

anarchist fortnightly

Freedom

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Inside: GRASS ROOTS REACTION; CNT SYNDICALISM; MAKING A FAST BUCK; ALTERNATIVES.



Grass roots reaction

JUST to make sure that certain events which have taken place in this winter's industrial struggles do not go unrecorded I'd like (briefly) to make mention of them. Essentially they involve the splits and contradictions which are evident among both the working class and bourgeoisie, splits and contradictions which are likely to increase as the capitalist crisis deepens and are, therefore, well worth keeping an eye on.

With regards to the contradictions of the working class I'd like to concentrate on the reactionary measures taken by certain sections of workers.

Firstly, Longbridge. There the bulk of the workforce (15,000 against 1,000) voted against any action to support the sacked Communist convenor, Derek Robinson. In other words, they voted for the right of management to pick and choose whom they regard as union convenors.

Secondly, scabbing in the steel strike. The most notable occurrences of unabashed scabbing have happened in the private sector at Sheffield (Hadfields) and Sheerness. Also at Sheerness was the 'right to work' (sic) counter-picket by the wives of the workers. Such smug and selfish examples of Thatcherian 'common sense' are doubly annoying when you consider the hardship, abuse and violence suffered by the British steelworkers.

Then there was the decision by the traditionally left wing Welsh miners not to strike against the proposals to de-industrialise Wales. It would be shying away from the problem in confused embarrassment to blame this submission on the NUM leadership for not giving a 'strong lead' as, for example, Socialist Challenge did. Like the vote for management at Longbridge, this was another example of the rank and file being to the right of even the union hacks. (Voting in Wales was 22,000 to 4,000 against action).

These are just a few concrete expressions of a general reaction which has been taking place for the last few years, more or less in proportion to the deepening of the crisis. (Of course there has also been a movement to the left among other workers and this is encouraging. The point being made here is

that the traditional polarities within the working class seem to be widening and as this happens more of the 'moderates' in the middle appear to be tagging along with the rightward shift). This general reaction was well illustrated by the size of the vote for the Tories last May. We all knew they'd win, but few could have guessed they'd win by such a margin. This approval for a bout of reactionary policies by a larger than usual section of the working class gave the bourgeoisie the boost of confidence they needed and they have been feeding off it ever since.

The trend was set by Thatcher at the Tory conference. There she appealed directly to the workers over the heads of the union hacks for 'common sense' and 'moderation', claiming that the Tories stood for the interests of 'all working people' - more so than the unions. (Such contemptuous hypocrisy from her was repeated in the censure motion debate when she said she was opposed to the picketing at Sheerness and Hadfields because she believed in 'the right to work'). Sensing the generally favourable response to this appeal, the most notable aspect of which was the quietude of the NUM over pay, and encouraged by the lack of mass opposition to the vicious attack on the working class in operation since May, the management bourgeoisie have been using the same tactic: Go to the grass roots.

Witness the British Leyland corporate plan being put to the shop floor, by-passing the usual union channels; the BL management's anti-Robinson smears being circulated to every Longbridge worker, rather than being expressed via press statements; National Coal Board management's interference with the Welsh pit vote by spreading false information about how the vote was going amongst the miners, and now British Steel have cottoned on and, at the time of writing, are preparing to ballot the entire workforce on whether they want another ballot on the pay offer - and this in the face of fierce union opposition.

The TUC's conspicuous silence of late has not been due merely to their being in an empty-headed reformist position in a complex situation. It is also due in part to

their being in the sulks over the management bourgeoisie encroaching on their patch. The Labour Party's inaction, caused by its perennial infighting, has also left the field clearer than it would normally have been and this too assists the right in making grass-root forays. And on top of all this has been the craven and unimaginative anti-working class (specifically anti-union) media hysterics. Small wonder that an atmosphere has been created in which scum like Edwardes at BL can casually lock out thousands of workers until 'the surplus production' has been flogged off cheap and reactionaries can fire-bomb steel union premises without hardly anyone noticing. All this does not clearly explain why the reaction is as deep as it appears but to even approach a thorough analysis of this would require a neo-Reichian 'Mass Psychology of Social Democracy', and I'm not up to that.

But it's not all negative. The bourgeoisie, too, have been far from the united block they try to pass themselves off as, and just one section of industry coming out - the steel workers - has been enough to show up their warts. These have been in the main squabbles over incompetence and the selfish defence of areas of power by different state agents.

Prior, pissed off at his unpopularity on the right, blamed BSC chairman Villiers for his bungling of pay negotiations, and it was suggested that Villiers would be asked to retire early. Villiers turned round and blamed government interference and tight-arsedness for causing the troubles. BSC middle management joined in the attack on the government by passing a motion condemning the speed of the steel closures. Thatcher then piped up and was heavily critical publicly of Prior's incompetence and also revealed that the Cabinet is far from united on many issues. Paranoia and lack of confidence in the ruling elite have reached the stage where Angus Maude - government PRO - has banned ministers from appearing on a television question show lest more cracks be revealed. More recent was the anonymous sniping by Julian Critchley (Tory MP)

from the pages of The Observer and then again, openly, in the censure motion debate.

Further, various chief constables have complained recently (at least twice) about government pressure on them to intervene more firmly in industrial disputes. A police delegation informed Whitelaw that they wouldn't ask neighbouring forces to stop flying pickets en route. Another delegation told a select committee on employment that they wouldn't be prepared to enforce clause 14 of Prior's Employment Bill, a clause which involves assisting employers to obtain information in order to take out injunctions.

While these are hardly major ruling class divides, they do show

that the contradictions within the bourgeoisie are just a bank-note's thickness below the surface and that it takes little to bring them out. After all, the steel strike has not been well organised and has produced these effects. And as the confidence of the Tories begins to sag and the 'unity' dissipates, it can't be too long before the first U-turn is made and this will further weaken confidence.

Added to this is increasing unemployment and inflation, there are the social consequences of the cuts and forthcoming anti-union legislation which will create fiercer and more widespread opposition, which again will serve to heighten the contradictions. The more deeply shak-

en the smugness and confidence of the ruling class the more the chance of the tide of reaction being reversed. (Whether we like it or not the majority of folk do look up to governments and take a lead from them. A shaken government is something for us to feed on). The loose talk of a general strike this winter has been exactly that. Loose talk. But next winter, with another 12 months of misery forced down our throats, who knows? We can start stepping up the pace now.

A. PLIER

*The result of the ballot show that a majority of those who voted were in favour of a vote on whether to return to work. But only a minority of the strikers as a whole are in favour of such a vote.

CNT Congress pt.2

SYNDICALIST SOLUTIONS

RELIGIOUS mania, or something similar, is never far from the surface in most anarchist movements. The Spanish movement is no exception. In the 1930s it was the nudists and the naturalists who provided the exotic touch, whereas today it is the globalists and the gays. *

Shrewd writers like Gerald Brenan have detected this quality in Spanish anarchism. He ascribes to anarchism in Spain a kind of Protestant hangover, which Spain missed out on because of the Inquisition.

The globalist influenced delegates who walked out of the Congress were the same kind of uncompromising moralists who have developed anarchism as a moral force in Spain. Which makes a change from the Marxists whose only concern is political expediency.

Clearly there is a significant anarchist movement outside the CNT. This became obvious at some of the meetings at the Teatro Mart-

in; the well organised cultural week running in conjunction with the congress.

But some anarchists have held aloof from the CNT in the past. It's as well to remember, though, that the anarchist groups at a congress in Madrid in 1922 decided to enrol in the CNT and work in it, in order to combat communist infiltration.

Collective Bargaining

Self-interest is the basis of syndicalism. Consequently it is interested in the methods and strategies which advance the members' self-interests.

The job of the anarchist is to introduce a libertarian consciousness into the syndicate, to coordinate the workers' sectional interests to the needs of the wider community.

In short the syndicate must not become a soulless Frankenstein, as is so often the case with the British unions.

The anarchist influence was ever present in many proposals at the congress. On bargaining and negotiations the congress supported free collective bargaining.

State intervention or arbitration through social contracts, pacts, incomes policies was rejected, only direct negotiation between employers and union members or the syndicate being acceptable.

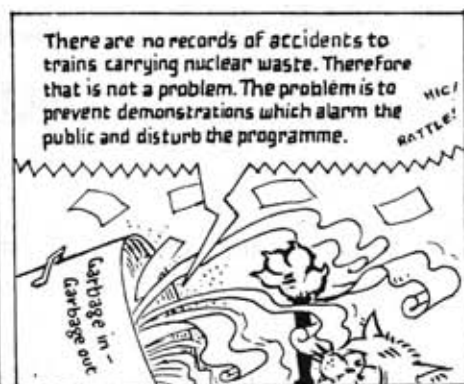
The form of collective bargaining will be on a factory or regional basis. It will not be rooted in national negotiations, since the problems of the separate regions are distinct in Spain. Nor will there be negotiations based on craft or skill.

Unemployment

According to Munde Obrera, one in ten 'active' Spaniards are out of work.

The situation is serious especially in the centre of Spain and many comrades are out of collar.

continued overleaf



CNT(cont.)

While visiting the coastal areas just after Christmas, I noticed that shanty dwellings were being built within 20 yards of the main street in Alicante. A sure sign that people are moving from the interior in search of work on the coast.

Unfortunately many Spanish anarchists have a slipshod approach to the problem of unemployment. They proclaim the right not to work - the right to do nothing, and by implication draw state benefits.

This position neglects the danger that in a society of mass unemployment power and privilege are likely to fall into the hands of the employed.

A better position, and that taken by the CNT, is one of sharing available work. But this does not involve the kind of appeals for statist solutions implied in the 'right to work' and 'fight the cuts' campaigns in this country.

The CNT argues for a cut in the working week to 35 hours, and to

30 hours for workers in dangerous, polluted or rough jobs. More holidays. Abolition of overtime. Control of employment agencies by the unions.

In agriculture in Andalucia, there are plans by out of work CNTers to take over uncultivated land owned by absentee landlords.

There were proposals to pressure employers into increasing the numbers of workers on a job. Also there is a scheme to create community activities through the CNT, with the intention of stabilising the distribution and commercialisation of products and to cut out middle men.

It is through these kinds of considerations that the CNT embraces the everyday lives of ordinary Spaniards. In this way the anarchists speak the language of the Spanish pueblo.

Syndicalism then places restraints on anarchism and forces us to face what Chomsky calls the '... structures and principles which underlie the most ordinary human accomplishments'. Syndicalism provides the scope as well

as the limits of anarchist creativity.

The issue which Chomsky raises is that all human activity is rule-based, and he invokes Coleridge who wrote, "The spirit of poetry, like all living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules".

Anarchism is a rigorously rule based, value-orientated philosophy of life, which makes highly moralistic demands upon its supporters. Anarcho-syndicalism attempts to introduce the value of anarchism into real life situations and to apply them to organisational strategies inside the syndicates, factories and social system.

Spanish anarcho-syndicalism, through the CNT, lifts anarchism out of the monastic setting into the realm of everyday life. B. B.

* Globalism is a tendency which attempts to influence the CNT to adopt a policy which would shift its emphasis on classical anarcho-syndicalism towards a kind of social-political movement (see part 1).

MEXICO

WE all know that there are no political prisoners in Soviet Russia - only 'enemies of the state'. Nor has Western Germany or Italy - only 'terrorists', as in Northern Ireland.

But what of Mexico?

On Saturday night, 23 February (female!) police drove 26 campesinos from the Belgian and Dutch embassies in Mexico City, thus ending a week long peaceful occupation. The police cleared the embassies without violent resistance from the protesters.

The campesinos had originally occupied the buildings the previous Monday, demanding better living conditions (which in much of the country are little better than they were at the time of Zapata's death in 1919), the 'end to police oppression in the countryside' and the release of over 100 political prisoners, of whom many had 'disappeared' over the last few years, in Acapulco and elsewhere.

During negotiations with the police, the peasants - supporters of the National Democratic Popular Front (possibly a Maoist group) - reduced their demand to the release of about 25 specific prisoners.

PRISONERS

During the occupation of the embassies, President Lopez Portillo condemned the campesinos as 'notoriety-seekers', and Interior Secretary Enrique Olivares Santana claimed that the prisoners whose freedom was demanded were 'common criminals'. They would not be freed, he said.

"Mexico has no political prisoners", claimed a police official. Indeed, over 300 political prisoners had already been freed recently under two amnesties, he said. And who are we to disbelieve such an honourable official? Time will tell.

PETER E. NEWELL

Cuernavaca, Mexico
24.2.80

ENGLAND

Dear friends

I have now been in prison for 6 years. Due to the hostility that I have shown towards the prison system I have within these 6 years been forced to spend over 1800 days in segregation (isolation). During this period I have also been brutalised and physically abused, had all my human rights stripped from me, had all my family ties severed, due to the frustration caused by the illegal suppression of mail, had my budgerigar killed and my radio smashed by prison guards and suffered many, many other degrading inflictions (I am at present suing the state for the above).

It is, indeed, an arduous struggle and no matter how staunch or dedicated a person may be there has to come a time when each one of us, either through sheer physical exhaustion or mental fatigue, must collapse under the incessant strain. I am locked away behind the cell door for 23 hours a day and I am not allowed to associate with anybody, nor can I do any work or

Cont on page 8

SUB RATES FOR 1980

Inland and surface mail overseas, sterling £7.

USA \$15.00

Canada C\$18.00

Airmail USA US\$20.00

Airmail Canada C\$22.50

Airmail Europe £8.00

Airmail Australasia £9.50

MAKING A FAST BUCK

Respect for the law is a funny business. Lawyers respect it for the money it brings them. Estate agents, too, along with property developers, enjoy the same healthy appetite.

Not so long ago I had the opportunity to observe at close hand how the system is used to assist little old ladies shed the burdens attached to wordly possessions. A neighbour died intestate, her estate eventually going to an even older sister living up North. The house, in what used to be thought of as a salubrious neck of the woods in London, was valued at probate at £10,000. This could be considered a fair price, if anything on the low side. A similar semi-detached four bedroomed house in the same road, without sitting tenants, was fetching around £26,000 in reasonable nick.

This particular house had three breathing bodies tucked away upstairs, one of whom would drop by once a week or so to pick up her Social Security cheque. Of the two gents, the one whose claim to remain was weak in any case, opted to leave, taking over a flat offered by the same co-operative estate agent. The other gent in residence had a more permanent air about him.

To say that the house was in poor condition for a condemned pigsty gives you some idea of how much needed to be spent on it to make it habitable in the normal sense. It needed gutting with a flame thrower. After that, replumbing, rewiring and a central heating system would have put a couple of thousand quid on the bill. A new roof would have helped, too. Add a generous £2,000 for that item, and another £1,000 for decorating inside and out. So, for £5,000 on top of the basic price you would have acquired a nice little residence with vacant possession of the ground floor.

For obscure reasons the house never came on the market in the usual way. Just a year after probate the Sold sign went up outside. No For Sale notice preceded this transaction. As it happens, I have a copy of the letter that the little old lady up North sent my mother,

who had helped clear up the mess immediately after the first little old lady snuffed it. Weariness and distress pervade the letter, but the bones of the matter are simple enough. The estate agent found a buyer willing to pay, not £10,000, but £5,000. An attempt was made further to reduce this offer by £1,500 on the grounds that the property is leasehold. Buying the freehold would involve roughly another £1,000. Showing a remarkable spirit for her 80 odd years, the little old lady dug her heels in and settled for £4,500, less, of course, the agent's commission and legal fees for the solicitor who had been safeguarding her interests in such a stunning fashion. Which is where the word "solicitous" comes from, I suppose.

So much for the little old lady up North. Now for the payoff. Various ploys were adopted to persuade the two remaining tenants to leave, including offering alternative accommodation. To no avail. Having been alerted to the name of the game, the legitimate male tenant demanded his share of the loot. When legal action was threatened he cheerfully pointed out that in the witness box he would be free to blow the gaff on the whole grotty circus.

Pause for thought on the part of those eager to reap the harvest for their skill, enterprise and low cunning. Lo and behold, a new owner arrived on the scene with a tale of woe that would wring your withers if his own motives were not also suspect. According to his story, he paid £15,000 for the house, believing that he had vacant possession. Being a resourceful sort of character, he put it straight back on the market for £17,000, having done nothing to it other than calling the junk man to remove a few sticks of furniture. As it happens, the house remains unsold and continues to protect its owner from the worst ravages of inflation.

Well, well, well. Where does that leave the state of play? In the first place, the original peice of skulduggery is now carefully buried and well insulated from any legal steps the new owner may take in order to gain possession. Secondly

if you subtract £5,000 from £15,000 and allow for the bulldozing operation that took place downstairs, you will discover that some person or persons whose identities may only be guessed at, have walked off with a cool £9,500 for the exercise of their patience, foresight and professional know-how. By comparison bank robbers get my vote as honest, upright, hardworking citizens. At least they don't specialize in swindling little old ladies unable to defend their own interests.

By now you may be pondering at least two thoughts. One, how typical is this sort of thing and how wicked is this wicked world? Two, why did no-one do anything to prevent the little old lady from being skinned alive? As for the first question, I made a few informal inquiries here and there and discovered that this is a fairly standard racket. In one instance I was told of a gentleman of property who had himself fallen into a state of mental disrepair, had been packed off to a private nursing home where he spent his declining years being, I trust, well cared for. From time to time it became necessary to sell off a

piece of his estate to defray the expenses attached to nursing his condition. On these occasions a deal would be struck between the estate agent and the purchaser. As with the little old lady, the house would not be placed on the open market. Instead a private arrangement was made whereby the purchaser acquired a property at well below the going price while the agent received a hefty kick-back for his acumen and resourceful endeavours. This on top of his normal commission, of course.

Surely there must be a law against this sort of thing? Well, maby there is, but if so it seems to be even less effective at improving human behaviour or the law. As we all know, the purpose of the law is not to protect the weak from the strong, on the contrary, it is designed to enable the strong to hang onto their ill-gotten gains. Which explains why no one was able to prevent the little old lady from being thrown to the wolves.

The ANC and I

I WAITED with this article/letter till the first emotions about the foundation of the Anti Nuclear Campaign had cooled down a bit. What I want to present is a kind of resume of what the 'Anti Nuclear Campaign' has meant to me as an anti nuclear activist so far.

The first thing I heard about plans to set up the ANC were rumours. Our local anti nuclear group (Hackney, London) never received any concrete discussion papers or information about the planned ANC from the ANC organisers themselves. The date of the launching conference we learned from the bourgeois press. Perhaps the organisers of the ANC just did not know about our local group, I thought. But no, one week before the launching conference I got a phone call from the ANC office to ask if I or anybody else in our group could help out as stewards during the conference. This left me with the impression that our group was in the eyes of the ANC organisers too unimportant to get involved in the discussion about setting up an anti nuclear organisation, but good enough to do the dirty work.

The launching conference showed that the policy and the structure of the new ANC were not to be discussed during the conference. That (and even the membership of the new steering committee) had been decided beforehand and behind the scenes by the (petty) politicians involved.

My feeble attempt to speak at least for one minute during the conference was futile. I handed in my slip to the chairman, asking permission to speak, at the very beginning of the conference, but was never called. Censorship, loss of the slip or just no time, the result was the same. To me the whole conference was a farce, including the election of the steering committee.

Well, I thought, give them a bit of time; maybe the ANC will still prove to be of some use to the anti-nuclear movement. Since then three months have passed and our local anti nuclear group still has not received any communication from the ANC office. So to us it really does not make any difference whether the ANC exists or not. It certainly does not support our local nitty-gritty campaigning in any way. I have heard of two occasions when the ANC tried to, or did, support activities of other organisations: a) the ANC suggested printing posters of the London Anti Nuclear Alliance on the cheap, if they could print 'ANC' at the bottom; b) during discussion of the FOE poster for Harrisburg Day, the ANC spokesman was critical about the names of supporting anti nuclear organisations such as SANE, Sera or SCRAM appearing on the poster. Since these were all members of the ANC, just 'ANC' on the poster would have been much better.

All this petty cliquishness would leave me cool did I not happen to believe that the anti nuclear movement does need a coordinating national body. But such a body must be a democratic one, which the ANC steering committee is not! Members of the steering committee are not controlled by anybody. (And I do not accept that being elected by an anonymous conference plenum means adequate democratic control). The viable solution, combining regional representation and direct democratic control, is the federal approach. Autonomous local anti nuclear groups must form regional alliances (like SCRAM or the London Alliance); the regional alliances should then each send a delegate into the steering committee of the national body. This delegate would be directly responsible to his or her regional alliance. The delegate need not be the same one all the time, but could rotate through the local groups who make up the regional alliance. Such a structure does indeed leave no space for automatic representation of political organisations and parties in the steering committee (as is the case now). If the Young Liberals, SWP, Welsh and Scottish nationalists, Eco party etc truly and actively support the anti nuclear struggle they should work in the local groups and regional alliances. To me the outlined (or a similar democratic) structure is a necessary condition for support of the ANC. If the ANC does not reach such a democratic federalist structure at its next conference (when?) the only thing I'll have left to say will be: as an anti nuclear activist, the ANC does not concern me.

KLAUS

No PWR at Dungeness

THR Dungeness Action Alliance (ANC), an affiliation of over 30 autonomous groups representing the South East Anti Nuclear Campaign, has called a national demonstration at Dungeness for 24 May.

The demonstration has three purposes: to mark our total opposition to any proposal to build a pressurised water reactor (PWR) at Dungeness; to mark our opposition to the fuelling up of Dungeness B (1) advanced gas-cooled reactor (AGR); to bring to the public's attention the serious cracks in Dungeness A (1 & 2) which have led to them being shut down. Dungeness B is ten years behind schedule due to design faults (most notably the making of the reactor vessel too big to fit into its contain-

ment building) and to labour disputes.

The demonstration will assemble at Lydd (4 miles from Dungeness) at 2 p.m., where a bicycle rally from London (leaving Sth Bromley station at 6 a.m.) will meet us. Then we shall march to Dungeness where a mass sponsored balloon release plus music, food, speakers and other attractions are being laid on.

The demonstration is being sponsored by the Dungeness Action Alliance and the South East Anti-Nuclear Campaign and is being supported by FOE, ANC and SANE.

For more details, c/o 57 Upper Lewes Rd, Brighton.

NICK JAGGER
for DAA (ANC)

N.E.L.P

The Day we Called for Freedom
(and Nobody Answered)

AT a meeting of the North East London Polytechnic Students' Union, held on 26 February, the Anarchist Society tabled a resolution noting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the continued denial of human rights and imprisonment of dissidents by the Soviet government. In our resolution we also called for freedom for political prisoners, respect for individual liberty by the Soviet regime and support for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics until these demands were met. While we knew that such a resolution wouldn't change the Kremlin's policy of repression we were of the opinion that it would at least show Soviet

Anarchist Centre

WHERE can you meet Black Flaggers, the Freedom Group, the Rising Free collective, the Anarchy group and others of a similar ilk over a pint and discuss the merits and demerits of dialectical materialism or bourgeois recuperation?

Where can you spend an evening listening to some good music without getting ripped off by some profiteering promoter in the process?

Where can you meet people as a springboard for other campaigns?

Well, at the moment the answer is nowhere, but that situation could change very soon. A group has been formed with the aim of setting up an anarchist centre in London. So far we have had a good response from anarchists throughout the country and have been successful in raising some of the money which will be needed for the project.

In addition to this, Crass and Poison Girls, the punk rock bands, have recorded a single ('Bloody Revolutions/ Persons Unknown')

N.E.L.P.

dissidents that students here cared about their plight and were trying to do something to help them. Nobody, we thought, except the most intransigent of Stalinists, would oppose this.

Well, we were wrong. Firstly the union executive opposed it. This group of Labourites and Communists (Euro-variety) proclaimed long and loud their support for human rights. But to actually do anything about it, they said, was to play into the hands of the cold war warriors, to upset detente, etc., etc. One Vaughn West, deputy president of NELPSU and recent guest of the Cuban government, told us all how the generous Russians had armed the 'revolution' in the earth's four corners. We couldn't help thinking he should go tell that to the workers of East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and many other places who have seen their comrades killed by Soviet arms.

Next, the local branch of SWSO, the student wing of the SWP, got into their act. They too were for human rights, and what is more, for the struggle of Soviet workers. However, they felt that a boycott call - despite the fact that it had originally been made by Soviet human rights activists including

which will be on sale shortly. The profits from this single will go towards the centre and will, we hope, go a long way in helping us realise the scheme.

How Can You Help?

If you are interested in helping set up the centre you can:

1. Come along to the next meeting at Conway Hall on 20 March at 7 p.m.
2. You can take out your membership now. This will guarantee you membership of the centre for one year from the day it opens. Membership is £15 for those inside the London postcode and £10 for those outside.

What Will £15 Get You?

£15 will get you full membership of the centre for one year. You will be entitled to make use of all the centre's facilities. These will include, it is hoped, a bar, reading

several socialists - was not relevant. And so they tabled an amendment to have it deleted and replaced by a call for the NUS executive to do something: hardly likely considering it is dominated by Communists and Labour fellow travellers. What they really meant was that the boycott call wasn't relevant to their building the vanguard party and their elitist Trotskyist ideology, which springs from the same roots as Soviet Communism - the totalitarian concepts of Lenin. Anyway, their amendment and the amended resolution were passed.

Most sickening of all was the defence made of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by overseas students who attributed the revolt there to evil conspiracies on the part of the CIA. Stalinism, it seems, is alive and well at NELP.

Maybe it was daft to expect anything else, but the doublethink of many so-called socialists really amazed us. Anyway, we are undaunted and determined to work with other libertarians campaigning in support of Soviet workers and for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics. For us the only answer to the oppression and exploitation of all governments, both Left and Right, is Anarchy - the free association of free individuals. And it is for that we are fighting at NELP.

N.E. LONDON POLYTECHNIC
ANARCHIST SOCIETY

room/library, offices, concerts. It will also give you a say in what the centre will be used for.

What Are The Aims Of The Centre?

The centre has two aims: a political one and a social one. Our political aim is to make anarchist ideas and literature more easily available. We hope that a centre will not only be a focal point for different anarchist groups but also for those who are not committed anarchists.

Our social aim is to provide a meeting place where people can get together and enjoy themselves among comrades.

If you are interested in making contact with us then you can either come along to our next meeting or write to 'ANARCHIST CENTRE', c/o Freedom Press, Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

MAKING A FAST BUCK continued from page 5

The Public Trustee was not interested. Just so long as she had been screwed according to the book by professionals who knew their onions, everything was fine. Checkpoint, the BBC programme that goes in for exposing frauds, were more on the ball, but the problems were too great even for their mettle. After all, would you like to tackle a smooth, tricky lawyer and try to prove that he was involved in a conspiracy to take a little old lady to the cleaners? One small slip and the libel bills would be enough to give Auntie a swift kick in the Third programme. The public prosecutor? Ho, Ho, Ho! It would be a brave man who laid information in that quarter. What are your motives, dear fellow? Malice? Private gain? Notoriety? Only a simpleton would believe that you are acting in the public interest, moved by the Holy Spirit and an overweening lust for fair play.

So there we are. White collar crime pays handsomely because it never gets labelled as such. Its successful practitioners reap rich rewards, are respected for their riches and wisdom, and go honoured to their graves. Meanwhile, I've warned the recalcitrant tenant to watch out for badly driven cars, lest he goes to an earlier and less marbled resting place. Which is why, coward that I am, I remain yours faithfully, the Man from Mars.

FREEDOMS CONTACTS

International

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales

Black Ram, PO Box 238,
Darlinghurst NSW 2010.
Disintegrator! PO Box 291,
Bondi Junction, Sydney.
Sydney Anarcho-Syndicalists,
Jura Books Collective, 417
King St., Newtown NSW 2042.
Sydney Libertarians, PO Box 24
Darlinghurst NSW 2010.

Queensland

Libertarian Socialist Organi-
sation, PO Box 268, Mount
Gravatt, Central 4122.
Self-Management Organisation,
PO Box 332, North Quay.

Victoria

La Trobe Libertarian Social-
ists, c/o SRC, La Trobe Univ-
ersity, Bundoora, Vic. 3083.
Monash Anarchist Society, c/o
Monash University, Clayton,
3168 Melbourne.
Libertarian Workers for a Self
Managed Society, PO Box 20,
Parkville 3052.

South Australia

Adelaide Anarchists, PO Box
67, North Adelaide 5006.

Western Australia

Freedom Collective, PO Box 14,
Mount Hawthorn 6018.

Tasmania

c/o 34 Kennedy Street,
Launceston 7250

NEW ZEALAND

PO Box 2042, Auckland
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Federal Republic of Germany

Baden: Karin Bauer, Info-
Büro, Postfach 161, Baden.
Berlin: Anarkistisches Bund,
(publ. of 'anarkistische
texte') c/o Gebr. Schmueck,
c/o Libertad Verlag, Postfach
153, 1000 Berlin 44.

East Westfalen: (Anarchistische

Föderation Ostwestfalen-Lippe)
Wolfgang Fabisch, c/o Wohnge-
meinschaft Schwarzwurzel,
Wöhrener Str. 136,
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Hamburg: Initiative Freie Arb-
eiter Union (anarcho-Syndical-
ists): FAU, Repsoldstrasse 49,
Hochpaterre links,
2000 Hamburg 1.

'Gewaltfreie Aktion' groups
throughout FRG, associated
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Heinz Sang, Methfesselstr. 69,
2000 Hamburg 19.

France

Federation anarchiste fran-
çaise, 3 rue Ternaux,
75011 Paris (groups through-
out France).

Italy

Gruppo Hem Day, c/o Giovanni
Trapani, Via A. Tittoni 5,
00153 Roma.

The Netherlands

De Vrije Socialist,
Postbus 411. Utrecht.

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Denmark

Aarhus: Regnbuen Anarkist
Bogcafe, Mejlgade 48,
8000 Aarhus.

Copenhagen: Anarkist Syndical-
ist Bogcafe, Studiestræde 18,
1455 Copenhagen.

Rainbow Anarchists of the Free
City of Christiana, c/o Allan
Anarchos, Tinghuset, Fristaden
Christiana, 1407K Copenhegn.

Sweden

Replacing previous entries:

Syndikalist Forum, Tenstiernas
Gata 51, 11631 Stockholm.

PRISON

From page 4
enjoy any privileges. After 1,800
days of such an existence it is,
perhaps, understandable that the
strain is now beginning to tell on me.
I am writing this letter, therefore,
in the hope that someone out there
may care to form a basis for friend-
ship with me. Not only would this
be very gratifying and therapeutic
for myself, but it could also prove
to be beneficial to the partner.
I would, of course, appreciate any
correspondence, though I would
particularly appreciate those people
writing who would prefer to seek a
lasting friendship as opposed to the
more ephemeral one. All replies
are welcome, and I don't discrimin-
ate in aspects of age, colour, race
etc. Will anyone wishing to write
please do so initially by sending
your name and address to this
address:

Doug Wakefield, c/o J. Saunders,
97 Golborne Rd, London.

In conclusion I would say that
although I am a prisoner and would
appear on the surface to have little
to offer, I do have a faithfulness,
a devotion, a sincerity and an honest
heart to offer and anyone seeking
such qualities may serve themselves
by adopting the friendship I offer.
I will answer all replies promptly.

Sincerely,

DOUG WAKEFIELD

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81, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97,
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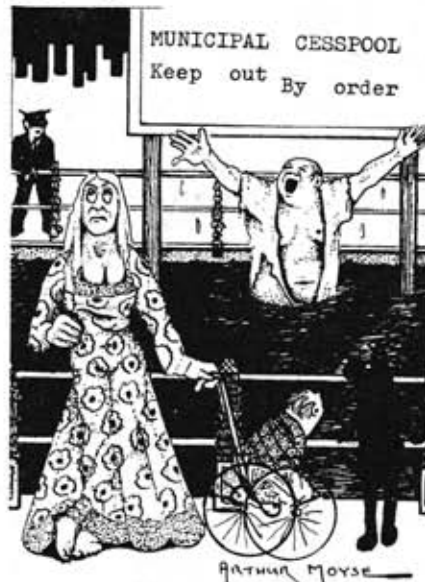
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What is the alternative?



"What We Want is Ecology, and Plenty of It."



"I've Got It."

AN editor has invited me to contribute to these pages. I wrote regularly for FREEDOM and ANARCHY in the early and mid-sixties. When I first came across it FREEDOM was, in the main, still advocating the orthodox line that had come down from Kropotkin's day namely that the masses, through their discontents should (or would) make a revolution which, if all went well, would lead to a stateless, classless, free society. In the meantime the masses should strive for as many material advantages as they can get out of capitalism. Anarchy on the other hand tended to the view that a positive trend existed in the onward march of science, technology, sociology etc and this, if properly nurtured, would by degrees lead to a free society without any need for a revolutionary upheaval along the way. It was argued that science and technology would shortly be creating such an abundance of material wealth that capitalism and bureaucracy would become redundant. One clown in FREEDOM even defined a free society as one in which, when you wanted a new car, you went down to the automated car factory and pressed the appropriate button. Such shallow, pathetic ideas of freedom were sniped at mainly by individualists and by those who realise that man does not live by bread alone.

I don't want to dwell on past controversies but suffice to say that a few of us at that time realised that endless higher wages and levels of material consumption tended to prop up capitalism by turning the masses into docile consumers. Also the great European and American scramble for more material goodies was mainly at the expense of the Third World which provides the raw materials yet anarchism is theoretically against such exploitation. It was not unusual to see an article decrying the exploitation of Asia and Africa alongside one urging that the British masses should have ever higher levels of material consumption and there was no hint of contradiction. Furthermore, if the desire for ever higher levels of material consumption leads to a raising of revolutionary consciousness it would have

meant that the advertising industry was an important instrument of future upheaval, a silly idea. Looking back I think the reason FREEDOM took the line it did was that many of its writers hadn't realised that the 1960s were vastly different from the 1930s or the 1880s. Economic demands were rarely about basic necessities any longer but were mainly about luxuries and trivialities. They were living in the past. As for Anarchy which claimed to be of the future its ideas on automated factories, social science, technical developments etc were so much fantasy for such forms of "progress" more widespread now than then and there has been a concomitant growth not in freedom but in the concentration of wealth and power and in dehumanisation in general.

No thoughtful person nowadays advocates ever-increasing levels of material consumption. The main reason is that over the last fifteen years or so there has arisen an awareness that the earth's resources are not infinite and that over-population and irreversible degradation of the environment are great dangers. These subjects are usually lumped under the heading of "ecology" although strictly speaking ecology is about all relationships within a biosphere and the effect of human activities is only a small part. But it is with the human aspects of ecology that this article is concerned.

When I was taught elementary ecology at school nothing was said about man's role in the biosphere or about ecology having a social role. That was in the fifties when the "affluent society" was the catchphrase of the day and almost everyone believed that there would be world-wide and ever-increasing material prosperity based on technical progress and that the only possible danger on the horizon was the remote chance of accidental war. In the late sixties I suddenly came on ecology again. There were magazines on the subject and newspaper articles and television programmes. But the emphasis had changed since my schooldays. Nature per se wasn't much mentioned, instead it

was mainly about the effects people's industrial and economic activities were having on the biosphere. Some of the predictions were very gloomy stuff. There was a writer called Gordon Rattray Taylor who produced The Domsday Book full of pessimistic predictions based apparently on sound scientific and economic research. There was The Blueprint for Survival which outlined ways Taylor's nightmare future could be avoided and argued a good case for decentralisation, simplification and a no-growth economy.

There was the Stockholm Conference of 1972 to which went representatives of nations and organisations from all over the world. There were the recommendations of "The Club of Rome" a group of EEC economists who argued that economic growth should be limited or even stopped.

INTERNATIONAL EFFECTS

What has been the result of all the information, warnings and proposals of nearly a decade ago? On the international level very little. The Western nations are still hell-bent on economic growth based on technical developments. The economic reason is that they are capitalist nations and capitalism requires ever-increasing investment, production and consumption to be successful by its own standards. The so-called socialist countries are motivated by the view that technical "progress" is a good in itself. I recently saw a Soviet magazine about "progress" in the Kuban area. We were asked to admire a vast spaghetti-junction type interchange and a windowless factory farm about a quarter of a mile long. No "small is beautiful" in the Kuban. The new rulers of China are sweeping away Mao Tse Tung's ideas of self-sufficiency, production on a small scale at local levels and defence mainly by Fabian tactics and are working towards a China which, by the end of the century, will be a first-rate industrial and military power with a large amount of consumerism. Already the rubbish drink Coca Cola has been introduced and one can see pictures of earnest and slightly bewildered Chinese watching French fashion models showing off the latest trendy garb. Many Third World Countries still see industrialisation as the way out of their difficulties rather than elementary measures of land reform and birth control. This year's Reith lecturer, a highly educated and intelligent African, said that he hopes that three African nations (Zaire, Nigeria and a black-ruled South Africa) will develop nuclear weapons to show that they are technically equal to Europe and America and then go on to show that they are morally superior by undertaking nuclear disarmament. That the way to demonstrate moral superiority is to not make nuclear weapons doesn't occur to this basically power-worshipping savant. Power-worship, that's the conscious or unconscious motive of nearly all leaders, whether in the capitalist world, the socialist world or the Third World. Their power worship combined with greed, envy, pride, revenge, and a whole ragbag of negative feelings make their policies a subject more fitting for psychological study than politics.

EFFECT ON THE MASSES

Secondly what effect have ecological warnings had on the masses in the industrialised countries? How many people have made sacrifices or would be willing to if top people set an example (a forlorn hope)? The number is practically nil. The broad masses are still deep in their love affair with consumerist goodies and were these to become unavailable many people would collapse like empty balloons. Despite the current decline in real wages car ownership goes up and up as does the demand for colour televisions, music centres, household gadgets and rubbish of that sort. The youth who hasn't got a Japanese motor cycle is out of the social scene while the true failure is s/he who travels by bus when past the age of 30. More and more resources go into the fripples of life and less and less into the essentials. Look at a photograph of a shopping centre 50 years ago and you'll see that nearly all the shops dealt in essentials - food, clothing, repairs etc. Then consider the proportion that do so today. A row of useful old shops was demolished near here recently in a rebuilding programme. Of the old shopkeepers only one, a grocer, could afford the replacement premises. The remainder of the new shops include abetting shop, a wine merchant, a boutique, a place selling spiced pancakes and

open only in the evenings and a mysterious premises called something like Euro Interfacings. Someone's priorities are very wrong. In California recently the people were given a straight choice (Proposition 13) between the abandoning of many municipal services (parks, libraries etc) and having more money to spend on themselves. They chose the latter. California is often hailed as a microcosm of the future. It will be argued that the masses accept all this only because they have been conditioned by the capitalist controlled media, that it is only because they are bamboozled by a torrent of advertising, propaganda and bad examples that most of them so eagerly think the thoughts their masters want them to think and live the lives they do. This is undoubtedly true but the only thing that is proved by the observation is how easily the masses are bamboozled.

It is also argued that when the contradictions of capitalism really begin to make themselves felt or when the scarcity of a natural resource (most probably oil) unmistakably signals the end of consumerism then the masses will seek a radical, revolutionary way out. Is this likely? Isn't it more likely that rather than come together in a common cause based on decency and austerity they will fall upon another nation or group (such as blacks) in an effort to maintain their consumerist lifestyles at someone else's expense? Consider the extraordinary venom now displayed by the American public towards Iran. Ten years ago large numbers of Americans took sides against their own government and for Vietnam, yet the phenomenon isn't being repeated in the case of Iran. This is because Vietnam didn't threaten the material living standards of America. Iran with its oil does. There is the further point that unlike America, which lives for self-gratification, Iran is now a country which lives for an ideal and idealists are always unpopular. To put it in a nutshell I consider that were the private motorists of Europe and America to be given a straight choice between a one-third cut in mileage and the extermination of half Asia with napalm, nerve gas and neutron bombs the majority would choose the latter. Buggins wait at a bus stop? Oh, the indignity of it.

The steady increase in negativity among the Western masses as shown by the levels of mental breakdowns, drug dependency, alcoholism, abandoned children, barbarous entertainment, crime, oafish behaviour, sport worship, car worship, pop-star worship etc. is a subject on which there is a campaign of silence save for a few churchmen and a few social and ecological commentators. The reasons are obvious: Politicians cannot draw attention to public decline because to do so would antagonise the public on whom the politicians depend for votes. Trades union leaders are either moneyed careerists or wish to preserve the fantasy that the unions still harbour the ideals on which they were founded. Compare the slogans on a pre-1914 union banner with the "snouts in the trough" philosophy of today. Marxists are contemptuous of the masses and see them merely as stepping-stones in their own struggle for power. Try asking a British left-winger Trot or what-have-you, whether they intend to remain in their present occupation if socialism (their version) comes in. They give you a pitying look because they see themselves as administrators i.e. power wielders. Or try pointing out to them that there isn't enough wealth or potential wealth in the world for everyone to live at the average British consumption level. When I've suggested this I've been called an eco-nut or lackey of capitalism but the leftists never answered the point because they're basically not interested. Most media bigwigs, writers etc are too busy making a fat bit for themselves to notice or care about what's happening socially while many libertarians are still starry-eyed.

THE SELF-STYLED ALTERNATIVE SOCIETY

Thirdly what of the "alternative society" of Europe and America which to some extent arose as a reaction to consumerism, militarism and the drift towards eco-disaster and what of the ecological movements themselves? Nothing in my lifetime gave me more hope, nothing caused me greater disillusionment. Before outlining personal experience, I'll take my hat off to that tiny band of courageous folk who really meant it, tried to do something really positive and still do. As for the rest, it was just like so much froth on the surface. Proof of this is that it contradicted a basic historical law.

All through history the situation has been that when times are good there is little discontent and protest and when times are bad a lot of discontent and protest. With the alternative society it was precisely the other way round. The alternative society really got going in the mid-sixties when economies were booming but c. 1974 went into a sudden decline. Magazines folded, hippies became rare birds, communes collapsed. The reason is the effects of the quadrupling of the price of oil in late 1973 and the Labour Government's 1974 legislation giving security of tenure to people in furnished accommodation. Suddenly jobs and cheap rooms became very hard to find. No longer could Nigel, in a carefree mood, hitch to Katmandu or spend six weeks on a commune and think he was changing the world and knowing full well all the time that having temporarily dropped out he could within a few days drop back in again so that by the time he was 25 he was just like any other bank clerk on the 9.15. If he tried it from 1974 on he'd probably find himself left in the cold at the end because of the scarcity of jobs and rooms.

My own experiences make dismal reading. I stayed at three communes. One had been started by an idealist as a haven for social outcasts (ex prisoners etc), but hippies had taken over living off state aid in a welter of pot smoke, pop 'music', litter and filth. The second was a mere beatnik's doss-house. The third had begun with the aim of being long term and self-supporting and some hard work had been done but that was in the past for personality clashes had reduced the members to sulking, squabbling factions. The kitchen garden was a mass of nettles and food was tinned junk from a travelling shop. Money was from an inheritance. Much of the time was spent writing beautiful articles about the joys of communal life which were published in a magazine. While I was there they were discussing what to do with a field they had paid a farmer to plough. Some, who believed that eco-disaster would shortly bring a raising of temperatures, were for planting palm trees. Others, who believed a new ice age imminent, preferred pines. By contrast, a Buddhist community, which had no social idealism pretensions but got on with its Buddhism, was a model of cooperation. Housework, which caused the secular communards such anguish, was done quickly and cheerfully. The Buddhists also scored by being the only people I met who taught effective meditation free of charge. The other meditation tuition centres I investigated were quite simply rackets as were nearly all the fringe religions, the natural healing places and the consciousness-raising places. Equally money-grubbing or ego-tripping was the flood of books etc. with elves, gnomes, King Arthur type heroes, pre-Raphaelite type heroines, talking rabbits etc. Pretentious rubbish! The attempted revival of pagan religion based squarely on Nature and as a counter to scientific abuse, which I still hope to see one day, was a squalid farce. If I met a hundred self-styled pagans 98 of them were interested in money, power, thrills rather than Nature. My attempts at interesting conversations with alternative people usually got nowhere. There was hardly anyone with a broad approach to life and ideas. So frequently I met people with monotone voices and one-track minds who had concentrated all their energies into one temporary obsession. It was not unusual to meet someone who was 'heavily into' flying saucers one month, anarchism the next and primal scream therapy the month after. Wholefood shops varied enormously and still do. The test of a good wholefood shop is whether it sells organically grown vegetables. To arrange supplies of these means a lot of work and there's not much money in it. The racket shops, and they're the majority, tend to sell mainly packaged, exotic products from the Third World. The producers, who do most of the work, get only a fraction of the selling price. Last winter I visited six wholefood shops and in each free range eggs cost more than at nearby ordinary shops, yet the ordinary shops all paid full rents and rates, unlike some of the wholefood places. The wholefood shop nearest to me at the moment charges for a jar of marmalade (a wholefood) almost double what Harrods charges.

As for alternative occupations I saw in an alternative magazine about two years ago a survey of people who had settled in Pembrokeshire to escape the rat race and there was a breakdown on how they supported themselves. There was the usual abundance of potters, handloom weavers and candle makers but those engaged in agriculture, in a predominantly agricultural area, were conspicuous by their absence. It's

too much like hard work. Similarly how many of the alternative workshops that exist in cities produce items of general practical use such as simple sturdy furniture or warm, durable clothes rather than mock Olde Englishe furniture, fishermen's smocks or gorgeous candles? Is producing expensive fripperies for wealthy trendies really an alternative to the capitalist mentality or is it an exquisite offshoot of it?

A word about local conservation groups. The ones I've met have consisted almost entirely of hypocrites. They're not in favour of conservation in general, only in conservation of their own locality and they'll cheerfully foul up someone else's if there's money or convenience in it. I once attended a meeting called to protest at the proposed Archway Road widening. It was for local folk only which meant that no-one had to come more than half a mile, yet the majority came by car. One young man, having spoken eloquently about the horrors of possible vehicle noise under his windows, roared off into the night on his souped-up Japanese motor cycle. About a month ago I was in an area of North Bucks where a third London airport may be built. There were posters everywhere - 'No Third London Airport Here' - but not, you'll notice, no third London airport anywhere. If it is finally built elsewhere they'll cheerfully use it. I once studied Ecology and Conservation at university level but abandoned it because it had the same deadening attitude towards the natural world as sociology has towards the social world - namely reducing everything to jargon, statistics and concepts. Also the lecturer, although warning in his lectures against the dangers of consumerism, used the fees to help maintain a high level of consumerism.

Finally a few words about other social phenomena of recent years. Is the segregation of the sexes and suspicion and hostility between them really a step forward? Why would it be sexist if, say, a British Museum professor refused women admittance to his archaeological display considering that I was assured, by 'progressive' people of both sexes, that it was not sexist for a local women's group to refuse me admittance to their archaeological display? Is not 'positive discrimination' in favour of blacks as practised in America not quite simply racial discrimination just as much as the negative discrimination against blacks which used to be the norm? I'm against Mary Whitehouse type puritanism, but is the making and showing of a porn film at the climax of which a wretched Latin American prostitute has her throat cut really a step forward in sexual liberation? What sort of topsy-turvy 'freedoms' are these? In CNT Spain anyone who made such a film or anyone whose idea of 'freedom' was going around



ARTHUR MOYSE

"He's a pacifist, but he's not a fanatic about it"

seducing young children, would have been taken out and shot. In those days revolutionaries believed in freedom and responsibility, the two things being based on natural morality. Nowadays many self-styled rebels and 'progressives' believe that anything goes so long as it helps to *épater le bourgeois* and so jaded have people become it doesn't even do that.

Responsibility and natural morality don't mean a thing today. Almost everything fine has become lost in a great sea of consumerism, self-gratification and pseudo-sophistication. In industrialised lands there's no longer any untainted class or group to try to lead society out of the mire as there was in old Spain. Well over a century ago Bakunin concluded that the northern European industrialised masses had been too warped by capitalism and statism to be the instrument in removing them. Basically I believe that the vast majority of people, whether rulers or ruled, reactionaries or rebels, male or female, black or white, young or old, who grow up in or are in considerable contact with modern, industrial, bureaucratic, consumerist, sophisticated society become so warped and corrupted by it as to be past redemption. One has to go very far indeed from the centres of modernity nowadays to meet people who have natural dignity or wholeness. As far as Cambodian villagers or Afghan mountain folk, the sort of people who are napalm fodder in the struggles of the great powers, struggles which the industrialised masses either support or are indifferent to. What is long overdue is a simplification.

IS THIS THE ALTERNATIVE?

The most likely simplifying agent so far as Britain is concerned is the Rocket Corps of the Soviet army. Or can you see an outcome other than war to the power struggles, hatreds, boredom, greed, frustration, folly and hypocrisy which exist? Many people think that nuclear war means the end of the human race or even of all life on Earth. This is because they still hold the 1950s idea that nuclear war would be global and would necessarily involve the blotting out of whole nations with gigantic H bombs. Nowadays, however, many politicians talk about 'if war comes', while some military chiefs regard it as absolutely inevitable. Twenty years ago both politicians and military men believed, quite sincerely, that nuclear weapons held by two power blocs made war between them so unlikely as to be hardly worth thinking about. In other words, then they believed in nuclear deterrence and now they don't. What has caused this change of view? Firstly there are no longer two clear cut super powers with a rough balance of terror. When

the EEC, China or some other rotten power set-up becomes stronger, one of the current blocs (most probably the Warsaw Pact) may think the others are ganging up on it and decide to put in a pre-emptive strike. China and America have moved closer in recent years, so Soviet fears have some justification. The second reason results from technical developments over the last two decades or so. For instance, the existence of the hot line means that rulers may be tempted to practice extreme brinkmanship but they might miscalculate. The fact that Hiroshima and Nagasaki are now more populous and productive cities than they were before they were A-bombed shows that an area can recover from a nuclear attack. Some people have argued that the number of devices used in a nuclear war might not exceed the number tested to date and as modern devices are generally less 'dirty' the once predicted worldwide clouds of totally lethal fallout wouldn't occur. The main technical reason concerns improvements in rocketry. In order to hit an airfield in, say, Norfolk, an old-type rocket would have needed a warhead capable of blotting out half the county as its inaccuracy meant it could only hit the general area of the airfield. A modern rocket would land slap bang on target and as the aim of war is imposing your will on the enemy with the minimum of violence and not the maximum it follows that agricultural and residential areas would be largely unscathed. Or so goes the latest thinking on the subject and it seems logical.

It is ironic that most ordinary people today who think at all about nuclear matters (and most people don't because their minds are bogged in a mire of consumerism and self-gratification) direct their energies to worries about possible accidents to nuclear power stations whereas 20 years ago nuclear disarmament was the issue. When our rulers believed in the deterrent there were loud demands for nuclear disarmament. Now that our rulers no longer believe in deterrence the nuclear disarmament movement is a shadow of its former self. Rulers aren't always wrong.

This issue dodging on the part of radicals is part of the general malaise. People won't face what is looming before them. They think that what they regard as good times, i.e. the present whirl of consumerism and self-indulgence will go on and on. They fail to see that it is their tawdry version of what constitutes a good time that will inevitably bring the bad time. Whether survivors of what will be the worst catastrophe in history will think and behave any differently only time can tell.

Jeff Robinson

Whose camp is the ball in?

THERE are those who would claim that my parish in west London has more than its fair share of national heroes, be it Christie and Heath, the mass murderers, the Vicar of Stiffkey, the Prostitutes' Padre who climaxed his career by being eaten by lions in a Blackpool cage, Joe Batton and his primeval pre-war gang of thugs, Jack Doyle, the Irish nightingale known to the world of commercial boxing as The Horizontal Heavyweight or on and on for the list of local boys who made the big time in the News of the World goes back two hundred years when gallows stood on Shepherd's Bush Green and a lilted dance at the end of the hangman's rope was worthy of a paragraph in The Gentleman's Magazine. They may rot in hell with the slum landlord Rachman or illuminate heaven with the Vicar of Stiffkey, whose only crime in the eyes of the Lords of the Established Church was that he delighted to go a-whoring in Soho, but no-one can deny it made good reading with the Sunday beer and the pudding. On a good day and if one were fortunate one might spy, and I mean no ill-conceived jesting pun, our only ex-member of the nation's

nobility Anthony Blunt. Elderly and stopping one would hope that he now moves forgotten through the mob but the Guinness drinkers in Notting Hill's Irish pub gazed at the old man with sympathy over their beer glasses as words drifted in that old Sir Tony our local Falstaff had been driven out of the next door cinema by a butch mob screaming "Get out you rotten old traitor!" and cutting remarks such as that, instead of watching *La Cage Aux Folles* for which they had paid the Gate's high admission.

It's all a matter of questions Tony as to why his friendly employee tried to walk on air from the window of a high rise flat to the still unresolved matter of Brian Sewell the private art dealer who, while employed by Christie's, the international art dealer, claimed that he catalogued non-existent names onto unknown paintings such as Jan Louel - Dutch slang for pents, get it! And Lawrence Bastard in a 1962 catalogue as a name for an unknown painting because "Oh God, it's a bastard", et it! Or the flower painting by Van Essabel in a 1964 catalogue, get it!

I have no strong views as to who cons who in the hedonistic world of expensive pleasures and Christie's as with professional wrestlers, so the Fancy inform me, will settle the result, win, lose or draw in the civilised atmosphere of the dressing room, but poor old Sir Tony, and I still bend the knee to his ex title should he pass the window of the pub, must wonder and worry which of his associates will next go ape in the public prints and from the grave comes the hand of Tomás Harris via the Louise Whitford Gallery. Harris went the way of all flesh in 1964 in the orthodox 'mysterious car crash'. In 1975 Sir Tony penned the introduction for the catalogue of Harris' Courtauld exhibition and described Harris as "one of the most complete human beings I have ever known", which you know and I know, comrade, is a meaningless compliment, but the question is now being hawked around that the body in the grave was the Fifth Man.

I doubt it. It is true that during the war he worked for the war office and operated in Spain where it is claimed he hindered the Nazi intelligence. That he paid for the education of Philby's children but that would not make him 'the paymaster of the Philby ring'. It is said that Burgess recruited him into the British Secret Service, that he knew Anthony Blunt and that he lived in the Earls Court Road and you cannot damn a man for that trinity of errors. I once knew a woman who lived in Walthamstow and no-one suggested that she be stood against the wall of the local betting shop and stoned to death because of that but only for tipping a rank outsider to win the Derby, as the result of a dream. There are geographical areas forever associated with individuals and no-one would walk across the Yorkshire moors without thinking of Heathcliff annoying the neighbours by calling for Cathy or Sackville Street off Piccadilly peopled with the sad ghosts of Michale Arlen's lost generation of beautiful people. Dover Street at the cultured dernier of the Royal Academy forever sacred to the memory of Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster and the Drones Club or the Whitechapel High Street as the pleasure ground for the miserable Jack the Ripper. Hemingway's Left Bank or Oscar Wilde's Cafe Royal are places forever fixed in time because of the perverse personality of some minor artist of the pen, the brush or the murdering knife. So it is fitting that Blunt's dead friend Tomás Harris should have his grave yawning exhibition at the Louise Whitford Gallery at 25 Lowndes St, W.1. There, behind St. George's Hospital, bannered and held by a staff sit-in and bounded by Knightsbridge's Harrods and Chelsea and the prancing world of the Sloan Square Rangers, lies the dead world of the young Evelyn Waugh. Here it was that the Bright Young Things spent out gentle pleasure seeking lives with Pont Street as their heart and hub and, comrades, let no-one stand in smug judgement on them for like us they were the creatures of their time. There in this world of lost pleasures and abstract wealth the houses stand in all their graveyard grandeur, peopled by clerks and security men, and there in this abandoned world of white painted facades where once the Bright Young Things ran screaming into their sports cars and into the Waugh novels, is the Louise Whitford Gallery and the paintings of the late Tomás Harris, the friend of Blunt and of Burgess and of Philby. Discovered in a Fulham junk shop four years ago they hang upon the walls of this small and pleasant gallery and what can one say of these sad rip offs of the style of van Gogh except that they are no more than the competent work of any Sunday Painter who is unable to express in his own work the values he admires in others. But the call came from the grave and we made the journey and the only question Tony that will never be answered is why Harris' paintings ended up four years ago as junk in a Fulham junk shop. But if trivia is the order of the day then let us follow the Town and his strike picket abusing frau and there let us plunge into the well lit catacombs of the Tate Gallery for a worthy and major exhibition of minor work Abstraction: Towards a New Art. Painting 1910-1920. 'In the main, the exhibition concentrates on the early years of abstract painting in the years between about 1908 and 1921 and it stops at precisely the moment when that evolution was essentially complete, having its own distinctive identity', says the Man but when these minor paintings, as with the Royal Academy Post-Impressionist exhibition, fill up wall space after wall space then we are forced to accept and reject an art movement that imposed an unnecessary discipline on the artist, not in the choice of subject matter

but how the subject matter should be painted. They talk of an abstract interpretation of an idea or an ideal but divorce the abstract from the emotional subject and all that is left is no more than a mass or a mess, according to the talent of the artist, of pretty brush strokes. The masters are there both Braque and Picasso but all the camp followers, as with every trivial school from philosophy, politics to the dirty joke make their impact on the many headed Establishment by the force of their own personalities and not by their skill. What sums up, nay, makes me sad, about this worthy and enjoyable exhibition is contained on page 125 of the Appendix to the catalogue for column 2 begins, "1916 Marc killed in action." and closes at the foot of the page with, "1920. Moscow: Establishment of Institute of Artistic Culture. End of Civil War." and in an exhibition given over to a new art ranging from 1910 to 1920 a world war and a revolution could have been completely overlooked by the artists concerned. The artists abstract and otherwise made their mark, their claim or their protest but it would seem not in the work on display.

To appreciate how trivial by its unnecessary discipline this style of painting is, one has but to go along to the National Gallery's Second Sight exhibition wherein Turners Dido building Carthage and Claude's Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba are hung side by side. Two major painters using the same background but each giving his own interpretation. The subject matter is of importance or unimportance only according to our imposed or chosen relationship to it but remove the subject matter and all you have is a pleasant pattern of ruled lines or brush strokes. I drank of the sherry, gazed at Claude's Queen of Sheba and Sarah Jane Checkland the Press Officer and explained to Michael Wilson who organised this two painting exhibition that Turner had flawed his painting by giving Disney rays to the sun in the centre of the painting strap me for a villain and received the hint that the audio visual film would be altered so that the sun would not fill the final frame and listened with kindly understanding to Sir Michael Levey the Director of the National Gallery, while standing together in splendid isolation sherry glasses at the high port, as he explained to me this apparent obsession of gallery directors to order the cleaning of anything that is flat, two dimensional and is marked with coloured paint and I forgave him for he is a good man in error but while there is an official restoration department I doubt if anything can be done about it but comrades if you ever see anyone with a B.A., a bucket of hot water and a packet of soap powder walking towards a water colour painting or the beer pumps in Ward's Irish pub then it is a time to All Be Upstanding for the sit in. Meanwhile over to you Tony over.

Arthur Moyses

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ANARCHY IS A CUBIST PAINTING

This is the second in our occasional series of quotations from non-anarchist literature. The passage is from The Women's Room, by Marilyn French, chapter 20.

..... "The conflict I see as basic is between spontaneous and free feelings and feelings requiring order, imposed order, structures, habits..."

"Order is ugly in the face of feeling," Mira said fervently... "But on the other hand, everything is order. What else is there? There are simply different kinds. I can't conceive of such a thing as anarchy."

"Anarchy," Beb said to her, "is a cubist painting."

.....
"It's true that anarchy is simply a variation of order. You know, gangs of black-jacketed motorcyclists tearing up little towns may be a horror, but that isn't anarchy; each of those gangs has a leader, each of those towns does, too. It's a conflict of two different orders. Most threats about anarchy are fears of an order different from the one presently constituted. I'll admit that it's easier to live with one order than with two or three different ones, but not necessarily if the one order is a totalitarian state, say. Anyway, anarchy - I looked it up - ... means without ruler. That's hard to envision politically. But if we move to another discipline, we can imagine it.

.....
"Think about a traditional painting - of a table, say. Most of what you see is the top, the things piled on it, the cloth, or a bowl of fruit, a vase of flowers, the bread and cheese - you know. Say it's a painting of the entire table, not just a still life. If there's a long cloth, you may not even see the legs. Or take another example - a building. You see the facade: you don't see the back unless you walk around it, and if it's a working building, chances are the back isn't attractive, it has sliding garage doors and ramps, it's the receiving and warehouse part of the building. But even if you see the back, you never see the foundation, the basement, the part that holds everything else up. Well, that's our usual view of society.

.....
"We are aware of the people at the top - in our present society and in those of the past. We know about the wealthy, the powerful, the famous. They make the rules, their standards and manners and styles set the tone. It's as though they are the flower the whole plant was designed to produce. But in fact, the flower is only one phase of the process that is a plant, and the purpose of the plant is to endure and reproduce. Production of a flower is only one step in the process. The stem, the supports of the table, the foundation pillars of a building are also essential to the whole. So are the roots, the feet of the table, the basement walls. These are like the lower classes of a society: they are necessary, but they don't get much attention, they are not often seen as beautiful, they are taken for granted.

"But in cubist painting, everything is important, everything is paid attention to. Even the underside of the table, the insides of desk drawers, the space around the table - each thing is seen and seen in the round, each is shown in its essentiality, each is given room to exist. What dominates the painting is not the top, the flower, but the whole, the design of the whole. Well, society could be like that. With laws designed for people rather than for property, we could have a government without a single dominating ruler. There is no single thing in a cubist painting that dominates the whole, yet the whole coheres. It might be possible that each group, each person, could be granted its own inherent autonomy, its space. The foundations would be admitted to be as important as the top."

"If there were a top," Grete said.

"Well, there will always be a top if it is a table, a facade in a building, people who are better known than others. But each would only have its own space and would stay in it."

"But in cubist painting," Mira argued, "things don't stay in

their own space. That's one of its main points. Each little section infringes on every other around it, everything overlaps."

"Is that right?" Ben gave a delighted gasp. "That's even better! Because we do violate, intrude upon, each other's space all the time - life would be awfully sterile and boring if we didn't. We do it in speech and in action - we do it when we touch each other. So we learn to violate each other's space a little, but we know when to return to our own. There is contact without conflict."

Clarissa shook her head. "I'd like to believe such a thing is possible, Ben, but I can't imagine eliminating conflict."

"We don't want to eliminate it. It's a wonderful thing. We grow by it. We just learn to contain it. We learn to jiggle!"

Clarissa was thinking. "Yes, okay. But isn't that what the human race has been trying to do for centuries? Games, sports, debates - that sort of thing. Provide sublimation for aggressiveness?"

"Yes," Val shot in, "but all the while it has been piously mouthing that aggression is wrong, it has been exalting the hero, the warrior, the man who kills."

"That's true." Thoughtfully said, but Clarissa was not persuaded.

"You think its time we got our shit together and stopped being moral schizophrenics," Val said to Ben. "A man after my own heart!"

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