

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

16 FEBRUARY 1980
Vol 41 No.3

25p

Inside: PRISON & RESISTANCE, REVIEW ON PSYCHIATRY & THE STATE

*'THREE TIMES THIS WEEK I'VE CALLED UPON THE
MASSES TO RISE AND TAKE OVER THE STREETS
IN BLOODY REVOLUTION AND NOT ONCE—NO NEVER—
DID ANY SOD TURN UP!'*



ARTHUR MOYSE

Fight for your lives!

that bureaucrats or capitalists are extraordinary people - they are really just very ordinary people with extraordinary powers - tolerated by the very people they manipulate and exploit. Indeed, not merely tolerated but supported and venerated, worked for and fought for - elected, even, though to be strictly factual, the people who do the real manipulation in society are rarely up for election.

'Personalities' representing the various manipulating factions appear on the surface like froth, or scum, but the real decisions that affect our lives are taken in the Palace of Westminster, but in the boardrooms of corporations - maybe halfway round the world.

The present wave of attack has been building up gradually, from long before the Tories came to power, but it is certainly hotting up now, with the first strike in the steel industry for over 50 years occurring as a direct result of the British Steel Corporation's decision to close plants and declare thousands of highly skilled steelworkers redundant.

The British Steel Corporation's declared reasons for having to 'cut back' were the world recession and the strong competition the British industry is having to face

from other countries - both of them very good reasons for the BSC choosing this very time for a showdown with its workers. For, ironically, it is precisely when the struggle is most difficult that it is most necessary to fight back.

There can be little doubt that the steel bosses are very pleased to be having their workers out on the streets at this very moment. The BSC was losing money at the rate of about £1 million a day, a sizeable proportion of which was in wages. Since stocks were high and what steel there was being produced wasn't selling, it was quite convenient for the workers to walk out and thus save the Corporation their wages.

One reason for the crisis in the BSC - the publically-owned sector of the industry - is that the Tory government has refused to advance any more 'public' cash to help out, in spite of the fact that high-powered investment is clearly what it needs if it is to catch up with the Japanese and other country's modern equipment. Little attention is being drawn now, however, to the fact that the strikers will be getting tax rebates and their families will be drawing supplementary benefits - all 'public' money!

The very fact that there has so far been no outcry about this, as distinct from the hullabaloo the press has raised about other strikes, is another indication that this is a strike that the employers actually

THERE is no doubt about it - the British workers are facing the most vicious attack upon their living standards since the 1920s.

A small group of politically motivated men and women and women are conspiring to destroy, not the system, but the concessions that organised labour have wrung from it over the last 50 years of democratic 'progress'. And the ease with which they are doing it demonstrates the flimsy nature of that progress.

'Progress' within a bureaucratic and capitalist society is always illusory, for as long as bureaucrats and capitalists remain in charge of their system they are always able to manipulate the swings and roundabouts, the checks and balances, the rewards and punishments, by which they control the lives and well-being of ordinary people. Not

want - not only because of the reasons already mentioned, but because this is a strike that will be settled on terms that will set a norm for others to come - terms very much to the employers' benefit.

We wonder if there is just as much cynicism behind the timing of the sacking of 'Red Robbo' at British Leyland? Not only is the whole 'economic climate' such as to undermine workers' confidence (a high unemployment figure always provides such a good 'economic climate') but even such a stroke of luck as the invasion of Afghanistan and the stirring up of feeling about the Olympics, can be used to undermine popular support for a Communist shop steward.

It is in this case particularly that we see the fundamental servility of the trade unions, for it is already clear that there is going to be precious little support for 'Robbo', although a trade union enquiry has already pronounced that he was unfairly dismissed. Talk of an official strike was very quickly scotched, however, by BL's chairman, Michael Edwardes, stating categorically that he wasn't having Robinson back on any terms - and it was his job or Robbo's.

Instead of jumping at the chance to get rid of the nauseous Mr Edwardes, however, the unions started haggling over the compromise of getting Robbo back to work, but withdrawing his credentials as a shop steward. Edwardes stood firm and now we see the crumbling of the principle that the workers elect their own shop stewards, whether the bosses like them or not. Now we see the beginning of the acceptance of the idea that the boss can 'vet' a shop steward - just as the prosecution can 'vet' a jury in court.

If the unions are not prepared to fight on this one, they might as well give up. Or, rather, the workers might as well give up the pretence that the unions are there to defend their interests.

In fact, of course, there has for long been an antagonism between the officials in the higher echelons of the trades unions and the shop stewards, for the latter still represent something much nearer to a rank-and-file movement with democratic decision-making by the workers on the shop floor, than the boardroom-level decision making of the top union careerists.

So Robbo is out and it looks as though he'll stay out. If there hasn't been a strike, official, or unoffic-

ial, in his defence by the time you are reading this there probably won't be one at all. And Red Robbo can spend his time browsing through his Marx and ruminating on how the workers have nothing to lose but their chains.

He might of course write his memoirs, for there will undoubtedly be a capitalist publisher who will see a few pounds for himself in them. And Robbo can also ruminate on how much of a disadvantage it is to call yourself a Communist when there's a state like the USSR bearing the same label.

But for the rest of us, there's little consolation in Robbo's discomfiture, for his defeat as a shop steward is a defeat for all of us. If his mates are not prepared to fight for his job very soon we shall all be fighting for our lives!

REPLY TO J.W.

(see last issue)

IN a letter published in the last issue of FREEDOM, J.W. criticised us for stating that we should put our weight behind the jury system as long as people continue to be brought to trial, and against our 'liberal' approach suggested the revolutionary alternative of people's courts.

In reply, we should like to quote from Malatesta. Malatesta attacked the reformists who either believed that social ills could be cured through the existing political and economic institutions which are a basic cause of those same ills, or who believed that small and often ephemeral improvements could make the present system more bearable and so helped to consolidate it. However, he also acknowledged that "in any case it is always a question of reforms, and the essential difference lies in the kind of reform one wants and the way one thinks of being able to achieve it. Revolution means, in the historical sense of the word, the radical reform of institutions, achieved rapidly by the violent insurrection of the people against existing power and privileges; and we are revolutionaries and insurrectionists because we do not just want to improve existing institutions but to destroy them completely, abolishing every form of parasitism on human labour; and because we want to achieve this as quickly as possible, and because we believe that institutions born of violence are maintained by violence

and will not give way except to an equivalent violence. But the revolution cannot be made just when one likes. Should we remain inactive, waiting for the situation to mature with time?"

Malatesta also realised that even after a successful insurrection we could not 'overnight realise all our desires and pass from a governmental and capitalist hell to a libertarian-communist heaven...' Such a belief he dismissed as illusion, with its roots in authoritarianism. Thus, although "we will never recognise the institutions", "We are reformers today in so far as we seek to create the most favourable conditions and as large a body of enlightened militants" as possible to make revolution successful; and "we shall be reformers tomorrow" (after the revolution) "In that we will seek with all the means that freedom permits, that is by propaganda, example and even violent resistance against anyone who should wish to restrict our freedom in order to win over to our ideas an ever greater number of people".

Thus, in advocating that the jury system (and not necessarily specific juries) be supported and strengthened against present attempts to abolish it, we are not recognising the correctness of courts of law, but taking a strategic stand which we believe to be consistent with seeking the most favourable conditions by which to move towards anarchy. "In any case it is always a question of reforms..." RAP knows this well enough with its submissions to public enquirers and so on. So do, or did, all anarchists who ever took part in a defence campaign for a prisoner, or who, like the Haymarket 'martyrs' fought for an eight-hour day, or who initiated - as they did in Britain - the ultimately successful campaign for the abolition of the death penalty.

It is not that such struggles are themselves revolutionary, but that they help create a more favourable climate for Revolution. This is, of course, the contrary argument to those apparently revolutionary groups who seek to eliminate reformists in favour of tyrants, believing that a tyranny will bring about revolution more quickly. Such groups would work towards the elimination of the jury system in favour, presumably, of trials held in camera, and in which the sentences are known in advance (eg. as with some so-called people's courts today).

EDS

TORNESS CHARGES

ON 29 October 1979, 20 people from the Severnside area blockaded Torness power station by erecting a 24 foot scaffold tower across the main gates.

The tower was occupied from dawn till dusk when the police moved in and cut the chains binding the tower to the gates. They also removed the people on the tower, some of whom had chained themselves to it. Nine people were charged with breach of the peace.

Since the occupation of Half Moon Cottage on the Torness site in October 1978 there has been a series of direct actions against nuclear power resulting in people being arrested. Over 60 people have been arrested over the past 14 months, nearly all of whom have been charged with breach of the peace. Although most of the arrests have been in Scotland, some were in England during the chain-up at the uranium enrichment plant at Capenhurst.

So far all the charges have been dropped, but now despite the cabinet leak (minutes of cabinet meeting of 23 October 1979) indicating that Thatcher's government would like to keep a low profile and avoid confrontation with anti-nuclear protesters, there seems to have been a change of policy. The charges against the nine people arrested in October are being pressed. Every one has decided to plead not guilty, as they believe that they acted to preserve the peace and the environment from the growing menace of the nuclear industry. The hearing is likely to be in Edinburgh at about the end of March. Support outside the court and continuing direct actions at the Torness site and other important sites around the country will be crucial from

now on. The government would like to keep a low profile and continue with its nuclear plans. We want as much public attention as possible while we continue to prevent these plans.

Since those charged are from Severnside and area, some distance from Scotland, the costs will be quite high.

'Nuclear Power Breaches the Peace' badges (1½" diameter) are available at 25p. each (bulk rates available), from October Action Defence Fund, c/o 18 Bishop Rd, Bishopston, Bristol 7 (tel: 0272-426203). Also donations urgently needed please.

JULIA HAMMOND

HULL LIBERTARIANS

HULL Libertarian Collective has now been in existence for about one year. We are a group mainly made up of students or ex-students. As our name would suggest we are not a specifically anarchist group. Some of our members are in the Labour party, others are anarchists radicals, libertarians and non-aligned socialists. Given this varied membership it is often hard to reach consensus of opinion on different issues but the two main areas in which we are active are nuclear power and prisons. As we slowly evolve and develop our own 'line' we hope that the scope for activity will expand. We'll let you know if and when this happens.

Finally we would like to send our congratulations and best wishes for the future to the four recently released defendants. Long may the force stay from their door!

HLC

EIRE ANARCHIST CENTRE IN DUBLIN

ABC has been operating as an anarchist book service for a year now and in that time we've developed into an autonomous anarchist circle. We have been active in the anti-nuclear movement, participated in the H Block protests and also helped organise protests against the Curragh Military Detention Centre. These have been in support of Noel Murray and his non-political prisoner comrades when they went on the blanket in protest against conditions and indiscriminate drugging by the authorities. (See also Review - eds.) We also provide outside support for one of our members at present doing time in Mountjoy.

We are now organising a series of benefits to raise cash to rent a premises which will be both a bookshop and an anarchist centre. In relation to this we'd appreciate any donations from any anarchist groups or individuals who'd like to help strengthen the anarchist presence in Ireland. If you know any anarchist millionaires you could ask them to send especially large donations ...

ABC COLLECTIVE
(7 Ballsbridge Avenue
Dublin, Eire).

DEAR JERRY,

Dear Comrades,
As there is a brief mention of the Wildcat cartoon at the end of JW's letter about RAP, may I add the following footnote to your reply? : Thanks, JW, for the mention.

Donald Room



PRISON NOTES

PRISON & RESISTANCE

WHAT is supposed to be the point of locking people up? There are four main reasons provided by authorities for the incarceration of people. They are that prison is a punishment, that it is a deterrent, that it is for the rehabilitation of someone who has offended against the definitions of acceptable behaviour and finally that prison is there to protect the general public.

PUNISHMENT

Kropotkin's biting statement that prison is organised vengeance seems close to the mark. It is institutional, planned infliction of pain. One description of prison is that it is simply the deprivation of liberty and the liberal rhetoric has it that when prison does more than deprive an individual of liberty it needs to be criticised. The radical stance has been not to understate prison's impact but to emphasise its inhumanity. Brigid Brophy has compared prison with burying people alive and the analogy is perceptive enough to carry great weight.

But the infliction of pain and suffering by the institution of prison does not stop with the prisoner. If the soul of prison is to punish - detaining people 'at Her Majesty's pleasure' - the hurting does not stop at the prison walls.

Inevitably prison destroys relationships. It cuts the prisoner off from spouse, friends and children. It cuts these off from the prisoner. In this way - if we take the average situation - the wife or husband, children or other relatives - are punished for actions for which they have never been tried, let alone 'found guilty'. Children who are below the age when they can even be brought to court are punished for actions they have no responsibility for. Thus a nominally Christian country like Britain, where the

nuclear family is promoted as the ideal relationship, has an institutional means of destroying families.

Other inevitable consequences of prison are the provision of a prison record. This punishes the ex-prisoners and means their efforts to follow the 'strait and narrow' after release are often undermined.

Prison also encourages dependency and discourages feelings of social cohesion, since any prisoner who stands up for a mate in any conflict with authority is penalised for such fellow feelings. 'Model prisoners' keep their eyes averted from the abuse of people in their proximity - they are rewarded for this by the parole system. Lastly prison inevitably costs the public a lot of money - currently £112 a week per prisoner - which, with close on 50,000 in Britain means quite a bit. It provides employment for people whose only purpose is to deprive others of freedom. This is not a recipe for a healthy existence.

DETERRENCE

There are two groups of people involved with the matter of possible deterrence. The prisoners and everyone else. Reconviction rates do not help the view that an experience of prison deters a person from offending the law again after release. Those who suggest a 'tougher' prison regime need to face the fact that the tougher prison regimes, such as those in Scotland, have a higher reconviction rate than elsewhere.

The general population may be deterred from committing crimes by the fear of prison in some instances. In others, with growing crime rates, this idea does not seem to hold. A more general reaction is to take precautions as regards not being caught breaking the law.

REHABILITATION

At the bedrock of prison lies the official mask. It is contained in Prison Rule 1. This states that 'The purpose of training and treatment of convicted prisoners shall be to encourage a good and useful life'. Here we have the supposed basis of the whole law and order philosophy.

But the prison does not adhere to its first declared rule. For those who are being incarcerated for breaking the rules of society the lesson is taught that the institutional rules are to be broken by officialdom without a qualm. How do we know the authorities do the authorities do not respect their first rule? They inform us.

Every year the Home Office produces statistics about every aspect of prison life. Among them are figures concerned with re-conviction rates. They tell us that, overall, most people in prison will be reconvicted within two years of leaving jail. For people under 21 the figures reach 70, 80 or 90 per cent the younger the person locked up.

When I used this argument to attest that prison failed when I talked to a group of prison psychologists I met the astounded response that it was nonsense to suggest prisons failed. Did I not know that hardly anyone escaped from prison? It depends on one's criterion of 'success' but the prison psychologists should know the criterion of success clearly visible in their own prison rules is that a custodial sentence should 'encourage a good and useful life'. One could have many debates about the content of a 'good and useful life' but surely those in officialdom are not going to claim that committing crimes is an example of it!

PROTECTION

Prison may protect us from the dangerous and violent person for a period of time. This is a tiny percentage of the overall prison population who are mainly incarcerated for property offences. It is clear that, in the long term, the public is not protected by prison at all. People come out of jail embittered, damaged, unemployed - their problems augmented, not diminished by the prison experience. As we have seen, most re-offend. All that time and money spent on prison, all that misery and deprivation and the result is a greater chance of actions disapproved of recurring.

We live unprotected from the worst ravages of the transport

system which destroys many more lives than murderers ever have. A sane public transport system could decrease death on the roads immediately. Statistically it is known how many people will die and be injured on the roads every year; the lack of effective means of altering the course of public transport endangers the public far more than does the existence of a few violent people. Little protection is afforded to the public at work and what rules there are are usually ignored. We are threatened with a nuclear power policy of very high risk, by a balance of terror in world affairs no less precarious. The poorer people in all countries are not protected effectively from economic exploitation.

HOLLAND

A comparison between the penal policies of Britain and Holland is enlightening. For every one person locked up in Holland there are proportionately four incarcerated in Britain. For the last 20 years the Dutch have been locking up fewer and fewer people for shorter and shorter periods. In Britain the opposite has been happening: more and more for longer and longer. Yet if we compare the crime rates of both countries we find that they have been going up at roughly the same rate. In other words prison is irrelevant to the crime rate.

In Britain a few very simple actions could bring the prison population down considerably. The basic approach is carried in two words: decarcerate and decriminalise. Coupled with this wide use of projects of an experimental nature could be financed and assessed over a period for areas causing public concern.

Decarcerate means simply shorter sentences, with the long term objective of no sentences at all. Decriminalisation means legislation in a number of spheres peripheral to the central area and mainly involved with life style. These would be matters such as drug use, consenting sexuality, prostitution, psychiatric disturbance, alcoholism, vagrancy and arrest on suspicion.

I would suggest as the guiding light the Mathieson approach: 'Short term reforms as a road to the long term abolition (of prison) must be of a very specific type: they must be of an abolishing kind. Only then - by a stubborn insistence on abolition also in what is close at hand do you have a chance to solve the conflict between short

term and long term objectives'. We are continually trying to do with less and less prison.

The central area of difficulty between prison reformers and prison radicals can be summed up in one word: politics. To the former discussion of the profit motive, the acquisitive society, redistribution of wealth is taboo. For the latter it is the distinctive contribution: without serious debate about the inequalities of class society you are never going to deal with the roots of anti-social behaviour. Without measures to establish a socially just society involving social equality and a vast redistribution of wealth there is an evasion of the central core of crime which is theft. Without realising that the forces of law and order are to some of us seen as protecting not the public but the unjust status quo, there is no vision of an effective penal policy.

The most basic opposition to prison does not come from the soft bleeding hearts crying over the poor people locked away from their loved ones - although these may not be entirely useless - it comes from those who see how ineffective prison is at doing what it says it is attempting.

TWO SCENARIOS

What is likely to happen? There are two realistic scenarios which take into account developments of penal policy into the '80s. The first is that present trends will continue: more prisoners, more prisons, more unemployment, more crime. There would be greater repression and resistance put down by an increasingly brutal authority. Problems of control in prison would involve wide use of the specially trained 'Riot Squad', the use of drugs on an increasing scale to deal with 'difficult prisoners' and the growing return of sensory deprivation techniques by long term solitary confinement. (A person known to me has just completed 381 days in solitary).

An increasingly submissive population would result, obedient and fearful. The media would come increasingly under state control. In a word it would be 1984 Orwellian style. Although the proponent of such a development would use different language there is little doubt the main ingredients of such a strategy are a major option today.

This is because the alternative scares most people in authority. This is one of increasing resist-

ance, a polarisation into camps roughly along class lines. With the war of the flea developing in a deft jump from the north of Ireland to the mainland, together with collective takeovers of industry and the land by the work force. There is a word for this too: Anarchy.

So, are we pitching our tents in Britain for an approaching civil war? It is some time in our history since anyone has seriously thought of revolution here.

In this lies a great danger. Those who cannot abide the former of my two scenarios pull back from the alternative. 'I don't want violence', they say, 'surely we don't have to go that far'. I am afraid we do if there is to be a chance of avoiding the encroachment of fascism. I may say I have no wish to see the development of a revolutionary elite in Britain which would introduce all those measures all authoritarian revolutionaries dream about. I have no doubt I would be among those to receive a bullet - in fact one supposed 'revolutionary' has told me I would be one of the first to go! It makes for some hesitation.

It just strikes me more forcibly that a libertarian movement is so very important. It is there, if you know where to look in Britain today, far more extensive than some would believe and far more powerful as well. For there is a tradition of radical dissent in our land; not a brilliant one but not without a few fine moments and people. It must stir itself, the hour has come you fraternity of neer-do-wells and agitators, of students of all ages, of women now so alive to issues, of eccentrics and cranks.

I started with prison and ended with everything. I believe I have seen that prison provides a very useful underbelly of society for students of the body politic. There tends to be less pretence than with bourgeois society. As one prisoner remarked to me, 'Here you see what it's all about. All society. It's about doing what you're told. Obedience. There's no crap about welfare and for your own good. Do what you're told is the motto of prison'. Against such a philosophy stands only determined resistance. Here prison has some instructive lessons for us as well.

JERRY WESTALL

Until recently Jerry Westall was Co-ordinator of Radical Alternatives to Prison.

LETTERS

Some letter!

Sir,
Individualism now!

May I take up some points made in FREEDOM (No. 23, 22nd Dec.) by Fred Yates in his open letter to the workers. A 2½ page trudge through world history sure is some letter! We started with Margaret Thatcher, and go, via Harold Wilson, Shelley, Plato, Cyril Smith, Robert Owen, Olive Shreiner, Edward Carpenter, William Morris, The Co-operative Movement, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Watt, Telfer, Macadam, Cromwell, Luther, The French Revolution, Napoleon, Palmerston, De Tocqueville, New Harmony, John Bright, Lloyd George, Jeremy Thorpe, Karl Marx, Lenin, The Tsar, Stalin, Watt Tyler, The Ayatollah, Spartacus, The Working Class, The IRA and end up with the anti-nuke Arthur Scargill. Truly a cast of millions.

Fred. uses this panorama of the past to apparently make the point that both Paul Buckland and myself are wrong to attack each other over the issue of organization and Individualism, as we both lead to a dead end.

I shall leave the Direct Action Movement, London Workers Group and Xtra Structureless Tyranny to explain how their blueprints of anarchic organisation can avoid being authoritarian, and will defend my 'dead-end' liberalism.

You see Fred., a cul-de-sac is not such a terrible place to live in. To those that strive for a future paradise or a revolution just around the next corner, a cul-de-sac is the worst of possible routes because it doesn't lead anywhere, but since I have already arrived there is no problem over destination. So, from the comfort of my blind alley, I can safely watch the progressives rush along their yellow-brick utopias to never-never land. As for Fred's history, it was the American cynic Ambrose Bierce who said history was 'An account mostly false, of

events mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers mostly knaves, and soldiers mostly fools', and one might add perpetrated by HISTORIANS mostly HYSTERICs.

It is Fred's sociological observations that most interest me. According to Fred., I rely on the established way (society) to provide for me and whether I like it or not, am carried along by it and help to maintain it in a negative way. This is surely nonsense. I can only help something by aiding it, if society persists despite what I may feel or do, then it is not I that is to blame, but all those that support the system. All I can do is to minimize its pressures on me. At least with astrology I have a choice of accepting the influences of the Zodiac or taking my chance, there is an element of free will. But the Yates' world view leaves me doomed to flounder against the irresistible forces of society.

But no need to despair, as there is a ray of hope: we must see the wholeness of society, we must live together as one and be educated for that, production for consumption not profit, plus a touching faith in the silicon chip.

I fed Fred's open letter into my anarchic computer; it replied in typical siliconese:

To evaluate, or not evaluate
That is the ponderable
Cybernetics will here codify:
O come all ye faithful
(Input to all dedicated peripherals)
Joyful and triumphant.
(Frame refreshed and vertically sync pulsed)
O come ye, O come ye
(Input required from terminals: priority)
and Pra... is... e the Lord
(Frequency data scan row-column addressing now required)

If you found the above difficult to understand Fred, its because it has a sprinkling of buzz words. In computer terminology, buzz word is jargon for jargon. If you're still confused; start worrying about the effects of computers.

It seems that Fred's bridge to the stars is to educate everybody to feel a sense of unity and common purpose. The trouble is it wouldn't be education, but brainwashing. It might be termed a free society, but only if you mean free of individuality.

I am thankful that Fred Yates' Shangri-La remains somewhere over the rainbow.

Yours
W Millis

Spanish

Dear friends

As you know two of us went to the 5th CNT Congress in Spain (it was postponed from October in Barcelona to December in Madrid). Our purpose was to record on videotape this first congress after 42 years of fascist dictatorship, during which the anarcho-syndicalist organisation was viciously suppressed.

Well we did our work and are now translating the 10½ hour tapes which we brought back. If any of your readers or their friends would like to help us in this task, would they contact us at the address below (we'll record the Spanish on a cassette, send it and a new one to them, to translate and return).

We're also working on a catalogue of the tapes, plus ones we've done on Ireland and an accompanying booklist. These will be available at the same address in February, and will be sent out automatically to those who donated towards the trip.

Thanks and best wishes
BELFAST ANARCHIST COLLECTIVE

Thanks...

Dear Friends,

Just to say "thank you" for putting in the paragraph in your issue just before Christmas about my operation and hospitalisation. This wasn't meant for publication, but it was greatly appreciated and it was heartwarming to receive so many letters from old friends. I have already written to each person separately, but I would like your readers to know how welcome these letters were.

Love and peace,
Douglas Kepper

179 Isledon Road
Finsbury Park London N7

Good

Dear FREEDOM,

Thought Peter Good's article was excellent - as a trade union activist (temporarily retired!) I feel a lot of sympathy for him! The Aesthetics of Anarchism was very interesting indeed, you may well be getting a reply from some Art Degage types in the near future!!

Yours
Richard Alexander

PSYCHIATRY AND THE STATE



Introduction

THE invasion of Afghanistan and the banishment to Gorky of academician Sakharov - the most well known of the dissidents still in Russia - has thrown the West into a tantrum. Yet preparation for the Moscow Olympics has involved the arrest and banishment to distant places of many dissidents for many months and scarcely a word has been heard from our freedom-loving press and politicians.

Many left-wingers involved in the distribution of samizdat, or officially unpublished material, have been sent away as part of the general clean-up. Baptists, a particular target in the religious sphere, have been threatened with mass expulsion and forced resettlement during the Olympics; dissidents in psychiatric hospitals whose cases are due for review have been told that they will now have to wait until after the Games.

Not necessarily connected with these but part, certainly, of the relentless war against 'hooligans', 'parasites', and other 'counter-revolutionaries' were the arrests of the New Left Opposition in the autumn of 1978: FREEDOM was the first anarchist paper (see vol. 40 nos. 8 & 9) to report these arrests and describe the background to them. Since then it has become increasingly apparent that, despite intense police activity, new left groups have continued to operate not only in Moscow and Leningrad but in several other parts of the Soviet Union. The writings of Bakunin and Kropotkin have been circulated together with discussion of the Kronstadt rebellion and the ideas of Marcuse and Cohn-Bendit, and there has also been argument about the pros and cons of Red Army Fraction-type guerrilla war against the Soviet state. Leaflets have been distributed in the metro, and articles in the journal Perspectives have condemned the Soviet leaders and bureaucracy as 'monopolist state capitalism carried to absurd extremes' or as a 'new aristocracy' that has made of the state 'an end in itself'.

In October last year, again in Leningrad, several members of another new left group were arrested and have so far been charged with 'hooliganism'. Among these are Alexei Stasevich, a musician, poet and artist, Vladimir Mikhailov, a worker with a previous prison sentence, and Alevtina Koncheva, a student. Not much is so far known about the group except that they have published anti-authoritarian critiques of the regime, taken part in an anti-war demonstration in May 1978 and fly-posted leaflets signed 'The Movement of Revolutionary Communards', and calling for a struggle against authoritarian-

ism and the evils of family, private property and the state.

There has also been news of the appearance in Leningrad of a feminist samizdat magazine called Women and Russia, edited by Tatiana Goritcheva. Three of the women involved, Tatiana Mamonova, Sophia Sokolova and Julija Okulova-Voznesenskaja, who has already served a prison sentence, were taken into custody and interrogated by the KGB but none seem to be in prison at the moment. We shall carry more details about this first Russian feminist magazine in a future issue; suffice it for the moment to mention that the first number includes articles on patriarchy and phallocracy; the way in which the Stalin personality cult stifled the progress of women's emancipation in the USSR; the masculine orientation of Soviet education; abortion and childbirth, and so on.

In November 1977 a group of unemployed workers - the most well known being the miner Klebanov - told foreign correspondents that they were setting up an Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers in the USSR. The primary aim of the Association was to protest against violations of labour rights and to fight for independence from the state-controlled unions. Shortly afterwards Association members were arrested and shut up in psychiatric hospitals. But these acts of state terror did not prevent the formation, in October 1978, of a second group - the Free Inter-Professional Union of Workers or SMOT for short. SMOT is made up of autonomous groups of working people from a wide variety of occupations. It states as its goal "the defence of its members in cases of violations of their rights in various spheres of their lives" and examination of the 'judicial basis of workers' complaints', bringing them to the attention of Soviet organisations, giving them wide publicity and so on.

Now many SMOT members too have been arrested, one of the latest being a driver from Leningrad, Nikolai Nikitkin, who defended himself at his trial, and was sent to a labour camp for 1½ years. Another member, Valeria Novodvorskaya, was put for a time in a psychiatric hospital; two others have been sent into internal exile for 15 years.

The Left Opposition and communards, the feminists, the free trade unionists are only three of the dissident groups to emerge in the Soviet Union in the late seventies. There's no space to enter into detail about the Helsinki human rights monitors, the various religious groups, the dissenting psychiatrists or the nationalist movements (not excluding the growing numbers of Moslem nationalists who are causing the regime such alarm and with which the invasion of Afghanistan has a probable connection).

So why did the Western regimes wait until Afghanistan to get annoyed? The question is meant rhetorically. The important thing to realise - and it's a point forcefully made in this Review by DAVID MARKHAM - is that the West has an (in-)vested interest in the Soviet status quo. Now and again, as with Afghanistan, dissidents may be useful pawns in the West's armoury, but whether the game be detente or its Russian equivalent of *razrydka napryashonnosti*, Western regimes do not want to see dissidence undermining their present and potential markets in the USSR. Nor is it only the revolutionary left that the West dislikes. The mild socialism a la Sakharov is hardly to their taste either.

David Markham has been mainly associated with his cam-

paign to free Vladimir Bukovsky, and less is known about his more general work against the abuse of psychiatry for political ends. This ten-year campaign has brought him up against both the Soviet and the British establishments; it's not just in the USSR that politics and medicine combine.

In January a couple of members of Freedom Collective went down to the old Sussex farmhouse where David Markham lives with the children's writer Olive Dehn (as well as with some rare and splendid orange-haired pigs). The following is an abridged text of the talk we had with him there about his personal experiences and views of Soviet dissidence and the links that he has made through them with the situation in Britain.

THE ANGLO-SOVIET CONNECTION

FR: What we would really like to know is what started you off on this whole business of fighting for dissidents in the Soviet Union?

DM: I think it all begins, don't you, with self interest. If we do not think it does, let us assume it does and, therefore, - if you want me to answer in the same way, the question becomes, when was my self-interest aroused? And the answer is that, it was in the degree of opposition by any lonely individual against the full panoply of the State.

There must be an objective interest at the very least - if not human concern. So you find yourself ready to identify and learn something from anyone who is prepared to go to these lengths. And going back to 1970, when I became involved with Russian dissidents, Bukovsky was of course just a name.

FR: How did you hear about him?

DM: It was written among other names - Daniel, Sinavsky, Litvinov, many others - on placards. I was handed one with the name Bukovsky on it. I knew absolutely nothing about him.

FR: Where was this?

DM: It was a well-worn stamping ground, as it later became, outside the Soviet Embassy. So I asked these demonstrators what they were doing, and one said it was really about Sinavsky and Daniel and that while a lot of other people had apparently been put in prison for a very mild protest on their behalf, they themselves had long sentences. I said, 'Well, like who?' and he said, 'Well, this bloke', and that is when I first saw the name Bukovsky. About five years later I met Bukovsky in Moscow. In many ways it was a simple story which had by then a certain pattern.

FR: Yes, but a lot had happened in those five years.

DM: Yes, and what was startling - and I still feel startling - was that within minutes of meeting Bukovsky in another house, in the house of a man called Alexander Volpin, that was the revelation really of what this whole problem is about.

I think that I grasped very quickly that it was something quite beyond my comprehension that was happening. These people wanted help, and of course it was very touching for someone who is anyway always in a minority and is not a powerful person to be suddenly asked for help. It was a very simple thing that - no complication whatsoever.

So that is how it started and it was in May 1970 that I went to Moscow. I did of course ask one or two experts who advised me on who to go and talk to and among them was Alexander Volpin a mildly eccentric man who had been in several psychiatric hospitals but who by no stretch of the imagination could be called - in my view - anything - approaching insane. There's no question of it; he is an extremely intelligent man, and he and his younger friend Bukovsky, a totally different type of person, had a great respect for each other from their different standpoints.

FR: Did you go to Moscow precisely with the purpose of meeting Bukovsky?

DM: Yes.

FR: Was it easy? Was there any difficulty getting in?

DM: No, I just went as a tourist on the cheapest package tour, and as far as I remember the first time I went I flew to Moscow and then immediately out of Moscow to Lvov and then to Kiev and then to Odessa and then back to Moscow. That was an extraordinary seven days for me, because I went to various dissidents' homes.

One, in Lvov, the home of Alexander Essenin-Volpin, was an eye-opening, literally eye-opening and harrowing experience because all these people were in desperate straits. In fact some of the things I was asked to do were really impossible and extremely dangerous and I didn't realise how dangerous at the time.

Being innocent of it all, one would perhaps do things one would never dream of doing now. Like asking silly questions of obvious KGB informers! One would go up and ask them - if they knew where somebody lived. Well, that was foolishness, but somehow one was protected - perhaps just because of being so foolish. They couldn't believe you could be serious about it and wouldn't take it seriously; but of course, after the second and third visits one became wiser, and I would certainly not dream now of doing half the things I did then.

FR: It's astonishing that you managed to do all this kind of thing. Did you speak Russian?

DM: No, not a word, literally not a word.

FR: You just went up to someone in the street and asked in English?

DM: Well, yes. I learnt the Cyrillic alphabet, obviously a few phrases; I now understand a few words and can say a few things but I'm just as far from speaking the language. The only time I was quite grateful that I hadn't learnt Russian, which is difficult, was when it finally came to an interrogation and they were trying to prove all the time that I spoke fluent Russian. They were setting little traps and things so one would suddenly answer. I don't mean that they actually said, 'Would you like a thousand roubles?' but things like that.

This was at the end of the third visit. People had said we wouldn't get away with it very often, they would catch up with us in the end. We were detained about 4 pm. of the afternoon we were going back. We were kept until 3 am. the next morning and then told they were not satisfied. They started again the next day, until they suddenly decided to put us on the next plane and that was all. For an actor, it was delightfully informative. A few other things as well - but very informative!

That was my third and last visit, in 1972. I have applied since just to see what would happen and had my name among hundreds of other tourists - but I was spotted and refused. I don't know what it would be like now but as I said the other day to Bukovsky, I'd love to go back there and he said, 'Well, if you're thinking of meeting anybody interesting, they've all been arrested'. There are you know the Olympic Games coming up.

FR: What are your views on the Olympic Games? Do you feel they should still be held there or should they be boycotted?

DM: Well, this raises I think the general question of 'detente'



One man's lonely vigil outside the Russian Embassy on Bukovsky's birthday.

which to me has become an extremely dirty word. I don't think the Russians have that word at all; there is no understanding even on the word.

To me it's just a stupid farce, a pretence, which it always has been and through which they have scored all along the line since Helsinki -- also at Belgrade. They're very clever at these manoeuvres. They're cleverer than the Americans, who fall back on the pretence that they too care passionately about human rights, so the Russians say, 'OK, we take you at your word then' - and so they get the better bargain. They are both thinking of profits in fact, and therefore the Soviet always wins that game.

So when you ask about the Games I think this is only a small, rather false type of symptom of the pretence about détente. There is also the same sort of phoney cooperation in psychiatry - something that I am rather obsessed with and have been obsessed with since 1970. The Olympics are an attempt to spread that pretence into the realm of athletics, that's all, it's completely phoney. I think it should never have been agreed when it was first mooted, this Moscow thing. I think it's utterly ludicrous.

You see, the Soviets do not understand the rather falsely liberal way the Western mind tends to work. They're looking for results, they're looking for the people who hold the power, and politicians in the West, in their eyes, don't hold the power any more. It's businessmen, it's oil people, it's all these people they will want to talk to. This comes out strongly (they're not my ideas) in this book I've read called *Vodka Cola* by Charles Levinson, who throws the whole thing into clear relief. The deals that are going on daily, and will go on, despite Afghanistan, believe me, it's quite clear.

FR: So you think it's only shop window dressing, this call for a boycott of the Olympic Games?

DM: Oh yes, I think there's more hypocrisy talked about the games and keeping them out of politics than anything-else and this is insulting because not only games, but every aspect of Soviet life, is political. There isn't one aspect you can point to, whether opera, ballet or anything else, which isn't

100 per cent political for the advancement of the Soviet bureaucracy and nothing else. So to say politics doesn't enter in is rather stupid.

FR: Have your experiences in the Soviet Union had any effect on the development of your own anarchist views in any way?

DM: Well yes, I think they certainly have. To see these things and experience them at first hand and to experience through your imagination what your friends have gone through - that must have something to say to anyone who professes and calls himself an anarchist. It's a title which I am rather diffident about calling myself, an anarchist. But certainly if I needed confirmation - well, it's all I needed, because over and over again my experiences confirm my rather half-baked ideas about anarchist if you like, and they are half-baked. They are a groping and a searching, but when you see the behaviour of Soviet bureaucracy confronted with Western forms of bureaucracy you see more and more how you are standing in isolation against what you can only describe as the evil of the State. It seems to stand out more and more.

You know what a con trick it all is and really it's not very relevant whether it's from East or West. There are different forms of power corruption, this is so obvious. There are forms of state bureaucracy; there are forms of the power of money to rule our lives. It is the corruption of power and it has all been said before, but people seem to be forgetting it all the time and it is so obvious to us. But it's not obvious apparently to 99 per cent of the world.

FR: You have said more than once that you found some of the dissidents, to use that phrase in rather general terms, were completely 'Sovietised'. What exactly do you mean by that?

DM: Yes, well, perhaps 'completely' Sovietised is an over-statement, but I suppose if they wanted to be a bit unpleasant about us they would say we were completely liberalised. Something outside ourselves, the climate of opinion is such, whether we like it or not, that we accept, or seem to accept, certain values. The sort of thing that a Frenchman will

detect when he sees an Englishman. I think it is true that you can't escape this form of being Anglicised or Sovietised or Frenchified, whatever you like to call it, to some extent, and they are victims of a much more rabid state power and powers of suggestion at school all the time.

Therefore, an act of dissidence is something so profound that we in the West have probably not understood how they can break through. So you see there is a paradox here; they are Sovietised, in a sense, but because they are Sovietised it is all the more amazing that they have broken through. It only appears from time to time and it is a comparatively exterior thing. It's not something of the inside; it is nothing of the spirit at all. They are far from Sovietised in spirit and that is profoundly different. I think I am talking of something much more external. If they were 'Sovietised' in their spirit then they would not be dissidents at all.

I would say there is still an element, a latent element possibly, of anti-semitism in some Russians who have come over and that again is part of their breeding. There is so much anti-semitism there, as there is in this country to some extent. Certain people you can suspect here of being anti-semitic, and it will certainly and surprisingly come out. But they are much more subject to anti-semitism I think in the Soviet Union than we are, and to that extent they have been successfully Sovietised.

FR: But that goes back beyond the Soviet regime ...

DM: Yes, but this is a manifestation of any minority. They are just better at persecuting people because they are better organised.

FR: Did you manage to find in discussions with any particular individuals any certain points which made them determined to start digging their heels in? Were there certain points in their way of thinking, in their way of 'de-Sovietising' themselves?

DM: This is a very difficult problem. I once asked Victor Fainberg 'Where was the tradition for you to suddenly start walking in the opposite direction? I can't see how you can begin on a thing like this'. I asked him that very question. He said, 'Actually we have a tradition. Going back to Tsarist times there have always been awkward people'. That didn't answer the question. I think it is one of the more hopeful things that in the most unlikely circumstances at school one or two children will refuse to join the Komsomol and they will say 'I don't want to do it', and they will be frowned upon immediately and become isolated and watched. Which will of course force them more into, perhaps, secrecy and will develop into the sign of dissidence which once started you can't suppress.

It is awfully hard to dig down to find where it began in oneself. I wasted five years at one of our greater public schools - my parents squandered thousands - but I don't know where it started for me. I was surprised when I refused to take a beating; I was surprised at myself when I altered all the rules of the house and we got a new charter going, and I thought, 'This is not like me. One doesn't know even in oneself what starts it all.'

FR: Do you think there is hope, no matter what the condition?

DM: I think there is always the possibility of hope. I think it is true because grossly unlikely things are happening, in oneself as well as in other people. So then you will say, 'So you are an optimist in life', and of course one has to agree. Yes, I suppose I must be, but then equally, you know you are not at all, you are a total pessimist. And they are both true, I think. It must be true surely to say that one is both intensely optimistic and pessimistic. Why should one be cornered into a sort of half-truth where you have to go round with a false smile saying, 'What a shame, I am an optimist, someone told me that I am!'

FR: So there was this spark in all these Russians that made them suddenly start walking in the opposite direction, as you say, but how much would you say, from your particular standpoint, that they were libertarian in their thinking? Or was there just some bee in their bonnet that made them stand out against a particular aspect of things rather than care too much about others?

DM: The most rebellious person I know out of all these people is undoubtedly Victor Fainberg, and Victor smiles gently at me when I mention the word 'anarchy' as if he is poles apart from such a conception; but one can't dismiss Victor as knowing nothing about freedom just because he doesn't agree with me.

Anarchy to most people still equals hooliganism in the Soviet Union. Kropotkin is available, perhaps, in the libraries - I don't know - but their whole life is a contradiction of the teachings of these people, of Tolstoy certainly. Their whole life is keeping body and soul together. They somehow try just to keep the head above water, and it is very exceptional when somebody can rise above it and say 'I want to know more' or 'I want to be prepared to do something which might lead to my own destruction'. It is all the more astonishing that so many people do.

FR: Presumably it would be far more dangerous for them to accept any kind of label rather than to act as individuals, prepared to buck the system but at least not part of any general political conspiracy.

DM: I think it's very difficult to be a 'Good Soldier Svějk' in Russia. Even if you seemed to go along with the authorities, I think you'd find it more difficult in Russia today than in Czechoslovakia for instance, and if you have no pretensions to be a Svejik but come right out with your revolt against the appalling conditions you are working in, then you are putting your head straight into the noose and helping the authorities to hang you. For somebody like Klebanov, the miner, has in fact done this and not unnaturally has ended up in a psychiatric prison hospital. It isn't clear whether the Soviet authorities think it is genuine madness or simply that you must be mad because you don't think their system is perfect, or mad just to try to oppose it, or what. As in our own prison system, there is hopeless confusion as to whether they are punishing, curing, deterring or whatever. They're just as confused as we are. What they know is that these people won't easily do this again and it will deter others, possibly. It doesn't, but they think it does.

FR: Have the authorities evolved any conspiracy theory to explain this phenomenon? Have they dug up a plot of any kind?

DM: What goes on inside the Kremlin is a whole industry in itself ... one can't find out.

FR: ... If there is a group, even if they're scattered over the entire huge empire, wouldn't that be grounds for a conspiracy theory?



Leonid Plyuschch before internment in a psychiatric hospital. A Marxist and mathematician he now lives in Paris.

DM: That's exactly it, that's exactly what they're terrified of. I think it was Krushchev who first laid down that anyone who did think there was anything wrong with the system must, by definition, be mad. It's a formula that has served them very well. I think that is why they're so zealous - just like - the days of the Inquisition - in snuffing out any possible divergence from the main party line, which is either criminal or insane. They're very, very quick on to it, and the punishment is immediate. The people will be taken in and interrogated week after week after week or they'll put them in the Serbsky Institute, before sending them to a psychiatric hospital.

All this is well tabulated and it has been known in the West since about 1971. The information first came through what was called the Working Group on the Internment of Dissenters in Mental Hospitals, and was conveyed to doctors of the Royal College.

FR: What would you suggest are the things that anarchists could best do, how they could help the dissidents? Do you think they should concentrate on the more left wing or revolutionary manifestations of dissidence that are beginning to emerge there?

DM: My response to that is that there's one obvious group they should help, and that is the free trade union movement. They could start working for that through their own unions or through whatever union they may be in contact with. Bring to their union's attention the fact that the Soviet unions are represented by KGB officials, and that there must be something wrong there. People could work so that ignorance no longer exists in the British trade union movement. That's a start, I would think. They could affiliate themselves to the SMOT movement, they could pay subscriptions, keep in touch, write to members who are in prison or hospital. There's quite a lot anarchists could do.

Once, after a talk on the BBC, I was given something like seven seconds to give my views on how the ordinary person in England could help someone like Bukovsky; and I'd been involved for about five years and hadn't found the answer when this question was put, and all I could think of saying was, 'You wouldn't ask a question like that if it was your own brother or sister, would you?' Imagine, then you would have to find your own answer. One needn't be as emotional as that, but if you want to help people you help them as you would help anyone else. You get in touch with them... How do you get in touch with them? You find out if they have any representatives who are still at liberty; if there aren't you write to them in prison; you make contact with these people, you stretch a hand out to them. Yes, I think there's a lot that people, and anarchists in particular, can do for those who are performing feats of anarchistic bravery in the Soviet Union. And I say anarchist feats of bravery, in that context, have nothing to do with throwing bombs at people. I have to put it like that because a lot of people still feel a lot of confusion about anarchy.

The Professional Establishment

DM: What I want to do is make the connection with the villainy of the British psychiatric establishment. This is a sore point with me. It has caused an open breach with the doctors I worked with. I mentioned the Working Group. This was a working group against the internment of dissenters in mental hospitals, chaired by Peter Reddaway. Gradually I became alienated from those very doctors who had joined the group in order to help and this was something quite surprising. One should be grateful to them because they are doing something against their natural inclination, which implies criticism of their own profession, but gradually over the years I got more and more exasperated. It seemed to me that there was an elaborate time-marking process going on. 'We must find out the facts'. 'We must sift the evidence' and so on. There might have been trainloads of evidence, so much had to be sifted and such time taken to sift, and one



Arkadiy TSURKOV, a Leningrad student and member of the New Left Opposition, was arrested on 31 October 1978 and charged with the same crimes as his friend Alexander Skobov. At his trial, held in camera on 3 April 1979, he was sentenced to 5 years in a corrective labour colony and 2 years of internal exile. His family's and friend's telephones were disconnected during the trial and put under house arrest; only his mother was admitted into court.

knew that at the end of all this sifting nothing was going to happen anyhow. But you see, professor so-and-so and doctor so-and-so had to be allowed to sift through and double test all our evidence - something which, to me, was blatantly obvious and true. There was a case to answer, a damning case to answer, a case which called for immediate remedial action on behalf of their Western colleagues. You see, doctors don't like criticising other doctors.

FR: Yes, but on the other hand it could have looked too easily like a propaganda move they were playing. Weren't they right to be cautious in view of the fact that it would have been so easy for them to have rushed in and turned into national heroes, having discovered this diabolical Soviet practice?

DM: If I'd ever thought there was the slightest possibility of that I would try and understand that point of view which, on the face of it seems reasonable. The one thing I learned was that there are many clubs, in fact, where the loyalty is higher than in the national club. You imagine they would think, 'In the end I'm an Englishman, my nation comes first'. But it doesn't; a lot of considerations come before the old naive idea of nationality and obviously professional solidarity does - particularly amongst doctors, particularly amongst psychiatrists. I suppose, because they have such an imprecise trade. They don't know where they are; no one agrees on any single diagnosis. No one has agreed what schizophrenia means. No-one has agreed about anything whatever, so they take refuge in this, saying 'We haven't got the same criteria'. That's a magic word among psychiatrists, 'criteria', and, you know, you can sift quite a lot in six years if you really try to get down to it. My point is that they never tried to get down to it. I shall be fair; there were one or two exceptions

I could mention more but there's no point in giving a whole list of names of people I've become disappointed with. Those are three that are fighting the same battle and saying, 'If this is true, then let's find out quickly and act quickly'. It seems to me a reasonable line of action, even for someone as conservative as a doctor, to say 'If a quarter of this is true we have to act quickly or else this could spread, this could give psychiatry a bad name everywhere, and it might be copied'. Perhaps that's naive; I know a lot of other doctors would like to copy Soviet methods, some of them already have; there are some magistrates on record as saying 'I wish we had Soviet methods here'.

FR: When you say that some doctors already have copied the same methods, can you give any examples?

DM: Well, on a vast scale you've had compulsory drugging in most of our prisons. We also have psychiatrists who are very often the most hated man in the prison, as we know. This hasn't got to go very much further to reach the Soviet model. I'm talking of prisons now; in individual hospitals we haven't yet, as far as I know, got a directive from the Home Office, ordering people suspected of being political to be given extra doses. No, no-one's going to be so stupid as to put that forward as a direct comparison with the Soviet model. I'm often accused of trying to put that forward and I hereby disclaim it. But we do things in the dear old British way, don't we? There was a Dr. Lawler, whose case could be looked up, that wasn't very pretty. There is an institute called Broadmoor. I have been told on the literally gutter level, on certain pickets, by apprehensive British psychiatrists, that they wonder where this kind of thing is going to end. If it is going to continue, they didn't actually say it will be us next, but that's clearly what they meant.

FR: You think then that this process is getting worse?

DM: I can't honestly answer that question. One certainly hears about more horrors going on in British mental hospitals than one used to and no doubt if you get mixed up in atrocities anywhere you'll hear other people say 'I have also been a victim'. I've had a number of abusive letters in which the word 'elitist' has often been used for criticising atrocities outside one's own country rather than inside, and to some extent I'm grateful to those people for helping me keep a sort of balance, because although I couldn't agree with them - I haven't forgotten what goes on in my own country - it has been a useful reminder in many ways. And now I'm much more active in considering cases in this country. But I'm not going to be tricked into the facile statement that the same thing's happening here as in the Soviet Union. That is obviously not true.

The same thing is happening in different places in very different ways. I think things go in fashions. I think the idea that non-conformers can somehow be made better, more conforming, by drugs, can spread very quickly from dictatorships to so-called democracies, and that again is an obvious fact. And that, I think, is the danger. We've all heard of people fulminating against Hitler and behaving like Hitlers in their own domain. This is the most common thing in the world.

FR: You talk about things spreading from dictatorships to so-called democracies, but you don't think there is any direct link between the adoption of such methods in the Soviet Union and the adoption of similar methods here?

FR: A direct link no. We would never do anything on such a blatant scale, I don't think, because they can get away literally with murder in the Soviet Union and here we do have an occasional commission of inquiry which goes round and inspects the hospital. There is that safety valve which isn't the guarantee one would like it to be, but it is a kind of safety valve nonetheless.

But I am worried about it. They all get very keen on new drugs. I know an English psychiatrist who has carefully drawn up a list of most drugs that are currently used by doctors and this has a startling resemblance to the Soviet ones. All I do know is that quasi secret meetings still go on between Soviet and British doctors. It would be naive I think to suppose they never discussed questions like what drugs quieten a man down ... doesn't show too many traces and, if so, can I have several tons of it? Policemen have the same

conferences from time to time: 'What do you find is a good crowd quietener?'

FR: In what sort of organisation, or under what sort of auspices would these kind of meetings go on

DM: So far as doctors are concerned, the less secret ones ... are the World Psychiatric Association-sponsored meetings, which can be large meetings, quarterly meetings or full congresses. I think I can assert without being contradicted that unadvertised meetings do take place quite frequently. I've got good reason to believe that Soviet doctors came to the West before their World Psychiatric Congress in Honolulu in 1977 and frantically pleaded with Western doctors not to have any part in the resolution of condemnation.

They almost succeeded. The resolution only just got through, you know.

FR: Are there any specific cases of people in this country who are working on, or have worked on, psychiatric abuse?

DM: As far as British prisons are concerned I think the danger is the inbuilt supposition that we offer every person who goes to prison a chance of some kind of sedative. Now that is a euphemism for saying 'All people who come here will get a jab and that will quieten them down. The ones who show obvious signs of anxiety will get an extra jab'. But that way I'm only generalising.

You see this is where temperamentally it's all different. We don't necessarily have to order a person to be held down and have a needle stuck into their arm. We will say, 'Now we suggest it's in your own good, if you don't like the look of this place you may not sleep too well. We will fix you up with something that'll make you feel happier'. And that person doesn't know he's being attacked at all. He says 'Oh they're nice to me, I got something here. I slept very well and I wanted some more and I wanted some more and now I can't stop, but they meant well'. That person might be hooked for life, you see, but there's no overt cruelty there. It's just the fact that you're in a predicament and it's very hard to refuse. This is where it's always difficult to make comparisons and yet it's the same thing, ultimately it's the same thing. Gentle persuasion backed by great force!

FR: What do you think are the chances of success in this area?

DM: I think there's a chance of success because the individuals involved are so tenacious. They are the ultimate success in one sense, and they wouldn't thank me for saying this but it doesn't matter. I can only start reminiscing about the five years of campaigning for somebody as I happen to have done, and you know whether you're a success or not. You have to do it. That's the point. It doesn't really matter if you get 'success' and it's a surprise when someone is let out. It's the same with RAP (Radical Alternatives to Prison). I try to support RAP because it fills a vacuum.



David Markham points to a fraction of the mound of evidence he has accumulated since 1970.

Doing something positive

There is nothing short of RAP really, short of bulldozing prisons down. And to say they should all be bulldozed down is pleasant, but it doesn't really help anyone now. RAP is doing something positive, so therefore one wishes them success and they deserve to succeed. But that depends upon people like ourselves.

FR: What is your view of Amnesty and its approach to prison work?

DM: I can't say much about great institutions. I can only think of people and of the good and happy relations I've had with most friends in Amnesty. One thing I can say straight away is that I'm dependent on their information and their facts. This is the one thing you can rely on where Amnesty's concerned. I can't say always that one can rely on Amnesty for making the bold gesture that one would sometimes have liked. I think there is a tendency in Amnesty to be flattered by governments. But on the other hand think of the good they do and that's enormous. Amnesty's individual workers have given me nothing but help, and that's for the record; but I think they should as an organisation be considering bolder public actions. They might think about this, the fact that you haven't solved all those difficulties by sending somebody a postcard ... I think someone wrote a study somewhere saying 'The more you know, the less you can do about it'. You get completely snowed under ... I think this very accumulation of facts tends to inhibit bolder action and I feel that Amnesty could borrow a little bit of anarchism sometimes; I wish to God they weren't afraid of making fools of themselves, because you have to sometimes. I'm going to quote Ibsen: "You cannot fight for truth and freedom in your best Sunday clothes".

Mind you, it's easy, all too easy to criticise Amnesty and I feel a little shamed when I do because so many good things come from them.

FR: Anyway, apart from Amnesty, is there anything about the whole process and the sequence of events and how it turned out that has made you feel a bit jaundiced about it all?

DM: Now, you were assuming I was feeling jaundiced; I'm not sure that I am actually. When one's able to rationalise the whole thing I suppose there's an element of sourness somewhere which I can understand. I think when you've been active, super-active even, by any standards, for five or six years, and you succeed in what you're doing, you want a progression. But there seems to be a sudden halt or even a backsliding. You think, well what did we do that for - to get somebody out. Where do we go from here?

Now, strangely enough, after about three years I think I see a continuation. You don't know until you've gone through a thing like that what your real aims are. Obviously the Bukovsky incident with me was the symbol of something else, just as Bukovsky was the symbol of something greater than himself. There was a certain sense of let-down, inevitably, in the way the right wing over here seized on Bukovsky. Seeing them swoop down and kidnap him at the time I thought, 'Ah, so that's why I did it, to make another ranker in the conservative army.' I didn't know I'd done it till then. I went through phases like that but I don't think they were more than just phases; I don't think I would ever regret it if someone joined the National Front in the sense that, if someone is in intolerable conditions for a very long time and you have the chance to do something about it, I don't think you should ever regret having done so. I don't regret it. Superficially perhaps I was a little bit disappointed at the time, but I think maybe I didn't know Bukovsky well. I hadn't met him for any length of time; he'd been shut up behind damp walls for six years since I'd met the bloke - he didn't know me and we had to really start and find out whether we had anything in common whatever.



Alexander SKOBOV, a fourth-year history student at Leningrad University, a member of the outlawed New Left Opposition and organiser of a commune for young people, was arrested in October 1978. He was charged with 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda', one of the severest charges against dissidents. He and Tsurkov have been subsequently charged with producing and circulating samizdat and with 'Organisational Activity directed against the State' and 'Participation in Anti-Soviet Organisations' (article 72 of RSFSR criminal code). The latter charge is connected with their reported organisation of a 'Revolutionary Communist Union of Youth' and intention to hold an 'All Union Conference of Leftist Groups' in Leningrad on 16 October 1978.

Alexander Skobov was tried on 16 April 1979. He was diagnosed as suffering from 'pathological schizopbrenia' (or 'schizoid psychopathy?') and imprisoned in Leningrad's psychiatric hospital.

FR: Did you ever have any illusions when you started that many of these dissidents were libertarian, and feel motivated because of this to act, as distinct from simply regarding them as people under the hammer you wanted to help?

DM: The idea of them being libertarian as such never came into my mind at all, except that I suppose the actions of someone like Bukovsky attracted and interested me to the extent that I wanted to meet him. Not because he might be a libertarian - on the face of it he turned out not to have been a libertarian at all ... Again, that shouldn't make you disappointed. You think, well this I had to do; and maybe without his knowing it, he is one. But this is irrelevant, you could argue about it for ages.

I think that partly there was the academic desire to find out how you cope with an overwhelming power like that of the Soviet state. If you can cope with it over there where everything is against you, maybe one day the knowledge of it will be useful over here too ... I was very lucky. I was able to put my hand in my pocket and say, yes I can afford the fare. It's damned expensive getting over there and back. But since then it's gone up so much. Then I could afford to go two or three times out of my own funds, but clearly anybody else's would have been out of the question, suspect.

FR: Whom did you work with at the very beginning? There's

the image of just you and a placard outside the Russian embassy.

DM: That's true as far as the conscience-salving was concerned, as far as the purely personal side. This man I'd met and this man I would make my stand for. It was an ego-trip, complete ego trip. Well, almost complete.

Then I was joined by a few others whom I thought were known to Bukovsky, but it turned out they weren't. I thought they were friends of his, whom I'd seem almost literally lurking about in the bushes outside the embassy, and I used to go up and say 'What are you doing there?' and they'd say, 'Ah, well, we too are interested'. So a handful of people began to turn up.

FR: And you started vigils didn't you, on Christmas Eve ...

DM: No, on his birthday - 30 December. From 1970, I said to myself that this was something I was going to do till he came out or until I snuffed it or whatever; I'd be there as long as he was in prison.

I didn't want a mass of people there. They didn't know Bukovsky, why should they go there? A few people later on said, could we join you, and of course, yes, it gets rather lonely and it's nice to talk to people. At one time I thought we could sing some wonderful Russian songs, hymns or whatever, and we'd have some torches, but we couldn't find anyone who could sing so we never did.

FR: At what point was the committee formed?

DM: The Committee for the Release of Vladimir Bukovsky was formed some time in 1974. It became a formal committee with VIPs. I'm not a good committee person actually. I had left the working group round about '74 and it was Peter Reddaway who, as chairman of that group, said I should have a committee for Bukovsky because he was my main interest. Every person had to have a committee. For a time I thought, no, we don't want another committee, there are too many committees. But we got one and we had some notepaper and our VIPs. It was not the same as our working group. That was concerned solely with psychiatric abuse, and was a pressure group, supposedly, on British doctors so that they would do more in their own associations, hospitals or whatever.

Our working group had doctors on it, as I've mentioned before, and some Amnesty bloke, and then we were in business. I suppose it had some scope and use. There were pamphlets and the eight well known cases at that time, including Victor Fainberg. Bukovsky at about this same time (1971) had sent an open letter to western psychiatrists asking for help on behalf of these eight people, so we were getting publicity.

FR: How was he able to send it; smuggle it out?

DM: Yes, he smuggled it out and sent it in fact to me. And this was circulated via Peter Reddaway to various doctors. I've still got the question somewhere: do you think, even though you may not be able to look at a particular case, that incarcerating a person for endless years can be an effective way of curing any mental illness? At least you can tell me your opinion of that! We hoped the letter would be put before the WPA congress in Mexico City in 1971, but the Soviets arranged for it not to be put. Bukovsky was completely betrayed. This is all dealt with by the journalist I. F. Stone.

You know, it was a gross betrayal. Bukovsky said, look I want help. I'm in danger and eight of my friends are actually incarcerated. Can this be right? Will you consider this at your next WPA congress. There are all sorts of quibbles about how it wasn't put forward at the right time, how it had to be forwarded by an association and not an individual and so on. In fact, they found a formula for not entertaining this thing at all. So he was trampled on. He got 12 years after that because they knew then that it was not going to be debated. He was under interrogation for over a year, quite illegally. It was more than the maximum time you could legally keep someone under interrogation. They felt safe to give him the maximum sentence as a direct result of the pusillanimity of the WPA. I was so horrified and shocked at the time - 12 years!

Well, that's when I felt an obligation, as the stuff had arrived here and we'd had meetings in his flat.... Victor

Fainberg was one of the cases mentioned by Bukovsky as being falsely incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital. Victor came out and knew I was working for Bukovsky's freedom; and I saw Victor slowly being worn down and disillusioned by our working group meetings, for he couldn't understand why nothing was being done.

I think the time is now ripe for an inquiry into the way drugs are being used here, particularly in British prisons, in the light of the relatively new tendencies here. Is it mere coincidence that some of the most dangerous drugs they are now using are commonly applied to both Soviet and British mental patients. Are meetings still going on between Soviet and British psychiatrists, and if they have ceased, when? We don't know; it's all shrouded in darkness. And is this considered to be one of the more admirable workings of detente, this kind of pooling of knowledge. We have the gravest suspicions, but of course these things are going to be kept private. No-one is going to say, I met Dr Snezhnevsky* at a certain time and we discussed the drug situation. Of course they're not, they're not that foolish. In the past someone like Dr Leigh* openly praised doctors like Snezhnevsky, although the man is a criminal, no question of it, in every sense of the term. But has Leigh given up that admiration, or has he not? Does he still cling to the Snezhnevsky school of psychiatry, or whatever you call it, still admire it as he used to do. At one time he would never have a word spoken against it.

One doctor was an early member of the working group and there was a meeting of the Royal College of Physicians, in 1972 I think it was, and there was one particular manifesto we were going to distribute there. At the last moment this eminent doctor withdrew his name because he found out that Leigh was going to the conference and Leigh had been one of his examiners. It's a sordid story. And the doctor rang me up after that Inside Story article* and said he was deeply shocked by what I must have told the writers; 'you even refer to Dr Leigh as "Leigh"!'. Well, we're all cowardly in some ways. But this doctor, having huffed and puffed long and loud behaved like a doctor in the Soviet Union might behave when told - except that he was under no threat whatever. He was at that comical meeting and he came up to me afterwards and said, 'O David, what a mistake to always drag in this other thing; and it's so bad for us and here we are working away, you always criticising'.

There's one Czech doctor, Dr. M, and she saw through this always. I say 'saw through' because she saw how they were all back-peddling, and not wanting to do anything to upset anybody. I know I can't be fair to these people because I can't allow for the inherent caution of their profession. In the earliest days you never criticised a doctor, particularly a doctor who was senior to you. Semyon Gluzman, that's why he got 10 years. He said he had examined General Grigorenko (a dissident then in psychiatric hospital) and could find no symptoms of mental illness at all. This was a flagrant breach of conduct and he was sent down for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. He's still in a labour camp. It's as simple and brutal as that.

Semyon Gluzman was actually who that meeting was about recently at Conway Hall. And the medical profession had been told by Dr Denis Leigh that Gluzman had not been a psychiatrist at all - so they could stop worrying about him. This was a bloody lie, and Dr Leigh was at the top of his profession.

Well, probably Dr Leigh treats his children and animals very well. I've also met quite a lot of English psychiatrists who say, 'Oh, I've met Snezhnevsky, he's quite a decent bloke actually, I've spent a very pleasant evening with him'

*A.N. Snezhnevsky has been responsible for diagnosing numerous dissidents at the Serbsky Institute of Forensic Psychiatry. Denis Leigh has been a consultant forensic psychiatrist to the Ministry of Defence and secretary general of the World Psychiatric Association. The article referred to appeared in No. 6 of Inside Story and was entitled 'Vladimir Bukovsky and British psychiatrists: a quiet betrayal'.

This is a FREEDOM Anarchist Review published by Freedom Press, Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1. Tel. 01-247 9249