in Brixton, is often the scene of visits from plain clothes police fishing for information, trying to fit names to faces and faces to names. Meanwhile, their uniformed friends sift through thousands of photographs taken at the time, to see if they recognise anyone.

At 8 a.m. on Wednesday 24th June, they took their operation one step further. Uniformed officers called at the house of a well-known anarchist speaker and Bookshop worker here at FREEDOM. They arrested him on a charge of 'incitement to riot', claiming that they had a statement from a constable who had recognised him at the time (a statement which they later produced). He was then taken down to the station and questioned for two hours. It soon became apparent (they almost certainly already knew) that he had nothing to do with the festival - not only did he have a cast-iron alibi, but he is a well-known pacifist! It seems that their little visit and quiet chat were intended to frighten, harass and, if possible, glean some information from him. Among others, they asked him questions about 121 Bookshop and FREEDOM Bookshop and if he knew certain individuals. He was later released and the charges dropped. Knowing the police's attraction to conspiracy theories, and the way they can manipulate the press along these lines,

they are surely trying to build up a supposed international network of anarchists and agitators (see previous Issue).

All in all, this must be taken as a serious warning to all well-known anarchists, especially in the South London area, who could be picked up at any time.

Some comrades are producing a Bust Leaflet entitled 'NOTHING TO SAY', to help people cope with these situations. It will be available

by the time this issue of FREEDOM is out. It is available from 121 Bookshop, 121 Railton Road, London SE24, or from us at FREEDOM Bookshop. Please send s.a.e. for copies by post.

Meanwhile, remember
CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES.

UPDATE

WE'VE just heard that a group of people whose house got raided at 6am by plain clothes cops without warrants attempted to disrupt the Scarman whitewash. Four people were arrested in the dawn raid. The harassment continues and we're all at risk. In the meantime Police Commissioner Fairbairn has said 'though there may have been some planning as it gathered momentum, the disturbance had begun spontaneously.' Some of us just wish that the rest of the police force, the press and the politicians believed him.

4th Revolution NOW

WE may be seeing the beginning of the 'Fourth Revolution' in Iran. The Islamic politicians have been proclaiming that the first three were the removal of the Shah, the seizing of the American hostages and removal of the secular opposition, culminating in the sacking of Bani-Sadr. The 'surgical operation', as Khomeini called it, the day before he was bombed. Now the people have begun to fight back, with the bombing of the Islamic Republican Party headquarters. It may be their last chance.

The Moslem politicians have spent the last year consolidating their positions. They have consistently outmanoeuvred their opposition. Their triumph was completed with the sacking of Bani-Sadr. He has become a symbol, almost by default; there is no longer anyone else available. But he is only a symbol. Many of the opposition groups have lined up behind him, mostly in a spirit of lesser evilism. Even the

Mojahedin (radical moslems) and parts of the Fedayin (Marxist-Leninists). Ethnic minorities such as the Kurds are taking the chance to mobilise their hatred of the Tehran government.

The politicised mullahs, represented by the Islamic Republican Party, have been steadily gaining ground for the last year and a half. Bani-Sadr had been an aide of Khomeini in exile and got his backing in the presidential election. That settled it and he romped home with 76% of the vote. He revelled in his role as Iran's first ever president, as the Imam's 'son' and in his popular support. Meanwhile a collection of experienced conspirators progressively (if that is the right word) eroded the ground under him. The IRP swept the elections for the Majlis and packed it with mullahs. They had to set up a special room for them to leave their guns outside.

Continued overleaf

A number of 'crises' helped. The crusade against the Great Satan, the hostages, the campaign against the godless Kurds, the war against the atheistic Iraqis, all were manipulated. There was little secrecy about all this. As Khomeini, the religious leader of the embassy militants, said: 'We blocked the attempt by the "liberals" to seize the machinery of the state; we forced the Bazargan government to resign, we enabled the great tree of the revolution to grow larger and stronger'.

Now they nearly have that central power entirely in their hands. Opposition has steadily been quietened. The ethnic minorities are kept in place militarily, opposition newspapers are banned (five more only

last week, including, ironically, Tudeh's (the CP) who have been backing IRP. Serves them right), politicians have been removed one by one. Character assassination is a standard feature of Iranian politics, 'pagans and heretics' Khomeini called them, people who worked to defeat the Shah's regime.

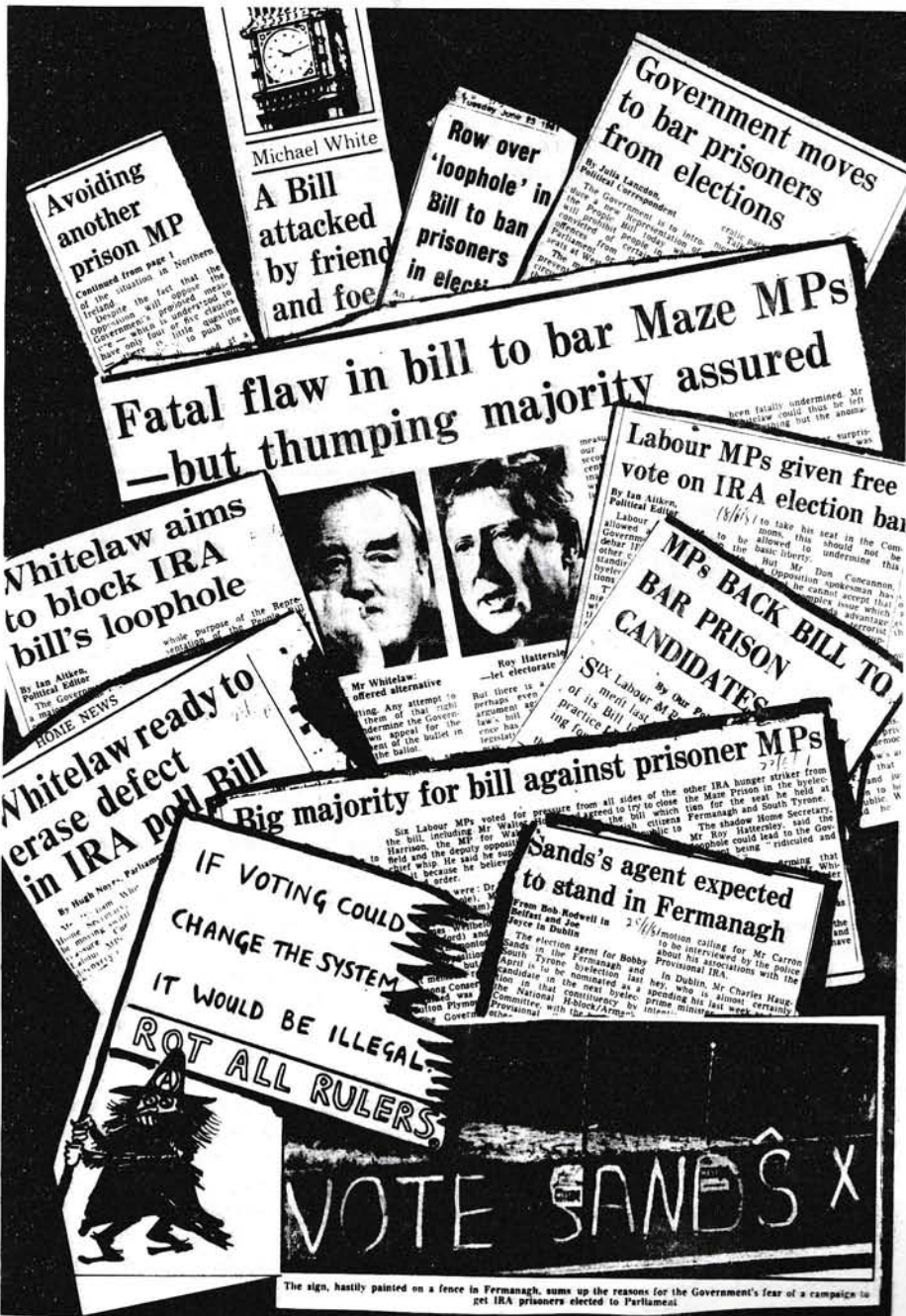
Well, we anarchists can't feel any great sympathy for most of these people. More to the point, side-stepping the personalisation, the opposition is still there. The ethnic minorities are still fighting, there have been recent outbreaks amongst the Kurds (north-west), Baluchi (south-east) and Qashgai (central). There is increasing opposition to theocracy in urban areas. The

Mojahedin have finally broken their psychological (and tactical) barrier and criticised Khomeini by name. The Fedayin are still around if largely underground or getting themselves killed as volunteer militia in the south. (For the defence of the regime, incidentally, most of the militants who seized the American embassy also went south when the hostages were released. Several, including the organisers, were killed in an Iraqi attack in January).

These people have been getting into street fights with supporters of the mullahs in the last couple of weeks. In Tabriz (north-west, a traditionally militant area of mostly Turkish speakers), a crowd of several thousands sacked the offices of the IRP and Tudeh. In the north, near the Caspian, a strong area for the Mojahedin, pictures of Khomeini were burned. Friday prayers were cancelled in several cities, to avoid the chances of demonstrations. Political meetings of more than five people are banned, tanks are on the streets again.

Khomeini's role in all this has been ambivalent. He sees his task as building structures which will survive his death. He is now 82 and had a heart attack early last year. Until recently he avoided taking sides, he wouldn't issue decrees. Remember, he is a theology professor. He would sit in the middle while the arguments were debated around him, then, when there was some sort of consensus, he would indicate his approval. Then he would support the decision completely. Westerners, unused to the conventions of these things, must have been startled by the rhetoric. (I like his phrase in the elections. When he had decided which side to back, the others became 'brainless perverts'. I can't see the Queen of Britain intervening like that.) However, he has obviously leaned emotionally towards the mullahs. Now he has tipped that way completely. He still says that Bani-Sadr can 'repent, return and sit in a corner'.

Now everything has blown apart, literally. There was a bomb at Qom, eight dead, the government say the Mojahedin did it, they say it was provocation. At least fifty people have been shot, mostly already political prisoners. They included Said Soltanpour, a well known writer and playwright. There have been about four thousand arrests of opposition of any type. Dozens have been killed in street clashes. The right wing opposition is rumoured to be gathering in Paris, including



CALL TO EMPTY FRENCH PRISONS

ON the 19th of June last, according to the French daily *Le Monde*, a group of about 50 youths of both sexes, members of a 'Collective for Total Amnesty', occupied during six hours the Headquarters in Toulouse (South of France) of the Departmental Federation of the French Socialist Party, from where they displayed a large banner reading: NO TO GENEROUS AMNESTIES - YES TO A TOTAL AMNESTY. This group of activists distributed also to people in the streets leaflets asking for 'a total amnesty to all prisoners without distinction', informing the public that the recent release of about 40 prisoners by orders of the newly elected socialist President Francois Mitterand was totally inadequate 'covering only 0.8% of the prison population'.

The same leaflet stated also that 'the 43,000 prisoners in French jails, of whom 90% belong to the most defavorised social classes and who have been locked up by the previous right-wing regime of Giscard d'Estaing, would like to share too in the hope for a better society felt by the vast majority of French people outside prisons'.

What is curious about this piece of action on behalf of those inside French prisons is the fact that the same influential left of centre / socialist(?) daily, *Le Monde*, felt the need to comment about this emotive issue in somewhat cynical terms (see printed insert) which translated loosely, says: 'In order to solve the problem of having people in prisons, a group of activists in Toulouse have asked during a short 'occupation' of a branch of the Socialist Party, for a total amnesty and for the release of 43,000 inmates from French

prisons without distinction of race, class or crime.

This is an excellent idea which should be extended to other areas. So in order to solve the problem of unemployment one just needs to give work to the unemployed.... To increase our sales overseas one just needs to export more.... To eradicate starvation one just needs to feed the starving people....

And to stop people being stupid one just needs to become intelligent.'

Faced with this reactionary comment, particularly printed in such a reputable paper, which in the past, it must be said, never lost an opportunity to debate the most radical ideas in its weekly supplement, *Le Monde Dimanche*,

one is left speculating if *Le Monde's* perception of the depressing problem of other human beings being locked in cages be it in France or in any other country in the world, is perhaps being affected by the sudden promotion to the Elysee Palace of a socialist mate?

Would this French daily have reacted in the same uncaring vein if for instance the same occupation had taken place during the reign of President Diamand Giscard d'Estaing before the recent elections and if the local occupier had been the branch of any right-wing political party opposing the candidature of camarade Francois Mitterand? One just wonders.....

CLAUDE

SUSSEX STUDENTS ON TRIAL

FOLLOWING a students union occupation at Sussex University held in the campaign to force the University to recognize a Students Union Education Sabbatical Officer, 29 students are being disciplined'.

The Students Union voted to disrupt the Disciplinary Panel and not to recognize its legitimacy. However, the Students Union President and Vice-President Finance resigned so as they could attend their hearings. Twenty-four of the students stuck by the decision not to make a plea.

On Thursday, 18th June, the trials were held in the University's administrative block. Many students arrived with typed music, musical instruments, stink bombs, masks, whistles, and attempted to disrupt the hearing. The relevant part of the building was locked off and protected by security guards.

The ex-Students Union President Adam Gaines (a Labour Student) arrived in a smart suit with documents and a lawyer. He attempted to enter the building but was surrounded by a crowd of angry students and prevented from doing so.

Then someone set off the fire

alarm, and Fire, Ambulance and Police vehicles arrived on campus. Staff were evacuated but the hearing continued for a while.

It is believed the cases of all those who refused to attend have been heard, and the four who want to plead will (the University hopes) be heard next week. So verdicts, which could include expulsions, will unfortunately be left till the end of term.

The day after the disruption, Friday, the Tory students had Julian Amery, the racist Brighton Tory M. P., down for a meeting. He was met with a furious reaction from a large number of students, and after the meeting had to be locked in a room with security guards for his protection. Eventually police arrived and whisked him away.

Out of the occupation grew the beginnings of an 'autonomous association' of students, which recognized the inhibiting ties of the Students Union to the University and the State - financially, legally and constitutionally.

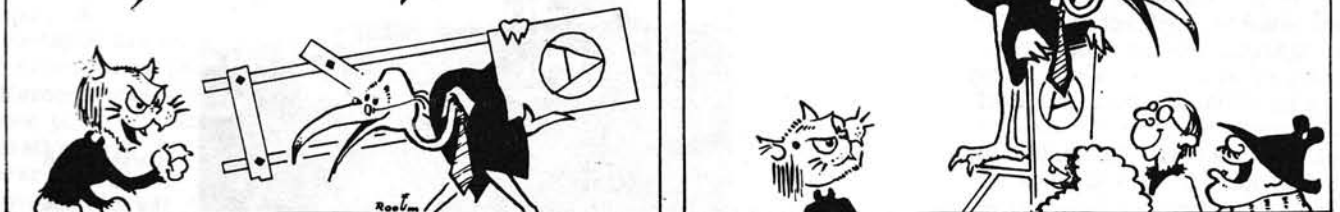
Messages of support, requests for further information etc., should be sent to Sussex Anarchist Group

WILDCAT

You won't achieve the free society by talking at street corners.

Right. You won't achieve the free society by any quick method.

But you might make your own society a bit freer than it would have been.



Petitions or Dynamite?

LUXULYAN, in Cornwall, is just one of several possible sites for a nuclear power station that the CEGB says has to be built in the South West soon. Test drilling has to be carried out at these sites to make sure any future power station won't sink beneath the ground causing a nasty accident and a lot of embarrassment.

When the contractors, 'Norwest Holst', arrived at Lower Menadue Farm, the farmer refused to let them on his land. The CEGB soon got an injunction against him, but to their horror they found several local anti-nuclear protestors were not going to let things be that simple. Here started the siege of Luxulyan.

With the knowledge that 93% of the population did not want a nuclear power station on their doorstep (independent survey), the local anti-nuclear activists felt they had sufficient support for their action. The understanding of the issues involved, and the speed with which locals were able to respond to the situation was largely due to the activities of Teddy Goldsmith (whom personally I think is a right berk) and his ECO friends. More activists moved in, not just locals, but people from all over Cornwall and a few from Plymouth (including myself).

When we first arrived at the 'HQ' (a caravan blocking the main gateway), we were greeted by the most upper class woman I had ever met; her name was Doreen, soon to be nicknamed Lady Doreen; later we discovered she had close connections with the 'high-ups' in the nearby China Clay Works. Soon we were ordered (literally) to guard some gates without any proper explanation of what was happening. I took an immediate dislike to Lady Doreen; so did most people actually. I told myself it was just class prejudice and she was probably OK really, although I couldn't help feeling that she could soon be as much an enemy as the CEGB. I was right. We spent the weekend there without much action, in fact the highlight was the contractors turning up at 8 o'clock on Sunday morning to borrow some milk off us. People spent their time panicking whenever the contractors drove around or started the machinery. Half the time I reckon they

and since then that friendship has grown; they have bought anti-nuclear badges etc. off of us and given us bottles of wine etc. Also that weekend a couple of us challenged Lady Doreen about the lack of democracy, but within a couple of minutes we were dipping our hats with a 'yes mam, certainly mam'. It's amazing the authority that is carried by an upper class voice.

By the time I had returned to Luxulyan a week later the contractors had inched a drilling rig into a gateway, (the one I had been guarding the week before) but had failed to do any drilling thanks to the quick action of a few locals who had dived under wheels. The situation stayed in this stalemate for quite a while, then came Thursday 4th of June. It had been announced that L.A.N.D. (Luxulyan Against Nuclear Development) would be pulling out at 7 pm. This followed thirty or so injunctions being issued against the most prominent local activists. What the CEGB didn't know was that other locals plus individuals and groups from all over Cornwall and Devon were prepared to take over where the others had left off. As one tent came down another went up.

I have now been down again for a few days and things have changed. Not the rig, that is still stuck in the gateway with chains around the drill. It is the organisation that is changed; no longer are there the 'generals' as we called them, Lady Doreen and Co. Now things are a lot more democratic and we have a good but simple system of knowing which gates are being guarded and it is also security against CEGB

staff posing as protestors. But there is a new threat. That is the seismic testers. They can be over the fences, set up their equipment, carry out the tests and be out again within 20 minutes.

My experiences of Luxulyan are much different from other anti-nuclear activities that I have been to, where protestors have nearly all been middle class, non-violent (dogmatically so), liberals. Here the backbone of the opposition is ordinary working class locals who don't give a shit about violence or non-violence; they simply want to stop the power station being built and will use whatever means they feel are necessary, be they petitions or dynamite.

If you wish to help bear in mind that it might be disastrous for us if any contractor's equipment were damaged, or if there were any violent confrontations (although equipment has been sabotaged and 'accidentally' fallen off cliffs at other sites in Cornwall where there is no occupation). Also, they don't want bums using it as a free place to eat and sleep, money is scarce. It's no holiday either, you may well be asked to sit alone for several hours guarding a field, so be prepared! Apart from the obvious things like tents and food, if you could bring bicycles (perfect for touring the site) and extremely useful are Citizen Band radios. If every major gate had a CB things would be much easier.

Luxulyan is a couple of miles off the Bodmin by-pass (A30). Phone Lanivet 203 or St. Austell 850359 before you come down. Once you have said you're coming you must turn up or let people know else you'll fuck things up good and proper.

Perhaps I'll see you down there.
N.M.

Plymouth **(A)** group.



illustration
taken from
the Leveller

Free Market Fun

WENCKE Muhleisen is the perfect Benson and Hedges advert for the Friedrichshof community in Austria. Both have reached the stage where they no longer have to say anything - they need only appear.

All that being so, you'll probably have much more fun listening to and watching Wencke. She's a great actress, never stops, and her vitality and verbal energy are infectious (like the common cold) and amusing. Wencke would no doubt approve of that - she's really into finding everything amusing, but don't mention the war - that wipes the smile off her beatific face.

Friedrichshof, full name the Academy Friedrichshof, is described in their advertising as 'a commune outside Vienna where they practise... the technique for developing a human being's creative potential, their ability to present things symbolically and, like psychodrama, to gain a certain perspective by playing roles.' What fun. Yummy, if you can afford it, that is. Seen their prices?

She's in the UK at the moment, presenting a series of workshops, lectures, discussions and videos. At Conway Hall, London, on June 17 Wencke was in fine form. She talked fluently about the work of the Academy and showed a video of a few people expressing themselves, a lot of people smiling and waving, and a lot of people watching. What it didn't show was anyone crying, threatening

anyone or giving two fingers to the camera.

She will tell you about spontaneous role playing, sexuality, regression, material action and, above all, self expression and communication. These last two are very important, but if you should try them whilst she's talking, you'll get told to Shut Up! just like the Scottish anarchist in the Conway Hall who tried it. Ah well. Persevere. Purse, severe. Mmmm. Maybe there is a difference between dear Wencke and a Silly Party candidate. Maybe. She will also speak a little about 'confrontation with society'. Well, she'll use the words (-like all the rest-) like a spinning top, but when asked how all this communication confronts society; that external world of power outside the private communes of Austria and beyond, she'll suddenly pretend not to understand English very well and play the dumb gauche role. Wow. That's really going to move the troops. Bet Whitelaw's shitting himself.

Asked about the group attitude to celibacy, Wencke looked as if a dirty smell had entered the clean world of her fucking boring fucking heterosexual gluttony. But it's all such fun, and her hair shines and she bubbles back like a real programmed trouser.

It's fine that any group has achieved highly developed forms of art and self-expression among their members. When it seriously claims that it is

challenging that external authority and power with which they've been oppressed and threatened, then their advertised theory enters the realms of the Department of Silly Walks. To see this Academy described as 'anarchist' (in Peace News) is curious, to say the least. They have experimented with 'models' for living - yes, folks, windmills and body painting! It would help the great Un-Free of the world if they knew what 'pedagogic training' meant, when reading the Academy's printed information. If they don't... tough. Then I suppose you could always train to be a Group Leader. Don't delude yourself that this really presents any kind of threat to the great Muckball. It just makes sitting in your own shit, fun, fun, fun.

Ann

P. S.

It cannot be over-stated that although it is amusing to take the piss out of Friedrichshof encounters and similar 'awareness' groups, such establishments can be extremely dangerous. Many individuals, especially the psychologically fragile and the very young can be manipulated and/or destroyed by such institutions. It is vital that we do work on self-expression and communication and sexuality, but this has value only within our own lives, in their complete social and political context, and not enforced upon us in artificial institutions remote from that which threatens us.

Ann

IN BRIEF

WHO says that nuclear planners and militants are heartless? The American government has now convinced itself that any future war will be a 'theatre conflict'; that is, it will wipe out Europe, leaving the USA and USSR untouched. As the saying goes, 'we fought the First World War in Europe, and if you're dumb enough we'll fight the Third World War in Europe'. As a preliminary step, the Pentagon has asked major hospitals to reserve a proportion of beds for European casualties, well, for service personnel anyway. Just a suggestion, why don't they have the nuclear war and we'll look after the survivors, if there are any?

A QUOTE by William Whitelaw, Home Secretary, on 'community relations problems': 'We cannot long sustain a situation in which sections of the community feel deeply insecure and particularly threatened by the belief that they will suffer from the activity of a small number of extremists'. It is uncertain whether this is a reference to the Metropolitan Police.

Club Row, that infamous street market in East London, that specialises in stolen, diseased and ill-treated animals is receiving growing attention from animal liberation activists and the weekly Sunday demo is gaining in strength. We need more to swell the numbers and to close this foul trade for ever. Club Row is also known as a market where vivisectionists obtain animals. Many unsold animals end up just dumped in the street. Just turn up about 9.30 pm in the morning with placards, banners, loud hailer and your good selves to put an end to Club Row NOW!

CLAY Cross in Derbyshire is to hold a Republican Day on July 29, the day of the Wedding (What Wedding?). Cliff Fox, a council member, said that they wished to depict royalty as 'riding on the backs of working class people and not realising what a mess the country is in'. Robert Lilleker, president of Chesterfield Chamber of Commerce, is appalled: 'It is probably mean spirited to deprive people of pleasure, particularly in these very difficult economic times when nothing is very funny anyway'.

AN interesting position is developing in Ireland. The British government is changing its rules so republican prisoners can't stand for parliament. Meanwhile two National H Block Committee candidates are elected in the south. Give it a while and representation will have been transferred piecemeal.

Who said if voting could change the system they would make it illegal?

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTI

Machiavellian Politics

Dear FREEDOM,

I am surprised at the nature of the letter in FREEDOM No. 9 by Ronan Bennett. I strongly reject his categorising my letter with that of Pat in whose tribal meanderings I fail to see anything but blind obstinacy. I also strongly reject his contention that my letter is an obstacle to an anarchist analysis, which by the way is long overdue.

My letter and its contents were directed primarily at the hunger-strike campaign in the South. I never said contrary to the fact that the war in the North is a class war. The bloody differences that divide the working class in the North, are above all the product of British Imperialism and the universal nature of capitalism which seeks to divide (and thereby conquer) a people on all its significant points; that is race, sex, religion and age and impose a hierarchical structure. While not at any stage wishing to enforce or give credibility to, the artificial border created by the British and Irish ruling classes in 1921, I would like to identify some features of the differing struggles which exist as a result of enforced partition.

Common to the working class in the North and the South is a Republican tradition. But in the South today the nature of British Imperialism is economic, the direct British presence has been removed. Furthermore, British Imperialism is gradually being replaced by American corporate capitalism. The struggle of the Southern worker is similar to that of any English comrade. Republican ideology for the Southern worker can no longer identify the essential points of oppression that that worker experiences. But Republicanism is still relevant in one crucial point - the oppression of Irish people by British troops in N.I. In the campaign to remove direct British Imperialism, the potential for working class backing is real. But there is no commitment to this by either the Republican Movement or the National H-Blocks Committee, the latter favouring a movement that will impress bourgeois politicians and appeal to bourgeois values. We all realise that in a secondary sense the hunger strike is a means of focusing attention of the social

struggle in the North, but as an anarchist I can't support the Machiavellian politics that are prevalent in this campaign.

The most favoured party in the south is the bourgeois nationalist party Finna Fael. This is a populist party whose grass roots have a strong anti-British rural and urban following. The grass roots would to a large extent support the IRA campaign but in a patriotic and moralistic manner. For this segment of the population, the IRA performs the task (as viewed from the South) of applying pressure (by the bomb and the bullet) to the British establishment and forcing it into talks with the Irish establishment, such as the present Anglo-Irish talks. To this extent the IRA plays a role similar to a military wing, forcing the Establishment on both sides to seek a solution in the interests of 'peace and the common good' - and we all know what that means! It is in not seeing the crucial importance of the whole of the working class (North and South) to any armed struggle carried out by the IRA in the North that Ronan errs. Any movement (particularly the NHC campaign) that does not base itself with the working class is doomed to bourgeois politics (and values) and the evidence is conclusively there that the present hunger-strike campaign and the resolution to the N.I. problem lies in the hands of the Establishment and our divine leaders! The Republican Movement has walked itself into this position nationally and because on the one hand it is undemocratic and on the other hand it is inseparably linked to classical Republican ideology there can be no hope for change or redirection.

To the working class in the North the situation is fundamentally different and as Ronan says the struggle is one that has a social base. It is primarily a working class struggle in which part of the class (engineered geographically to appear as though it were in the majority and hence lend a democratic tag to legitimise enforced partition) has historically been won over to an extremely right-wing ideology basing itself on religion rather than race (colour) as was the case in Rhodesia. For the importance of the democratic tag - mentioned above - compare public opinion on the legitimacy of Rhodesia or South Africa with that on N.I. I agree with Ronan in that the Republicans fighting in the North, have not been alienated from their origins, the struggle is still very

much a people's struggle.

No real movement to anarchy can be made in the 6 counties without a unified 32 county working class. Similarly no real movement to anarchy can be made by the working class in the South until the 6 counties have joined the rest of the country. The splitting of the Irish working class is therefore not the result of biological origins giving rise to warring tribes, but a distinct and conscientious ploy by the British and Irish ruling classes to divide and disorganise the Irish working class, which had in the 1920's as it has today, a distinct revolutionary tendency. My thanks for the space you have afforded me.

For Anarchy
KEVIN DOYLE

Cork.

No Quiet Debate

Dear Comrades,

Regarding recent debate and certain poisonous remarks by 'Pat', I do not see where this could lead. Apart from in a direction leading to total confusion and bitterness.

It makes no kind of political progress at all to call any activist involved in the Irish war a psychopathic murderer or a tribal martyr. No doubt there are people involved on either side with whom one would not wish to share a tent. Equally, there are people whose tired bodies one could embrace, whose resolve and commitment one could be inspired by. Personal line-drawing is easy when one is not involved. Which side is God on? Which side are the anarchists on?

Who cares about these self-laudatory questions. If outrage is what you feel then DO something to stop the horror. If all the A. L. F. did was to write indignant letters to FREEDOM, then I wouldn't particularly want to be a pig.

A war against occupation in Ireland exists. We have to acknowledge that. Therefore anything that anyone does within that war to resist such occupation and to bring freedom nearer, if not exactly under one's nose, is to be encouraged. Likewise, action designed to free people from the tyranny of police, employer, the press, the government, the priest and the London Transport Bus. Anarchy is no quiet debate. It's about time that was understood. And acted upon.

MINNIE MOUSE

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LET

Anarchist jingoism

Dear brothers and sisters,

What attracts attention (to paraphrase Kierkegaard) about the article 'Imprisonment is Violence' is not what is there (for the most part excellent) but what is not there, and should be.

At the time of writing, torture is an integral feature of the judicial process of the Miss United Kingdom in the province of Ulster. And discussion of the prison struggle that does not feature the conditions of the political prisoners and the present hunger strike - and support the five demands: 1. free association, 2. One parcel, one letter and one visit weekly, 3. the right to wear own clothing, 4. the right to refuse prison work, 5. full remission of sentence, ends up as simply a futile scholastic exercise. The relevance of these reforms to the 'outside' should be obvious to a moment's reflection. And until the revolution that abolishes prisons, any anarchist is under the primary obligation of solidarity to lend strength to the daily struggle for valid reforms (amelioration) without being fooled that reforms will do.

Those that invalidate the identity of others may well find their own identity prove illusory. Already, Peace News resorts to censorship to cover up its bankruptcy of ideas and its extraordinary failure of compassion in relation to the Ulster troubles: the suspicion now necessarily arises that behind the masks of anarchism and pacifism lurks the nauseous reality of the petty bourgeois identity crisis of Great British jingoism.

Twelve (12) years has surely been long enough for us all to get our shit together: and the present hunger strike is the urgent crisis. If this non-violent action on the part of the prisoners does not goad us into action, then reasonably we must expect an extension and escalation of the war. Of course we all hope this will not happen. A miracle may occur to save us from the consequences of our cowardly collective inertia and intellectual double-dealing.

The only possible revolutionary step here in England is to demand the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. It is well past time we realised this war threatens all of us!

I am under no illusion that this step will automatically end the violence in Ulster - but it will end the war between the Provisional IRA and the British state, and so significantly de-escalate the level of violence. More, it will open up the real possibility of social revolution in Britain also, removing a mill-stone of imperialist war guilt from around the neck of the English, Welsh and Scots masses.

And finally I take the liberty of reminding a suspected terrorist from Canterbury: Softly softly catchee monkey. There is terror in the air all right (and underground as well), and until we can undo that button that is the present danger, we must go carefully so as not to jeopardise the lives of all we love. And even so. (Patchen).

in struggle,

JAYBIRD

Legal child abuse

Dear FREEDOM,

I have just read John Goddard's letter (FREEDOM VOL 42, No 11) where he said he spent most of his life in Local Authority Community Homes, how the Welfare State is an illusion and how the 'hierarchical social services and social workers don't give a shit, being more interested in their careers'.

Well I'm writing to support everything he says; and I speak with four years experience as a social worker in a Local Authority. What is an anarchist doing as a state owned social worker? The short answer is that I don't really know. I don't seem to have got into the position yet of being able to start something viably alternative and real (a free school for example), so I've been hanging around as a thorn in the side of the system as it were. At first I thought I might really be able to change things - I was full of reformist illusions - now I KNOW I can never be anything more than an unfortunate inconvenience.

A couple of years ago I reported the Warden, for ill-treatment, and a number of so-called 'child care officers' at one of the establishments John was talking of, to the administrative chiefs of the Social Services Department. They held an 'internal inquiry' (lovely expression, that!) and within a fortnight the incumbents were back at their work - business as usual - and I was informed that 'action had been taken'.

I was so pissed off with the blatant inaction that I compiled dossiers on cases of child abuse carried out by these people in the name of care and sent them off to an acquaintance who worked for a national newspaper. I even had to commit an act of espionage to obtain a much needed document and it was at this point that my leap into anarchism and out of illusion took place. Anyway, the story broke on the front page of the Guardian, there was a subsequent public inquiry and in spite of the charges of ill-treatment being found proven they were all yet again returned to their jobs with a 'warning'. I was subsequently blacklisted and labelled as a whistle blower and I realised that all I had done was to complain to the SS about the activities of the Gestapo.

Correspondence I have since received has shown me that a vast quantity of children's homes and assessment centres are geared to authoritarian and violent regimes and, remember, many of the kids in these places have been removed from family homes by social workers precisely because they suffered abuse at the hands of adults. It is always interesting and telling to note that child abuse by parents is frowned upon severely to the point of imprisonment and ostracism by an establishment which itself allows its so called educators to indulge freely in psychopathic repression and beatings on such an enormous and excepted scale that a recent survey showed 80% of parents approve of their children being physically punished at school. Children are without doubt the worlds largest oppressed minority - that's why I have to make things very inconvenient for the perpetrators of official abuse until I can find something a little less upsetting and jarring to do.

I'm starting to ramble now - there's always so much to say! I just wanted John Goddard to know that there are one or two human beings in the social work system who are making life just that little bit less possible and that little bit more inconvenient for the professional careerists and hierarchists within it. Any further suggestions gratefully received.

Yours fraternally,
A LA N MORRISON
BRISTOL

P. S. To see some interesting suggestions about social work read the report 'Community control of social services departments' compiled by Battersea Community Action.

Liberal Variant

Dear FREEDOM,

I can't really make head nor tail of Carl Harp's letter (FREEDOM Vol. 42 No. 11) in which he defends the Libertarian Alliance and attacks my adherence to Anarchist Communism. So rather than waste my time and your space in pedantic point-scoring over isms, I will state a few basics.

What I want to see and participate in is the seizure of the means of production, distribution and exchange by all of us who labour, using the organisational forms which arise on the spot from the struggles as they happen. In past struggles it has invariably been workers' councils which have arisen and they have been armed. This last point is essential, as no ruling class gives up without a fight. Arms would also be necessary to prevent any Bolshevik-style coup.

This broad-based seizure would be followed (I hope) by the abolition of wage labour, money, commodity production and so on, thereby creating the material conditions in which the apparatus of the ruling class - the state - couldn't exist, and in which the ruling ideology and values would become redundant. This move towards the classless society would necessarily have to be global.

I want this to happen not just so we can all have our material needs met but also to develop new human relations - with one another and the world. That is, to bring about humanity's 'positive self-consciousness'.

The Libertarian Alliance too have something to say. But as it is a liberal (or 'libertarian', if you wish) variant on the ruling ideology, which proclaims (in all seriousness) 'capitalism without the state', that is, libertarian alienated wage labour with libertarian surplus value for libertarian bosses (even Thatcher has a clearer grasp of the class struggle than these fossils), then I unequivocally identify them as my enemy. I hope I don't have to repeat this again.

As for Carl Harp, it is up to you to stop fetishising the word 'libertarian', as such mind games get you into the hopelessly contradictory position in which you can claim to be an Anarchist, Socialist, Individualist and Egoist all at once. (I refer to your 'Notes on Anarchism' Anarchy 31). I would have thought that in the horrific situation you are in and after the bestial treatment you have received, you would be able to spot class enemies when you see them.

HERBERT READER

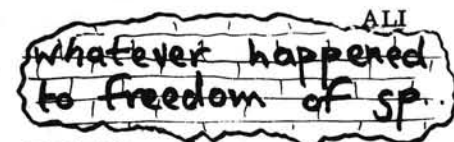
Iran

Continued from page 2

two ex prime ministers. On Saturday Khamenei was injured by a bomb, in his microphone, appropriately enough. (Enshallah, these mullahs do drone on). Then, most dramatically, IRP offices in Tehran were blown up. The government claims it was by Forghan. This is a group of religious nutcases (by Iranian standards). They have attacked various public figures and are thought to have killed Taleghani, the liberal populist Ayatollah.

Seventy dead, including two cabinet ministers, five junior ministers and nineteen members of the Majlis. The dead include Beheshti, strong man and arch conspirator. He won't be missed.

The next few days will be crucial. This will be outdated immediately. It has been announced that there will be no state of emergency and a successor to Beheshti has been appointed. Pro IRP demonstrations have appeared. Obviously there will be a massive clamp down. (As if there wasn't already). The opposition could be smashed completely. Alternatively, the moment could be seized. The people of Iran could stop this religious reaction now. If they don't, we can abandon hope for many years.



oops...

TWO posters are available from Just Books, Belfast. One asks for support for the prisoners' demands, one is a comment on the criminalisation policy and lists special treatment meted out to people who are then denied special status.. Posters are 50p for 50 which includes postage. From: Just Books, 7 Winetavern St, Belfast, BT1 1JQ. They also ask us to point out that the Bookshop is not near bankruptcy (Freedom gets mis-informed again !), but that money is always needed to fund prisoners' book scheme. Any help very welcome.

I WOULD like to make it clear that I disassociate myself from the use of the cartoon on the Final Solution and the Arthur Moyses illustration in the context of the Review section on Ireland in this edition of FREEDOM.
M.G.

FREEDOMS CONTACTS

Groups

The correct address of the Torbay Anarchist Federation is: Thistledown, Milton St., Brixham TQ5 OA Z.

A USTRALIA

Panic Merchants, K153, Haymarket, Sydney, 2000, New South Wales.

USA

Bound Together Book Collective, 1901 Hayes Street, San Francisco, California, 94117. Phone 386 9870.

Desires

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THE NOT SO DISTANT STRUGGLE

At the end of May 1981, five members of the FREEDOM Collective visited Northern Ireland at the invitation of the Belfast Anarchist Collective. This review section contains thoughts, news and comment, written during and after that visit. The views expressed are individual ones.

Other contributions were offered by Ann, which a majority of the Collective felt unable to publish on ideological grounds.



ITALO 71

From Umanita' Nova, Italy.

BREACHED barricades, riot debris everywhere, burned out vehicles abandoned in housing estates, searches of everyone entering the city centre, raids in the middle of the night, nervous soldiers patrolling busy shopping areas, the tensions grown out of a familiarity with violence - all these, whilst constituting what has become normality for Belfast or Derry, leave unforgettable impressions on the visitor. The inevitable, and perfectly valid, emotional response to such impressions immediately finds expression in the call 'Troops Out!'; the attempt to harness this response to an anarchist analysis of events in the Six Counties in the light of the visit, however, seems to raise more and more questions than before.

But this in no way abrogates the urgent task of seeking answers. BAC, in their writings in OUTTA CONTROL and FREEDOM, and in their discussions with us, have consistently posed the questions from the vantage point of long experience in a situation to which no facile theories, tribalist or otherwise, may be attached, and have sought to lay out an anarchist perspective. It would be difficult to deny that anarchists have, in general, avoided at all costs a properly objective examination of the situation in Northern Ireland, preferring instead to concentrate on the important but less thorny problems of more distant struggles. Why? After all, within a short distance of Britain we are daily witnessing a most repressive regime whose intensity supports no comparison with life in London; a regime where there is near total monitoring of movement day and night, where constant use is made of the Prevention of Terrorism Act to detain and prosecute 'political offenders', where the overt presence of armed forces often reaches saturation point, where prisoners are condemned by juryless Diplock courts, and where widespread condemnation has been directed internationally, particularly from America.

One reason put forward to us in Belfast carries the distinctive ring of truth: That such an examination would inevitably involve the choice between total support for, or denial of, the

aims of the IRA, an organisation which, on the face of it, bears no apparent signs of movement towards anarchism. Nevertheless, for whatever reason, ideological scruples must not be allowed to erode the clear responsibility of focusing attention on what has become the embodiment of the repressive state visibly at work in utilising all its resources, using the streets of Belfast, Derry and elsewhere as a prime testing ground for future urban unrest in Britain. In doing so, the striking image of people demanding to determine their own existence emerges not just from individual IRA actions, but rather from the close communities of which the IRA guerrillas are an indissoluble part.

Such an image is sharply defined in at least two ways. Firstly, in the knowledge that the state forces, whether police or army, are totally rejected by many thousands, demoralised, and themselves effectively imprisoned in their garrisons, barracks, Landrovers and Saracens. Unable to defeat the IRA militarily, and hampered by the continued redundant attempts to alight on a 'political solution', they are less able than ever to justify their existence. Secondly, in the recognitions of almost daily signs of reverses for the British state and its agencies. There has been humiliation for the RUC and army from people whose bitterness and violence makes them impossible to control except by containment; humiliation for the odious Atkins and his cronies, whose lies and scheming did not prevail against the hunger strikers last December and will not prevail now; humiliation for the arrogant, legalistic Thatcher, who is only now discovering the cost of her intransigence; and humiliation for parliament itself at the election of Bobby Sands MP.

A second reason, frequently argued, is that the scale of distortion commonly achieved by the media makes extraction of truth and genuine objective assessment impossible for outsiders. Such an argument can be attempted by ideologues who turn away from Northern Ireland as a situation too hot to

handle. But to the most casual observer no propaganda can mask the intensity of a war which has overcome every device of the state, including proscription by legislation. Uncontrollable rioting, amounting at times to near insurrection, and the willingness of prisoners to starve in prosecution of the demands are stark facts which survive any attempt at distortion. The fact that the Divis flats have been partially destroyed by occupants suffering 67% unemployment is itself a telling sign that the fight for better housing conditions and work forms an inextricable part of the overall struggle.

No pragmatic analysis of the far reaching historical developments in Northern Ireland can begin without accepting that the IRA has always occupied a central role. Whatever epithet used to condemn it, whether 'authoritarian', 'militarist', 'statist', and so on, it continues to offer formidable opposition to the state and its members retain powerful living roots within local communities, for whom republicanism is life blood rather than an adopted cause. It appears inevitable that the growth of libertarian influences, even in such potentially fertile ground, cannot mature without recognition of this fact.

To accept this and act upon it is not to sacrifice ideological principle for the sake of speedier, more immediate change,

nor is it the justification of any means to achieve a common end. In the short term, the absence of anarchist influence apart, the IRA objective of causing a failure of will at Westminster, resulting in withdrawal of the troops, appears incontrovertible. In the long term, after victory in the immediate struggle, there are more far reaching difficulties for anarchists concerned with developments in every area of life. The central position of the IRA in such fundamental changes only makes the difficulties insuperable if its strength can be shown to lie outside the political and social life of the working class, a view which even a brief visit makes untenable. If it lies within, then the IRA, too, will be dynamic and subject to the same changes, or else stagnate and fail. There is no evidence to suggest that, should libertarian influences grow within these communities, the IRA could remain ideologically static and unresponsive, or indeed would wish to. Here, perhaps, in the acceptance or denial of this probability, lies the clear choice between attempting to stimulate the argument from within or continuing to frown and walk away, allowing an impression of the past to determine an anarchist approach for the future.

RT

Guns and Crosses

IN Northern Ireland today the British Govt. is engaged in the systematic oppression of 1,500,000 people. This oppression covers all areas of life, the cultural, economic, social and the political. It is also applied regardless of religious background. All are oppressed. Of course, some sections of the population are hit harder than others. As is usually the case it is those who are different in some way from the majority of the population who suffer most. In England it is the coloured community. In Northern Ireland it is the Catholic.

Over hundreds of years the Catholic community in Ireland has been under attack from the British. Since the 1920's the major part of Ireland has freed itself from direct British domination (however British economic domination remains). As part of the price for that freedom an area in the North was retained by the British. Set up as a 'state within a state', Northern Ireland, with its own government at Stormont, is perhaps the perfect example of how a large number of people can be exploited, oppressed and denied any form of freedom under the auspices of 'Democracy'.

To keep control of Northern Ireland the British Government delegated the running of the statelet to the predominantly Loyalist Protestant community. To maintain that control the Protestant Government of Stormont engaged in a determined denial of any rights to the Catholic community (some 30% of the population). The police force was mainly Protestant, the police reserve (the B Specials) was almost completely Protestant. The Civil Service, local government, major industries and the public service companies gave priority in employment and promotion to the Protestants.

By use of 'gerrymandering' (the manipulation of constituency boundaries) elections of MPs and local councillors, even in predominantly Catholic areas, were rigged in favour of the Protestant Loyalist Parties.

Naturally the Catholic community began to fight. The historical method of resistance to the British had always been the Republican Movement and its military wing the Irish Republican Army. From 1920 onwards they engaged in many campaigns with the avowed aim of forming a united 32 county Irish Republic.

The Stormont Government replied with all the weapons of a threatened State. Internment without trial, harassment of the dissident population and further oppression.

A distinct polarisation took place. On the one side the Irish/Catholic/Republican community, yearning for a freedom they had been denied for centuries. On the other the British/Protestant/Loyalist community, only marginally better off in the main, fearful of being absorbed into a country professing a different religion, perhaps fearing a reversal of roles, of being the powerless and not the powerful.

In the 1960's, as in other countries throughout the world, a feeling of anger, of protest, reached a new height. In Northern Ireland this led to the Civil Rights movement. The Catholic community became charged with a new vigour and pride. Mass marches declared their intentions to be free and equal. The Protestant State, fearing the mass movement as all governments do, used its force to try and halt this explosion of feeling. The police and B Specials attempted to beat, gas and shoot the protest into extinction. Of course they failed. The British Government, fearful of international approbation, sent in troops to stop what was becoming a mass insurrection. The B Specials were disbanded and the British Army took their place.

The oppression, intimidation and discrimination of the Catholic community was directed now from Whitehall, the smokescreen of Stormont removed, the iron fist in the iron glove of the state was openly paraded. The Catholic community replied with rent strikes and civil disobedience, they replied with marches and riots and through the IRA and others replied with the bullet and the bomb.

Today the war goes on. New tactics are tried on both sides, some stay, some are dropped. New political initiatives are touted. Victories are declared, defeats forgotten. Communities face each other across devastated streets, troops and armed police patrol in armoured jeeps, empty gutted houses testify to broken homes and often broken families, barbed wire, corrugated iron, burned out vehicles. Flags fly declaring each area's affiliation. A society locked in mortal combat with no winners, only losers, politicians voicing hackneyed phrases always with one eye on the opinion polls and the other on the media, generals and police chiefs clinging to their talismans of 'military solutions' and 'law and order', graffiti on the walls 'Brits out', 'up the Queen', 'up the Pope', 'UVF', 'IRA', 'Provia's rule', priests and preachers boasting of Christian brotherhood whilst damning each others eyes. Slums and palaces, churches and barracks, guns and crosses, police and priests. Ireland's agony, Britain's surgery without anaesthetic, hatred and distrust, death and mutilation, all in the name of Democracy, Civilisation, Republicanism, the One True Faith, all in OUR name, which ever 'side' we purport to be on.

This is what we have to fight, this is what we have to defeat. To bring people together in mutual trust, cooperation, tolerance of each others differences, to bring love and peace to this sad, troubled land, to heal the scars that divide us all, here and there. We can argue the methods, the ways, the means but the solution cannot be doubted. As anarchists we must work towards a free and equal society, an Anarchy. There is the solution to Northern Ireland and to everywhere such conditions exist.

DAVID McCABE

More questions than answers

IT BECAME very evident, to me at least, soon after our arrival in Ireland that it was not only not possible to come to any clear or firm position on the political situation, it was not really very essential or desirable.

It was not possible because no single person that I spoke to could claim to know what exactly was really going on. As well as that, no two people agreed about what was actually happening.

So it became clear that the best thing to do was to look and listen very hard to as much and as many people as possible, with the hope of coming, at the end of it all, to an indication of the sort of approach that was useful for 'analysis' and simply looking critically (not in the sense of disapprovingly) at the situation, what has happened, is happening and why, and what is likely to happen. These things could then be useful in giving us an indication of what we can do about it.

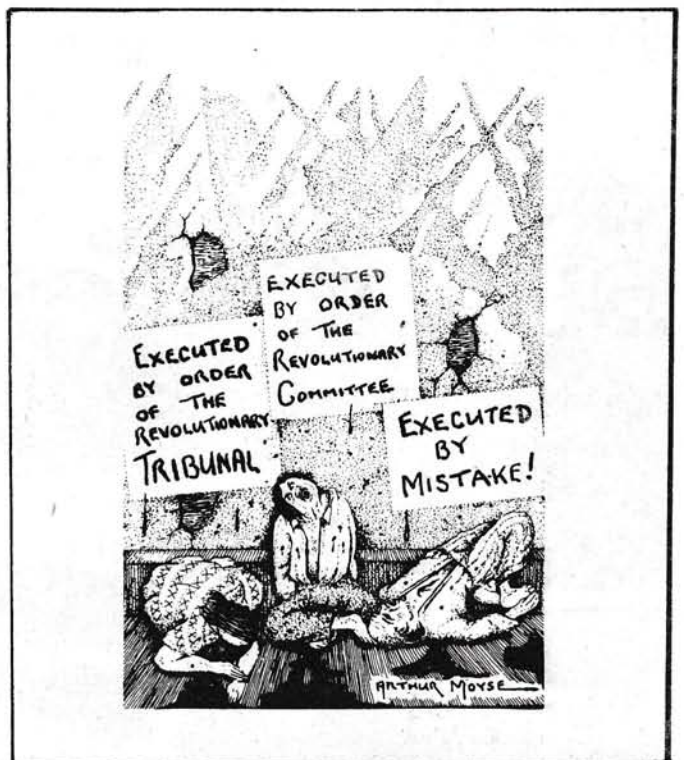
WHAT THEY SAID

SOME of these have been paraphrased. Apologies to anyone who has been misquoted.

- Rather than wait around for anything 'pure' to come up, we decided to get involved in what political activity there already was. -
- There's no room for anarchism in republican struggles. -
- The IRA are encouraging the young people to take up a Gaelic culture that isn't theirs in the first place. -
- The Gaelic culture is one of resistance to British rule and belongs to all Irish people. It has done for 800 years. -
- In the Divis Flats armed foot patrols walk the balconies challenging strangers and demanding to know what they're doing. Not Brits - Proxies. -
- We're encouraging cultural activities by fighting for peoples' right to give Gaelic names when stopped by the authorities. -
- The British Army aren't here to protect the Catholics or anyone else. They're here to keep down an insurgent population. -
- If I hadn't met you here I wouldn't have talked to you. I'd have hated you just because you're British. -
- Just because it suits the rioters they knock down the street lamps and tear up the pavement. This is in their own streets. They don't care a fuck about the old people or anyone else. -
- Conditions in the Divis Flats are so bad that when a flat becomes the people in the flats smash it up so the council can't put anyone in it. -
- The Catholic Church is a dangerous enemy or a powerful ally. We chose to have it as an ally. -
- It's your duty to report the truth about what the Army does here. -
- The British Army couldn't leave without it having similar consequences for Britain as happened in France after Algeria. -
- Bloody hell, people have had their heads blown off for less. (said to someone making a joke about the Proxies.)
- People either in the IRA who leave or outside the IRA, who challenge or disagree with what's happening get posthumously rehabilitated. They get killed and buried with full military honours as an IRA volunteer, which some of them never were.
- If you wouldn't turn in a Proxy then you support them. -
- You don't have to support the IRA to oppose the Brits. -
- The Proxies have the guns. They can't get people to use them. -
- A couple of years ago you knew there were Proxies around but you never knew who they were. Now you do know who they are. -
- Amongst the H Block Committee I feel like a hawk amongst the doves. With the hoods I feel like a dove amongst the hawks.
- Republicanism can't be separated from the IRA. -
- Some of them (the hoods) haven't even read Marx. -

All of these things were said by people living in Northern Ireland, some in Belfast, some in Derry. I don't think it's important that no two of them agree. I think each one says something about the situation and are worth reporting to show just how divergent opinion is. I would like to comment though, that for me, these show that there is no 'truth' about Ireland. It is an incredibly complex situation. Certain things are clear. Certain things are extremely unclear. The best we can hope to do is to look as closely as possible at as much as possible and try to find useful ways of seeing the situation, not a simple or clear position on the subject. Which isn't too different from the old idea of seeing revolution as a direction not a place.

It is extremely important not to fall into the trap of saying things like 'Don't talk to me about Ireland. I've been there, I know all about it.' The people living there don't really know what's going on. For them some things are extremely clear, and some extremely unclear. Given this it is not very surprising that a good deal of crap is written about Ireland, especially by people who haven't been there, and some of it has found its way into the pages of FREEDOM. I hope that, if nothing else, I'm helping to make it clear that it is unclear and so any simplistic viewpoint of either dismissal or acceptance of resistance in Ireland is completely untenable.



LIVING IN N. IRELAND

IT ISN'T too difficult to find out a fair amount of information on 'political' matters in Ireland by reading things in Britain. What you can't find out is what people actually do from day to day in Northern Ireland.

And half an hour on a Saturday afternoon in Belfast told me more than anything I'd read - not about the police and the Army. Those I knew about - what I didn't expect was to find scores and scores of young punks with spiky hair, leather jackets and bondage trousers. And contrary to what I'd been told there are a lot of people with conspicuously long hair. As well as skinheads and other deviant youth sub-cultures of various sorts.

In fact the shopping streets of Belfast on Saturday afternoon say quite a lot about 'things in general'. It's slightly bizarre seeing Army jeeps and foot patrols wandering around with loaded rifles pointing very casually at people, while shopping etcetera carries on as normal all about. It is a point worth mentioning that the Army are there to make sure that people go about their daily business of shopping etcetera as obedient capitalist beings. But in the end they become almost superfluous. It's surprising how quickly and easily (frighteningly so in fact) you get used to being frisked by soldiers while one has a loaded gun pointed at your head from ten feet away. And although none of them would be unaware of the fact that the trigger does get pulled sometimes and the Army does kill people, the people of Belfast seemed to almost ignore them. And after only three or four days I'd become almost immune to the shock of loaded guns pointed at me from jeeps etcetera.

Once you get over that shock you can start seeing the centre of Belfast as just another city centre that could be any city of a similar size in Britain. And most of the quieter, more prosperous (mainly Protestant) suburbs are the same. Quiet peaceful people going about their quiet peaceful business as capitalist beings.

It is very different however in the poorer areas, many of which are quite clearly Catholic ghettos. These areas show very clearly one of the most significant factors about how the people are kept demoralized. Obviously having foreign troops on the streets is part of the demoralization, but another part is the fact that many people live in what is really a demolished city.

Whole streets are demolished. Others are empty, windows bricked up. Nearly every street has derelict houses in it. Bricks and debris litter the waste ground. During periods of rioting there are burnt out cars littering the streets as well as bricks and glass. It has a certain immediate attraction in that it is evidence of struggle but it's very different from the beauty of seeing Brixton after the riots. In Northern Ireland, particularly in the Bogside in Derry, and the Falls Road in Belfast, it is quite clearly the scars of ten years of bitter struggle. It's not at all festive in the way Brixton was. It is evidence of cities destroyed by military force and official neglect.

The remarkable thing is that in the face of this demoralization, people still fight for their lives, there is a good deal of activity, there are counter-cultures and sub-cultures. Obviously a good part of this is directly as a result of the conditions, which are clearly quite appalling, but in general people are less demoralized than you would perhaps expect in the circumstances.

There are important reasons for this, two of them being the Gaelic culture and the Catholic Church. The Gaelic culture is one of eight hundred years of opposition to British colonialism and for many people it is still an important part of their lives and their political struggles. What is significant though, is that the youth sub-cultures have largely been dispossessed of this (which isn't necessarily a bad thing) and in response have





turned to their own counter-cultures. These do tend to mimic British youth cultures but there are signs of local originality and they aren't entirely 'non-political' (if you'll excuse the phrase.)

I was quite disturbed by the ease with which some people were able to dismiss these people as 'just punks' or whatever. I was eager to find out just what these people do in the face of the repression in Northern Ireland. I was told that what they did was 'just pretty much the same as punks and people like that in other places'. The reality hidden in that blase dismissal is that these people are generally involved in rioting, looting, theft, arson and taking on the police and Army with bricks and petrol bombs. And to me, the Irish band Stiff Little Fingers for instance say as much politically as any Gaelic folk song I've heard, and the existence of a punk sub-culture as a potentially revolutionary social group is very important.

Which is not to underestimate the power of the Gaelic culture as a force of resistance but there are many aspects of it which seem to me as an outsider, not to be particularly revolutionary. There is a tendency to glorify death and war and militarism, as well as religion, in a way which I find extremely alienating and sometimes nauseating.

Which brings us to the Catholic Church. Its power over peoples' minds is not quite so spectacular in the north as it seems to be in the south, but it is still a very powerful political force and a very clearly reactionary one. The Catholic Church is one of the most repressive institutions in the world and, from the point of view of its hierarchy at least, its role in Northern Ireland is pretty much the same as it is anywhere else. However it is seen very differently by many people involved in the struggles because it is a cultural force and a means of communication which is not controlled by the British. For instance what little communication there is at Mass is extremely important to the prisoners living in almost complete isolation in the H Blocks, living alone, in silence, naked in a white cell with no furniture and forced to put your shit on the walls because if you don't the screws will spill your pot all over your blankets or beat you black and blue if you go to the toilets. Given conditions as completely appalling as that it's not difficult to see why people find Mass important.

I think we still have to see the Church as a strongly reactionary force and also many aspects of Gaelic culture. But we must also see those aspects which are evidence and even part of the resistance to British rule.

It is noticeable that in the north, both the Catholic and Protestant religions thrive as minority religious cultures. The Catholic as part of the opposition to British repression because Catholics are in the minority in the north and the Protestant religion loyal to Britain in the face of the Papism which dominates Ireland with the Protestants as a minority in the whole of Ireland. Of the two, in the north at least, the Protestant Church is more reactionary and even more bigoted than the Catholic. Not that in the end it makes much sense to speak of less reactionary religions but it is an indication of the way things are at the moment.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

WHEN I think about Ireland I can't keep the phrase 'more questions than answers' from my head. And if I remember the song of the same name rightly, it goes on 'the more I see, the less I know'.

And I can't help getting that feeling now about what I did see. I've come back more convinced of the need for struggle, more doubtful about whether anything I saw is potentially revolutionary.

It doesn't need saying that there can't be anarchy in Ireland while the British Army is there. What isn't clear to me at all is whether the struggle against the occupation is the area in which anarchists in particular and revolutionaries in general can work most effectively at the moment. It has to be seen as one area of struggle - and a very important one, there can be no doubt about that. And anarchists in Britain can do a lot about it. For instance it is true that we live in the country where the soldiers are recruited who kill people in Ireland. We live in the country where they make the plastic bullets, the guns, the armoured jeeps that are used to kill people in Ireland. And we do have more freedom to produce propaganda than people in Northern Ireland. However I do get mightily pissed off by the accusation that we are living in luxury in the imperial heartland while comrades are killed by 'our' soldiers and we condone it by not condemning it, and the accusation is made implicitly or explicitly by many people.

It may sound like a complete red herring to some people, but to me it is important that I also live in a city which has hundreds of derelict and destroyed people on its streets whose life centres around the bottle and what they can beg off passers by, and I know that there but for fortune go you or I, and a good deal of this goes on in the area immediately surrounding Freedom, less than a mile from the business centre of London, and this has a bigger effect on my daily life than what the British Army does. Whether this is a good or a bad thing is open to question, but it does affect the way I see things politically, as do many other aspects of life apparently unrelated to the Irish situation.

This is no excuse for inaction and I'm not trying to apologize for inaction. We should be doing something. Just exactly what is what I don't know.

M.G.



QUO VADIS CND?

ALDERMASTON



PROTEST WITHOUT ILLUSIONS. Vernon Richards.
Freedom Press, 1981. £1.95.

NOW that a second generation of anti-nuclear war protestors has taken to the streets, what can and should we of the first generation say to them? This book by a self-described OAP (Old Age Protestor) provides one unique answer. It is a compilation of the relevant editorial articles contributed by Vernon Richards to FREEDOM in the period 1955 - 64, to which have been added the author's preface, an afterword by Gillian Fleming, and 38 superb photos taken by Richards himself at various demonstrations in which he participated.

The articles are reprinted without revision since Richards is 'convinced that if one generation can communicate to the next its thinking without the advantage of hindsight, something can be learned which would be lost with editing or rewriting'. The point is a good one, but it would be made, I suspect, only by someone who is also convinced that no revisions of substance are really called for: all that hindsight reveals is what foresight the author had! In reading the book (an exercise of re-reading articles which formed part of my own political education) I was particularly interested, therefore, to find out how well the author's contributions stand up to the test of time. The judgement must be: Remarkably well! And the explanation for that is simple: Vernon Richards was, and is, no ordinary hack journalist hired to provide instant analysis of current events. The political commentary which he contributed to FREEDOM anonymously over the years of his editorial association with the paper was always deeply informed by his sure grasp of anarchist principles and theory. It was this grasp which gave him the enviable capacity to see (in the words of the subtitle of Godwin's Caleb Williams) 'things as they are', rather than how we would like them to be or how, in the grip of our emotions, we imagine them to be.

One bit of evidence of Richards's capacity in this respect is that he never fell for the scary brinkmanship propaganda of the old CND - the line that the world was on the edge of nuclear disaster and that, if the bomb were not banned soon, none of us would be alive in a few years' time. Fear, he pointed out, did not make for rational thinking; the bomb was part of the war industry which was a permanent feature of capitalism; capitalist America could not afford to disarm; the ruling classes were not suicidal and certainly not stupid; accidental nuclear war was possible but not very probable. In Richards's judgement, voiced as early as January 1959, 'conventional' war was much more of a real possibility in the near future than extermination of the human race by H-Bombs.

So, in fact, it proved to be, and since the Cuban crisis of 1962 we have lived to witness the superpowers engage in 'conventional' wars, albeit indirectly through proxies, as in Vietnam. In his preface, Richards points out to the new generation of protestors that, after all the brinkmanship propaganda of twenty years ago, we still survive unscathed. He understands the new generation's concern with the issue of the H-Bomb race but, it is clear, he still holds to the view that nuclear war is not imminent. 'The greatest of all threats to mankind' he now perceives - and here he does acknowledge the advantage of hindsight - is the development of nuclear power stations and all that they imply. He may well be right about what is 'the greatest threat', but it would be fair to add two points that he does not make. One is that many, though not all, of the new generation are acutely aware of the intimate connection between the development of nuclear energy and the stepping-up of the H-Bomb race. The closer association between groups fighting nuclear energy and those fighting war, which Gillian Fleming calls for in her afterword, is thus already taking place. The other point is that there is good reason for believing nuclear war more likely now than it really was twenty years ago. MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction), as Fleming notes, is no longer the sole basis of the

strategy of the superpowers. Recent developments in nuclear weapons' technology now permit the strategists to think and plan in terms of actually waging 'successful', i.e. not completely suicidal, nuclear war. The realisation that our rulers see limited nuclear war as a possible option is one factor which has stimulated the revival of CND.

The essence of Richards's message to the new generation is summed up, of course, in the three words of the title. One major illusion of the old 'official' CND - the illusion on which it based its strategy for banning the British Bomb - was that the route lay through conversion of the Labour Party. While they happily joined the Aldermaston slogs, Richards and other anarchists, naturally, shared no such illusion. They were not surprised, therefore, when the illusion was exposed in 1961 by the reversal of the unilateralist resolution adopted at the Labour Conference in the previous year, an exposure confirmed by the behaviour of subsequent Labour Governments. Despite this experience, the illusion still persists. Indeed, if anything, it is more enticing today than it was twenty years ago, now that an old campaigner leads a Labour Party that is officially committed to unilateralism. But, as Richards asks in his preface: 'What can the revived CND expect from a Labour Party in opposition led by Michael Foot which its predecessors could not get from three Labour governments between 1964 and 1979?' The new generation would do well to ponder the words of Richards, written in 1961, explaining the difference between anarchists and the CND: 'Whereas CND seeks to influence government by mass support, we seek mass support for our ideas in order to weaken government. In other words, we are interested in influencing people, not governments. We are concerned with people taking initiative and not with wasting time seeking to prompt governments to take initiatives on their behalf.'

But exposing the illusions of 'moderates' like Canon Collins was, as this compilation shows, only part of Richards's task: he was also concerned to expose the illusions cherished by 'radicals', including some who considered themselves to be anarchists. In addressing the radicals, represented by the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear Weapons and its successor, the Committee of 100, Richards's tone was sympathetic but constructively critical. He welcomed, of course, the popularisation of the idea and practice of direct action and when, under the auspices of the Committee, this took the form of mass civil disobedience he saw clearly that it contained 'the germs of a revolutionary movement of the people'. But he warned that 'the H-Bomb - and what is much more important, war itself - will not be banned by attempts at persuading governments or by direct assaults on government itself.' It was an illusion to think that by sitting down in Whitehall or Trafalgar Square and allowing oneself to be arrested peacefully the Government would be forced to change its policy or even collapse. The British State was made of sterner stuff than many of the Committee's supporters imagined. The repressive actions of the authorities indicated that the State was beginning to take the movement seriously, but the movement itself was seriously underestimating the power of the State. The mass sit-downs were symbolic, not actual, threats to the State and, in themselves, were little more than effective ways of achieving publicity for the cause. It was a mistake, therefore, to assume, as many militants did, that sit-downs, picketings, fastings etc. were the only 'real action' and everything else a sheer waste of time. There were no short-cuts to peace. The way to peace lay through revolution - an anarchist revolution for a free society. And this could be achieved only 'by a series of steps, by each of which the power of government and the privileged class will be weakened as the people take over direct control of certain aspects of their daily lives.'

Taken as a whole, Richards's articles in this book constitute an anarchist critique of the British 'peace movement' in the

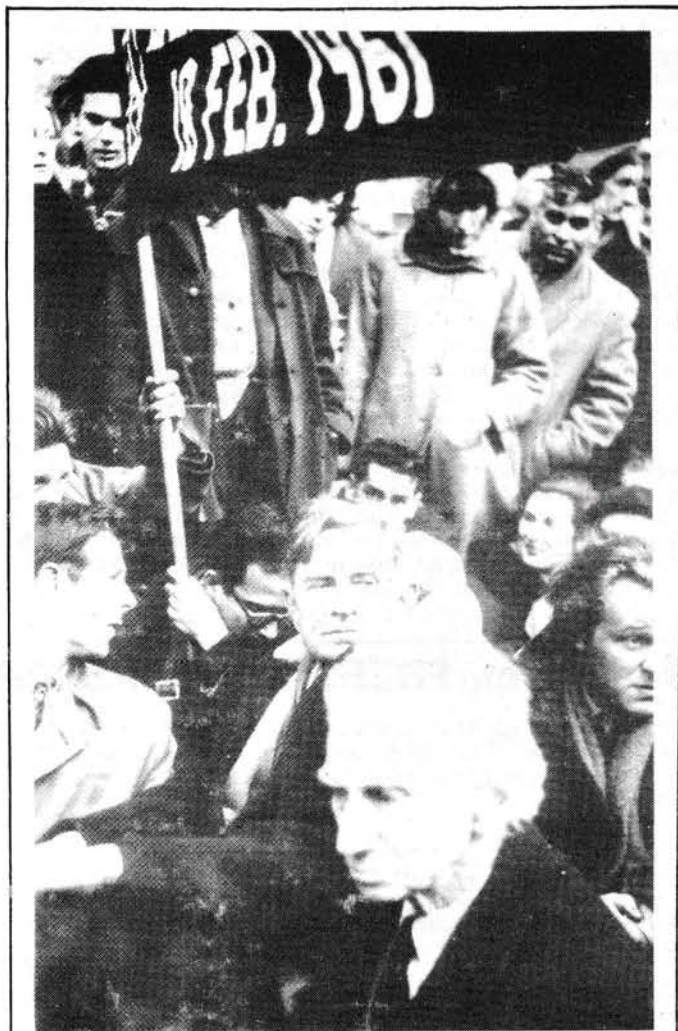
years 1955 - 64. Their republication now carries the implication that this critique is no less applicable to the peace movement today. As I have already indicated, there is an important sense in which this is undoubtedly true. 'The peace movement' in this country remains an amorphous body, made up of many groups, contrary strands and differing tendencies. And many of those who are newly enlisting in its current campaigns cherish illusions of the kind exposed by Richards. For them the book makes highly relevant reading. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the peace movement has remained unchanged over the last twenty years. One highly significant change is that the hard core of 'peaceniks', those who have carried the movement on through the doldrum years, have taken on board much of the anarchist critique.

That this is so may be seen by the evolution of *Peace News*, the journal which fills a role in relation to the peace movement similar to that filled by *FREEDOM* in relation to the anarchist movement. In 1955 *Peace News* was the 'official' organ of the Peace Pledge Union, an organisation whose ethos was still essentially that of its founder, Canon Dick Sheppard: the ethos of a high-minded, moralistic and politically naive Christian pacifism. But it was already coming under the influence of a more radical kind of pacifism and it proceeded in 1957 to split from the PPU, the year in which several of those closely associated with the journal launched the DAC - the group, incidentally, which organised the first Aldermaston March, the one that pointed the right way: to Aldermaston, not to London, the so-called 'seat of political power'. As the campaign against nuclear weapons developed into a mass movement, *Peace News* became increasingly radicalised and, in effect, the unofficial organ of the Committee of 100. By 1964, by which time, of course, the Committee had passed its peak, *Peace News* was to all intents and purposes an anarchist journal. It remains so to this day, although its columns remain open to non-anarchists. The changeover was marked symbolically by the adoption of 'For Nonviolent Revolution' as the journal's subtitle.

In retrospect the years 1955-64 constituted an historic moment in the development of both anarchism and pacifism. It was the moment when elements from both movements fused to create a distinctive new hybrid: nonviolent anarchism or anarcho-pacifism. (In saying 'new', I am aware, of course, of the long tradition of Christian anarchism which, however, was only part of the soil nourishing the new hybrid.) Broadly speaking, what happened was that, in the context of the struggle against nuclear weapons, (some) anarchists and (some) pacifists educated each other. In producing the new hybrid, tough-minded anarchists contributed their critique of violence. The two critiques were then synthesised in the concept of 'nonviolent revolution'. This term, admittedly, remains even today more of a slogan than a developed concept, but for those who subscribe to it, it signifies, not a programme for the seizure of power but a programme for transforming relationships, including above all that peculiar relationship between human beings known as 'the state'.

From this perspective, Richards's articles represent one side - the anarchist side - of a two-sided 'debate', the conclusion of which resulted in some anarchists and some pacifists (perhaps more of the latter than of the former) emerging as 'anarcho-pacifists'. What is missing from the compilation, of course, is the critique from the pacifist side. It is clear from several of Richards's criticisms of the tactics and assumptions of his 'pacifist friends', some of which are well-merited, that he is unimpressed by the notion of 'nonviolent revolution'. For example, he chides as 'naïve and utopian' the Committee of 100 for fostering 'the illusion that the violence of our existing social system can be destroyed by massive nonviolent demonstrations, of civil disobedience, legally - that is, openly - organised.' At the end of the debate, Richards remained, and remains, an anarchist tout court.

But, writing as someone who is not averse to describing himself as an anarcho-pacifist (and also - to declare my interest - as a trustee of *Peace News*), it seems clear to me that Richards's understanding of nonviolence does not match his understanding of anarchism. The principled, as distinct from pragmatic, stand that anarcho-pacifists take in regard to nonviolence is not intrinsically different from the principled stand that anarchists take in regard to the state. For every



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Sit-down at Ministry of Defence February 18
1961. L to R: M. Randle, Michael Scott, Ber-
trand Russell, Helen Allegretta.

anarchist tout court, like Richards, who criticises pacifists for elevating nonviolence into a dogma, 'a sort of religious faith', it is easy to find a pacifist tout court who criticises anarchists for elevating anti-statism into an article of faith. As far as the anarcho-pacifist is concerned, nonviolence implies anti-statism and vice versa. Nonviolence is not, as Gillian Fleming suggests, a non-issue or a side-issue. It is an issue that is central to revolutionary thinking because it involves the question of means and ends in social action and whether, in the last analysis, means and ends can ever be clearly separated. For the anarcho-pacifists, means are ends - ends-in-the-making. And it remains a puzzle to them why some anarchists continue to believe, contrary to all historical evidence, that a free society - which, by definition, implies the absence of violent coercion - can be achieved by resorting to violent methods, even for 'defensive' purposes. Since the state, in one of its aspects, is 'organised violence', those revolutionaries who organise their own violence, whether positively in making the revolution or negatively in defending the revolution, will, anarcho-pacifists believe, find at the end of the day that they have succeeded only in setting up their own version of the state. ('Spontaneous', 'natural' violence is another matter. And, of course, most violent revolutionaries are quite clear what they are about: to overthrow the existing state as a prelude to creating a state in which they are the new rulers.)

Richards, while rightly chiding *Peace News* editors for their pious attitude towards the police, reveals his limited understanding of the theory and practice of nonviolence when he writes: 'Here are good, active people willing to suffer imprisonment and forego the temptations of material comfort to

achieve a happier world for everybody to live in, who still think that those who are the ruling class will give up their power and privilege without a fight; that in their dealings with those who challenge their authority by openness, nonviolence and brotherly love they too will in due course use the same openness, nonviolence and brotherly love!' I doubt whether this accurately described the beliefs of the Peace News editors in 1961 and I am sure that it wildly misdescribes the beliefs of the present editorial collective in 1981. It is an elementary point but one which cannot be too strongly made: the use of nonviolent methods by one party in a conflict does not presuppose that the other party will respond nonviolently. If the other party is the state, this is highly unlikely! The most that nonviolent activists can or should expect is that the level of violence in the conflict will be less than if both sides use violence. Far from believing that such conflicts will be characterised by a complete absence of violence, nonviolent activists believe that violence - the violence of the opponent - contributes to the dynamics of the action. In part, nonviolence works - when it does work effectively - by making use of the opponent's violence. In some situations at least, the latter's use of violence against resolute and self-disciplined nonviolent resisters weakens the opponent's position, especially through its effect on third parties - the process which Gene Sharp has

called 'political ju-jitsu'. (See his manual, The Politics of Nonviolent Action.)

I have not the time or the space to take up other related issues raised by Richards: for example, openness v. secrecy, going to jail v. paying fines - many of these are discussed at length in Sharp's book cited above. So let me conclude with just one more observation and a plea for tolerance. The 'debate' to which the articles compiled in this book made a signal contribution was, as I have suggested, a most fruitful debate, even if the actions which gave rise to it ended in apparent failure. The debate continues and, in the context of a revived peace movement, is likely to take on new dimensions. It ill behoves either anarchists or pacifists or anarcho-pacifists, or indeed any of us who are striving to build a better world, to think that we already know the answers to all the questions. By all means, let us strive to 'Protest Without Illusions', but let us also remember that what one person perceives as an 'illusion' another perceives as 'reality'. But which idea or belief is 'illusion' and which is 'reality' will not and cannot be determined a priori. Only experience in action will decide that. Meanwhile, let us, in the spirit of fraternity and sisterhood, continue the task of trying to educate each other.

GEOFFREY OSTERGAARD

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