

anarchist fortnightly  
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FIFTY PENCE

"A good politician under democracy is quite as unthinkable as an honest burglar."

H.L. Mencken

(1880-1956)

## JOKE OF THE MONTH

### "Britain is the most honest country in the world" - Portillo

Whether he believes all the things he told the Southampton students, or not, one thing is certain: Portillo's excuse when apologising later that these were remarks made 'off the cuff', a mere slip of the tongue, in a heady student atmosphere, etc., doesn't hold water since it later transpires that he had made exactly the same speech only a few days before!

Apart from using 'unparliamentary language' and calling him a liar, much more damaging surely for that ever-smiling, ambitious young

pretender, is to conclude that he is rather stupid. After all, he must be as aware as any reader of the 'serious' press that this country is riddled with corruption from top to bottom.

The dossier of corruption at the top (quite apart from tax loopholes, offshore accounts, bonuses paid in gold bars on which no tax is paid - you name them!) is now mind-boggling.

If only *Freedom* could afford a full-time researcher/investigator, or just somebody to classify and file all the cuttings this writer makes every

fortnight, one could present an overwhelming condemnation of a basically corrupt system.

This writer can confirm that capitalism is corrupt at the bottom levels as well. Very many years ago as part of his studies he worked (unpaid) in the design office of a firm of structural engineering consultants in Victoria Street in London. A whole number of the staff were engaged in designing the steel girders, etc., required for a major building, and preparing a schedule of quantities of steel on which to tender - for the benefit of the layman that is to put in a price for the job. About a fortnight later this greenhorn found out that all this work was being done to lose the contract since the steel 'ring' had decided in advance whose turn it was to get the contract! And later when yours truly was working for contractors on railway work, the same racket was operated by the contractors. The only thing one can say in the railway's favour was that they generally selected smaller

*(continued on page 2)*

## WE SAY: STRIP THE EXPERTS!\*

*Freedom* readers well know that we do our best to debunk the so-called experts in all fields. The trouble today is that the media never admit to having made a mistake - and those like us at *Freedom* haven't a system to file away what the experts say so that we can, when events prove them wildly out, prove them wrong. The takeover by BMW of the Rover company is a perfect example. *The Independent's* 'City Road' financial feature (27th January) had these confident remarks about the non-viability of Rover for any buyer of its shares. The heading 'Rover's no longer a dog, but who would buy?':

"But no one should race for their cheque books in anticipation of an impending sale by British Aerospace. The dog of a company that BAe picked up from the government in 1988 may have taken some impressive strides but it is still some way off pedigree status.

Rover probably made somewhere in the region of £40 million last year. But it will not be worth anything remotely resembling its £1.3 billion book value until profits are running at four to five times that level ...

But who would buy it? Given Rover's uneven track record, a flotation cannot be ...

are not many cash-rich trade predators. That leaves the Japanese car maker Honda - the most obvious choice since it has collaborated with Rover since 1979 and already owns a 20% stake.

Talks are clearly taking place about Honda increasing its shareholding, but the Japanese do not envisage paying much for the privilege. They may need Rover, and like Land-Rover. But do they really want the brownfield sites at Longbridge and Cowley?

With Honda's help, Rover has come a remarkable distance in a short time, renewing its entire range with winning models in under eight years. Likewise its model development, at least to the end of the decade, rests on collaboration with the Japanese. BAe can sit tight a while. The last thing it wants to do is sell Rover short."

It reads almost like a fortune teller's prediction, but we think it worthwhile using our space just to expose the phoniness of these 'experts'. After all, only a few days later BMW paid a massive £850 million for the shares that BAe had bought from the Thatcher government in the late 1980s for £156 million. The price paid

\* We recommend a *Freedom* Press title with the same name by Brian Martin, *Strip the Experts*, ISBN 0 900384 63 8, £1.95.

by the German company included taking over a £1,000 million debt.

That's not all the story. One of Thatcher's 'experts' years ago was a Mr Young, a well known businessman, who became a minister overnight without needing to bother about the electorate. He was given a life peerage by the Iron Lady and he it was who negotiated the original sale of Rover to BAe for £156 million with the assistance of a 'sweetener' of some £35 million. Only a fortnight ago Lord Young appeared on television justifying the original deal and the 'sweetener' he had sanctioned, just a few days before Portillo was, with hand on heart, declaring that all foreigners were corrupt and only the Britishers were angels without wings! 'Sweeteners' does sound nicer than 'corruption' don't you think?



JOKE OF THE MONTH

(continued from page 1)

contractors who had years of experience of quality railway work. Nevertheless, the contracts were shared out between the contractors simply by the device of deciding among themselves who would put in the lowest tender, and so get the job!

At a much lower level, this writer as the contractor's employee and agent-engineer would be assaulted by suppliers offering cash 'sweeteners' for materials, equipment, services, etc. His reaction, not as a saint but as an anarchist, was to refuse but to inform his Tory boss and also as a good reason for demanding a salary increase!

To suggest, as does the Conservative-dominated Commons Public Accounts Committee in what *The Guardian* (28th January) describes as an "unprecedented ... damaging catalogue of public impropriety, fraud and mismanagement", that "standards in public life have slipped in the past two years" is, in our opinion, an optimistic assessment of capitalism as a system which can be anything but corrupt.

It exists, by the force of law and the force behind the law, to maintain a society of the *haves* and the *have nots*: of a small minority who are *disgustingly* rich, and of a large minority who are *shamefully* poor.

Today mass communications make it impossible to hide the unequal society, the top level corruption, the waste, the scandals, from the growing 'underclass'. Anyway, nobody believes the government's optimism about unemployment, trade, 'prosperity'. Yes, a little bit of 'prosperity' for the time being: Tesco, Sainsbury and the others are cutting each other's throats and if you look around you will find bargains. They are worried as their profits go down for their shareholders, but next year their tax bill will be that much lower, so the Chancellor will have to confess that revenue from the Sainsburys *et alia* has dropped and you will have to pay more tax - direct or indirect, to balance the books, which means that Sainsbury's *et alia* will in due course have to up their prices to balance their books.

But who in the long term pays to balance the books? As we write, the main headline in *The Guardian* (9th February) reads: "Tory taxes favour rich, says study" with a sub-head "Poorest £3 a week poorer since 1985".

As we are at pains to point out in issue after issue of *Freedom*, no government Lib-Lab-Con will want to, or succeed in, changing the redistribution of wealth. To do so not only means taxing the rich "until the pips squeak" (a policy attributed to [now Lord] Healey when he was Chancellor - and which he significantly denied), it also means that a majority of the wage/salary 'slaves' in between the rich and the poor must accept a lower standard of living - that is materially speaking, but with a lot more leisure to enjoy life and even to enjoy parenthood, not to mention the benefits to their

offspring!

Now, you non-anarchists, you Labour supporting, good-intentioned leftists: please give us your replies to what are, for anarchists, fundamental questions. The latest survey (*Guardian*, 9th February) shows that the richest get richer and the poor ... (which includes we 'oldies') get poorer. Surely we knew all this without having to have the experts tell us. What the 'experts' don't tell us is what we should do to get rid of the exploiters - that is the rich - off our backs. Perhaps the 'experts' are all in favour, possibly being themselves among the privileged.

Anarchists have no simple solutions to our privileged, unfair society. One thing we are certain about: the idea that once in four or five years, putting a cross against the name of a person wanting to represent your interests is the double-cross - the badge - of slavery. Nothing will improve until all those of us who in a capitalist society are made to be dependent either on the whim of an employer or of the state. Anarchists demand that every human being has a right to life irrespective of who claims to own the land that belongs to all of us. More so today than ever, when the capitalist European Union nations are paying farmers hundreds of millions not to cultivate arable land. In this country alone a million acres are being subsidised to grow weeds! What are the homeless thousands doing in their cardboard boxes when a million acres are being subsidised to go to seed? For goodness sake, homeless of Britain, wake up!

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FOCUS ON ... TRADE AND AID

— PART 2 —

Mechanisms of Domination

The 'Aid' Business

There follows an extract from *L'Occident et la guerre contre les Arabes - Reflexion sur le nouvel ordre mondial* shortly to be published by Harmattan.

The post Gulf War period has brought a new concept to the light of day, that of the right to 'non-interference', firstly applied to the Iraqi Kurds and then extended, in a selective way of course, to other situations. The humanitarian pretext makes a bad job of hiding the less pleasant motives. During the last century colonialisation followed an almost unchanging pattern: missionaries were sent in who stirred up such disorder that inevitably one or other of them came a cropper, which allowed troops to be sent in to 'protect' the missionaries, and accessorially bring 'civilisation' to the savages.

Today the missionaries have been joined by humanitarian aid workers and the right to 'non-interference'. Conditions are laid down which prevent Third World countries from laying down the foundations for a real development programme, and then we intervene to 'encourage' them to develop along lines which conform to the model of the industrialised countries.

There is a veritable business in 'aid' to the Third World whose mystifying function boils down to helping the rich in the rich countries.

One fact is particularly suspect: the enormous sums given under the name of 'aid' by the international organisations escape fully a cost/profit analysis. The financing of 'aid' is not linked to observable results on the ground. Thus Graham Hancock in *The Nabobs of Poverty* writes: "We have set up a tribe of well paid men and women who are irredeemably cut off from the daily realities of poverty and global under-development that their work is supposed to relieve. These over-compensated aid bureaucrats demand - and get - a standard of living far superior to what they would get if they worked, for example, in industry or business in their own countries." But he says their projects are not submitted to the kind of evaluation considered normal in the world of economics. The bureaucrats of Third World aid are never called upon to account for their competence by the results they obtain.

Development is a veritable industry which answers to different achievement criteria than those which are normal. Its role is not to produce results. This industry, financed by public aid in the rich countries to promote 'development' in the poor countries, employs hundreds of thousands of the best paid people in the world who enjoy inflated salaries which

guarantee them a privileged lifestyle.

The Council of Europe's Social Development Fund

The CESDF strayed somewhat from its intended purpose - to resettle or absorb refugees in Europe - last year when it started generating profits from money markets and giving generous rewards to staff. The whole thing was a mess but the governor was singled out by the auditors as one of the main beneficiaries of the gravy train:

- In 1991, his undisclosed salary for the whole year was paid in advance.
- His huge travel expenses for three years were reimbursed on the basis of an annual travel expenses account filled out by himself, including in 1991 seven trips to Brussels for no apparent reason.
- Withdrawals of hundreds of thousands of pounds were made from the pension fund for executives with ten years service.
- He set up offices in Brussels and Rome without approval.

Public aid to development is financed by money collected in the form of taxes and then given to official organisations. It corresponds to a flow of 45 to 60 million dollars a year. That may seem a lot but is insignificant on a global scale: France earmarks 0.72% of her annual GNP for aid, the US 0.21% ... the EU spends 20 billion dollars on stocking food surpluses produced by European agriculture ...

But if looked upon from a different angle, any business which had an annual income of \$60 billion to spend, a considerable sum, would be one of the most powerful multinationals.

With regard to private aid the waste is just as considerable. In 1985 the Hunger Project received donations totalling \$6,981,000 of which \$210,775 went to organisations engaged in relief to famine-struck countries. The rest was spent in the US on 'recruitment activities', on 'communication, information and education' services, on 'management and sundries' and on 'fund collection'. Just the telephone bill swallowed nearly half a million dollars. This led an African refugee to comment: "How is it that every American dollar arrives with twenty Americans attached to it?" (B.E. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*, OUP, Oxford, 1986).

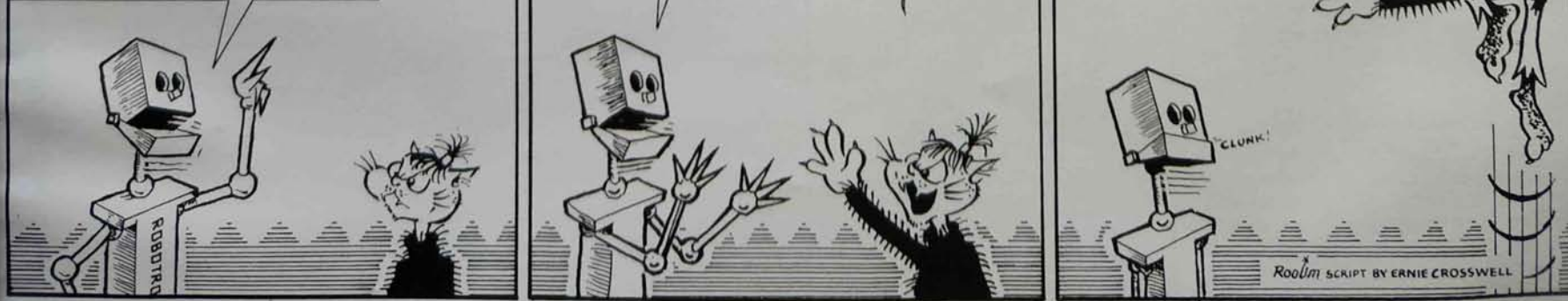
The international business is thus the opportunity for a formidable monopoly of private funds. It is ignored, for example, that

(continued on page 3)

**WILD CAT** Forget territorialism and militarism !!!!!!! !!!  
Ignore oppression for gender, age, or ethnic origin !!!  
Pay no heed to censorship and anti-education laws !!!  
Do not worry about bureaucracy !!!  
Never mind the Seven Deadly Sins !!!

The enemy of mankind is capitalism !!!!!!!

So we know how it took hold... God is a capitalist !!!





# Spain's bad apples

If life follows fiction it does so in a slightly shabby, if politically picaresque, way.

In 1979, when Manuel Vasquez Montalbán won the Planeta Prize (the Spanish Booker Prize), he got it for his novel *Los Mares del Sur*. This novel, known in English as *Southern Seas*, was about the murder of a rich Catalan building contractor who had made his money under Franco by supplying building materials. He ended up by being stabbed and dumped dead on a building site – killed by the brother of his leftie girlfriend after he got her into trouble.

A crime of passion, almost in good taste by Spanish standards!

Last week's killing of a leading Galician industrialist, his wife, daughter and their maid, was less tasteful. The murdered businessman, David Fernandez Grande, had begun as a lorry driver and ended up as Galicia's biggest granite exporter. The killings occurred after £100,000 had been extorted, in what seems to have been an attempt by the extortionists to cover their tracks.

What is supposed to have shocked the Spanish nation is that the men detained for the killings are two serving local police officers. Last week, Manuel Lopez, the local governor and chief of police, told the nation that the officers under arrest are "rotten apples, with bad disciplinary records" and this did not reflect on the integrity of the nation's police.

## Socialist face of corruption

Spaniards may have been more inclined to accept this if they had not been being bombarded with bad apples in almost every area of Spanish institutional life for the best part of a decade of Socialist government. It is significant that Michael Portillo, the right-wing Chief Secretary of the Treasury, is the son of Spanish refugees from the Civil War period. When he made his outburst about corrupt foreigners last week, he may have had Spanish society in mind, where he still had family.

Of course corruption existed under General Franco, but the opportunities were perhaps more limited. A character in Montalbán's novel, the Marquess of Munt, says: "After all, the whole economic miracle of the Franco regime was built on bluff. We all went in for speculating with the only asset we had: land. As there's nothing beneath the land, there wasn't much point in preserving it. Ours is a very unfortunate country. A lot of land, but very little else."

Perhaps it helps that today Spain is a more open society, but evidence of corruption under the social-democratic regime has been massive. There have been many 'get rich quick' types who have advanced at break-neck speed from rags to riches through their links with the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE). Juan Guerra, brother of a Party favourite Alfonso Guerra, was a notorious success story, already flogged to death in *Freedom*, but in more than a decade of Spanish socialism there have been more than a few frogs kissed by the regime only to become princes and princesses. Caretakers and the like who, thanks to their Party connections, became millionaires almost overnight.

In 1979, before the Socialist government won power, Señor Montalbán had another character in his book declare: "An alienated capitalist won't have much chance in the social-democratic future that faces us". About that time enterprising salesmen were distributing door-to-door adulterated olive oil among the poor in Spanish cities and towns. The oil, which was said to be of 'good flavour, but poisonous', claimed many victims.

Today, under the Socialist system, the

## Correction

*Freedom*, 5th February, page 4, column 3. The quotation from Luis Buñuel's autobiography should end: "... predictions claim that there'll be 30 million people living in these slums by the year 2000". (That is, 30 million living in the shanty towns around Mexico City, not 30,000 as printed.)

beneficiaries may be less the Brechtian Mack-the-Knife type 'Cheap Jack' salesmen, and more the hanger-on, the functionary, the party hack, with a political appointment or a bit of influence to peddle. One does not begin to describe a society by saying it is corrupt – in the sense that all political systems fall short of the values and ideals which they claim to be pursuing. The trouble in Spain of the Socialist administration is that corruption and 'trampas' (fiddles) seem to have become a taken-for-granted part of Spanish life.

The latest star to become a falling star has been Mario Conde, until last December head of the banking group Banesto. Conde was for two years seen as a bright whizz-kid, lunching with Alfonso Guerra and Benegas, two big Socialist Party figures, as late as last November. In December the Bank of Spain had to take over responsibility for running Banesto – a clean-up is now in hand reckoned to cost at least 140,000 million pesetas (£700 million). Andreu Misse in *El Pais* last month argued that Conde's major error "was to use the bank to achieve a social position". And he adds: "The style of Conde doesn't fit into the world of normal banking. Bit by bit he fell into a model of high risk banking which blew up in his hands on 28th December".

What do you think this product of more than a decade of socialist-democracy had to say for himself? – bearing in mind that it will cost at least £700 million to clean up the mess he left at Banesto. Why, he said on the day his bank went to the wall: "Don't worry about me, because I'll be back as a multi-millionaire in no time".

Montalbán was wrong, Mario Conde is a classic Brechtian figure. Did not Mrs Mac Heath say "Why rob a bank if you can own a bank?" But if these kinds of sharks are being reincarnated after well over a decade of social-democracy, what does it tell us about social-democracy?

## 'General strike'

When the Spanish labour movement organised a one-day 'general strike' on 27th January, they used Mario Conde on their propaganda posters saying: "More than 500,000 million pesetas – we'll all have to pay for it". The strike, which was supported by the anarcho-syndicalist CGT as well as the major unions – the UGT and the CCOO – was a protest against the government labour laws and against Spanish unemployment, which at 23% is the highest in the European Union and double the EU average.

The response to the strike call was substantial, but probably less strong than the massive action on 14th December 1988. Unemployment is higher now, yet it was a better display of unity than anything the TUC

in Britain could mount, I suspect.

The campaign was bitter with the press and media accusing the unions of being anti-democratic and anti-parliamentarian. While the unions claimed the media were promoting "a hysterical campaign against their democratic rights and the right to strike". One picket was killed during the strike, others were injured and some arrested.

## Spanish amoebas

The problem for the Socialist government, which has to depend on support from other parties, is that many within the party support the union's position. Indeed, a headline in *El Pais* recently declared: "Guerristas and reformists fight for control of the party in a struggle without comparison". This shows a conflict between traditional socialists and modernisers within the party, at a time when the government has been bringing in policies like privatisation and harsh labour laws which has at least some surface similarities to the Thatcher government in Britain.

Among yesterday's communists in the 'United Left' Party (Izquierda Unida) there are also signs of a rift. The 'New Left' tendency within the IU put out a statement last month through their leader Nicolas Sartorius, ex-deputy (MP) and ex-veteran communist. He condemned the 'social-liberalism' of the Socialist (PSOE) Party and the 'paleocomunismo' (Stone Age Communism) of the United Left Party. As a renovador, he argued that the 'dissipation' into radical militancy of Julio Anguita, General Co-ordinator of the IU, and the majority of the IU, is forcing the Socialist Government to form an alliance of the right – with the CiU (the Catalan Nationalists). Anguita, Pepe Gomez told me, started out as an anarchist.

I mention this to show that there have been, and continue to be, bitter divisions in all parties on the Spanish Left, and Right for that matter. Montalbán remarked on a fight between Leninists and non-Leninists at the 1978 Congress of the old Spanish Communist Party (PCE), in his book *Murder in the Central Committee*. There have been well publicised brawls in the Socialist Party, and a street fight that was televised between rival anarcho-syndicalists of the two CNTs in 1984.

In Catalonia, where Señor Montalbán was born, Jordi Pujol, the Catalan Prime Minister and the leader of the local nationalist party (CiU), also has his problems. The Catalans are notorious throughout Spain as the 'tight-arses' of the Peninsula; chiefly, it seems, because they insist on buying rounds rather than offering invitations (offering to pay the full bill for food, drink and entertainment) which all other self-respecting Spaniards do. The concept of round-buying encourages the mind of the accountant. Now Pujol, who has been demanding a 15% cut out of the Catalan income tax, is faced with a huge bill to rebuild Barcelona's Liceu Opera House which was burnt down on 31st January by a spark from a worker's blow-torch. Evidently despite their demand for greater autonomy the nationalists still expect the central government in Madrid to cough up for the reconstruction.

Tottering in the ruins of the Liceu last Monday was a lady breaking all the rules of political correctness by wearing a fur coat. Gesturing to the debris, she said: "This is what reduces me to tears. As soon as someone dies, the vultures move in. Now we can see that there are already vultures hovering in the ruins of the Liceu". That lady was the opera singer Victoria de los Angeles, and though she may have been referring to her rival diva Montserrat Caballé, who was present, it could apply to the Spanish Left in general following the death of Franco.

All the palaver over state subsidies, grants, patrimonio and the like, have had a corrosive effect on values and ideals. Not least of all in the ranks of the CNT and the anarcho-syndicalists. Since the death of

Franco the progressive parties in Spain resembled the money-grubbing relative might find in a novel by Balzac.

It has all been rather tasteless and shabby like the murders and extortion in Galicia. Manuel Montalbán describes the shift Franco to capitalism by getting his hands on a few landmarks of Barcelona: ugly poverty of the Barrio Chino had a part of history. It was completely different from the ugly, prefabricated poverty of the neighbourhood prefabricated by prefabricated speculators. It's better for poverty to be so rather than mediocre, he thought."

Market-place capitalism degrades and devalues much of what it touches. Galician murders, which may have something to do with the drugs trade, could just as well have been committed in the United States. Spain. Even Señor Montalbán's noir novels are a bit of a take-off of the earlier American novels by Chandler and Hammett.

But social-democracy subtly undermines standards and values, making people focus on hand-outs, subsidies and grants. In distributing favours, the social-democratic state creates an atmosphere which brings out the climber and the careerist in all of us, making us lose sight of what really matters

Brian Bamfo

## The 'Aid' Business

(continued from page 2)

the UNCHR is not an executive organisation – it collects funds from government members of the UN and then forwards the money to organisations on the ground. One organisation in Beirut thus bought material for which it paid triple the price from the intermediary of a fictitious company. The operation was worth \$500,000.

The international business is also clearly lucrative in itself. In 1986, during its annual session, the World Bank and the IMF held 700 'social events' in one week at a cost of \$10 million (*Washington Post* 28th September and 1st October 1986). This represented according to Graham Hancock, enough to treat 47 million children with xerophthalmia for one year: an illness caused by a lack of vitamin A which leaves 500,000 African and Asian children blind every year.

There is evidently no control over these institutions. The funds which feed them, and which we pay, are in the control of the managers of these organisations whose policies are laid out in confidential or secret documents, texts which are for limited circulation and meeting which take place in camera. Only insipid and vague texts are published. Everything is done to avoid public control. Employees are not allowed to communicate any information they are allowed access to.

The World Bank is probably the most impenetrable of the institutions involved. Even the governors are denied access to certain evaluations made by personnel concerning debatable projects and programmes. 'Internal documents' are not accessible to governors or the general public.

The documents prepared for the advisory administration are 'strictly confidential and non-communicable beyond their restricted field'. Only the US has stipulated that it will not give funds to bodies whose accounts it cannot verify.

One could say that if aid to the Third World was effective, if the institutions had resolved the problems for which they had been created, they would have had to disappear. On the contrary, they have grown and spread: 150 committees, sub-committees, sub-commissions and other UN working groups are concerned with the problems of the poor. In addition one should number some fifteen development institutions, each having its own budget and satellites – twenty in the case of the WHO, eighteen in the case of the OAF, ten with UNESCO and thirteen with UNDP.

Rene Berthier

# Raven 24

on

## Science – 1



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# 'Tammany Politics in Tameside'

Last year was an *annus horribilis* for Tameside Council Leader Roy Oldham. As the leader of one of the borough councils that comprise Greater Manchester, he was beset by scandals. The local press had revealed that the arm's-length care company Tameside Enterprises Ltd (TEL), which runs the council's twelve old folks homes, had run up debts of £2 million since its inception in 1990. There were charges of bungling incompetence and allegations that the Labour controlled council had dished out jobs to cronies, including councillors' wives. On top of this, there was a one week unofficial strike during the summer, after the council declared 98 staff compulsorily redundant.

On the face of it, this coming year doesn't seem to hold out much promise either for the leader of the council. The police are investigating the TEL fiasco and there are growing demands for his resignation. In addition, the recent sacking of former UNISON Branch Secretary, John Pearson, for alleged gross misconduct seems certain to provoke a further *cause celebre* for the council chief.

Last October, John was informed that funding was no longer available for the post he had occupied prior to his election as branch secretary. He was told that when his term of office came to an end, the council would endeavour to find him alternative employment. He wrote back to his boss, informing him that the provisions of the 'facilities agreement' allowed him to return to his previous post, or a subsequently identified post if his existing job had been deleted following a 'staffing review'. As there had not been a staffing review, he insisted that he should be allowed to return to his post.

The following month, John failed to get re-elected as branch secretary. When he reported for work at the beginning of December his boss told him that he was a redeployee and no longer employed in his department. He was told to attend meetings so his skills and abilities could be assessed and was invited to apply for internal vacancies. Having spent twenty years employed by Tameside Council as a computer programmer, he was invited to apply for positions such as casual cleaner, caretaker, and even bar steward in the council's social club. He refused to attend these meetings, insisting that he was not a redeployee but had a contractual right to return to his old job. The council were, in his view, in breach of contract and acting unreasonably in failing to permit him to return to his post.

Although council managers later conceded that the provisions of the 'facilities agreement' were incorporated into John's contract, they argued that a 'financial review' had in fact taken place and this amounted to the same thing as a 'staffing review'. However, when asked by the union to produce written records of the meetings at which these decisions were taken, they were unable to do so. It also became clear at a meeting of the Local Joint Committee that John's post had not been deleted and although he was only one of ten programmers in his department he was the only person who had been considered under the financial review. The union were also to discover later that several new staff had in fact been taken on during the year and that John's position was now occupied by someone

appointed to that post. Management assured the union that there was no victimisation and it was merely a coincidence that John happened to be a leading trade union representative.

In support of John the local UNISON branch declared a dispute with the council and its executive committee, instructed him not to take a temporary post or to attend any disciplinary meetings. In early January John was told by the Borough Personnel Officer, Colin Fielding, that he had been suspended without pay from the beginning of January for

unauthorised absence from work, even though John had not been permitted by management to return to his previous post. Moreover, the authority's own disciplinary procedures only allow for suspension with pay. John took one day's notified sickness absence and was told later that he would have to submit a private doctor's note and that an appointment had been made for him to see the authority's own physician. On 24th January, John was summarily dismissed for gross misconduct after union lawyers had threatened to obtain an

injunction to restrain the council from taking action which was intended to prevent John from exercising his right to return to his previous position.

The sacking of John Pearson hardly comes as a surprise to anyone familiar with Tameside's intimate political scene. It's no secret that Tameside's employees are in for a rough ride as they face a further round of pay and conditions cuts this year, and possibly next year as well. Nor should John Pearson's sacking be seen as something in isolation - it is only part of a wider attack on the unions within Tameside Council. Other union reps have been refused time off for training, selected for redundancy and disciplined for the manner in which they carried out their union duties. At national level the Labour Party generally supports Labour councils that 'get tough' with the unions because they think it looks good with middle class voters. However, as a leading and experienced trades unionist, John's sacking is seen by management as a way to make Tameside's employees more compliant for further cut-backs and is intended as a dire warning - 'step out of line and you'll be next one down the road!' John's departure would also mean that it would be less likely that anyone would stick their neck out to lead a fight back.

This is a case of the blatant victimisation of a trades union activist by a Labour controlled council which has a predilection for union bashing. It is led by Councillor Roy Oldham, a small but formidable character who thinks socialism is Manchester's Municipal Airport and who has been likened to an old style boss politician. Around here dissident councillors who step out of line can find they are expelled from the Labour group or that their past claims for expenses are under investigation. This is a council which is fast acquiring a reputation for being sleazy and squalid in much the same way as John Pearson's sacking is both political and contrived.

The local branch of UNISON have vowed to fight John's sacking and are demanding his reinstatement. There is also the possibility of High Court proceedings against the council. Messages of support should be sent to: UNISON, 18 Church Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire: Angry letters condemning the council should be sent to: Roy Oldham, Leader, Tameside Council, c/o 8 Back Moor, Mottram, via Hyde, Cheshire.

Derek Pattison

## Through the anarchist press

"Those who are successful become successful by refraining to offend the multitude by favouring the few," said Tacitus. On other pages he refers to the power of eloquence which brings untold wealth to those who possess the gift of blarney. He understood how mean and nasty people could become rich by their use of oratory. Tacitus would not have been surprised by the accumulated wealth and arrogance of the present day orators in assemblies, law courts and shareholders' meetings, however he would rue the lack of standards in the delivery.

His dialogue on oratory, from which the excerpts were taken, is written in simple language and in parts sounds like a present-day *Freedom* editorial, urbane, witty and devastating. That we have a copy to read is remarkable in itself, for this most important work by Tacitus, written in the first century, "went out of public view" for thirteen centuries. The first trace of the existence of such a manuscript occurs in 1425, when we find the antiquarian Poggio rejoicing in the offer that had been made to him by a Hersfeld monk offering him for sale a codex containing *aliqua opera Cornelli Taciti nobis* (certain works of Tacitus unknown to us). Poggio hung about in Rome, but the monk did not come across with the manuscript. Nevertheless, secular knowledge soon had to follow, even if Poggio died before it happened. What is remarkable is how fortunate we are that his book survives for us; in company with many other authors, like Propertius, Tacitus was as if he had never existed for over a thousand years. But then, of course, nobody had seen the manuscript Poggio was offered. When the Vatican got hold of the copy it allowed further copies to be made, but the 'original' has disappeared from public view.

Sometimes I wonder how such a repressive system has come about which can make a think of common treasury disappear for a thousand years.

George Orwell was a deft hand at this type of thing in a modern setting, where history changes at the push of a button. I have just come across his unpublished war diaries, excerpts of which were printed in *World Review* (June 1950). In the words of the editor, Stefan Schimanski, "we have thinned the manuscript ..." partly to omit certain speculations which have since been superseded by our knowledge of the course of events.

Orwell comes through in these war diaries as fussy, irritable and slightly dotty. He wants to be a soldier again...

"26th June 1940: Horribly depressed by the way things are turning out. Went this morning for my Medical Board and was turned down, my grade being C. What is appalling is the unimaginativeness of a system which can find no use for a man [like me] ... One could forgive the government for failing to employ the intelligentsia, who are on the whole politically unreliable ..."

I could quote many other sentiments of this sort, but every now and then his journalistic eye tells it as it is.

"14th September 1940: (London, The Blitz) On the

first night of the barrage, which was the heaviest, they [anti-aircraft guns] are said to have fired 500,000 shells, i.e. at an average cost of £5 per shell, £2½ millions worth."

But the comment is back to form: "But well worth it, for the effect on morale".

But to finish on a quote, the most charitable to Orwell I could find:

"22nd April 1941: Have been two or three days at Wallington. Saturday night's blitz could easily be heard there - 45 miles distant. Sowed while at Wallington 40 or 50 lbs of potatoes, which might give 200 to 600 lbs according to the season, etc. It would be queer - I hope it won't be so, but it quite well may - if when this autumn comes, those potatoes seem a more important achievement than all the articles, broadcasts, etc., I shall have done this year."

John Rety

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## News from Northern Ireland

In October last, two of the most horrendous acts of violence in the whole 25 years happened. The IRA blew up a shop on the Shankill Road in a failed attempt to get the loyalist paramilitary leadership. One of the bombers and people buying fish for the weekend died in the attack. A week later loyalist gunmen shot up a pub in Greysteel, just outside Derry, in a horrific revenge attack. The population of Ireland was stunned. There was a definite sense that we were on a brink. People didn't go out at night. Fear was everywhere. And at the same time a flickering of hope for peace could be seen in the talks underway between Gerry Adams and John Hume. It seemed as if Hume's efforts to bring Sinn Féin into the mainstream political arena could be a way of getting the IRA to stop their military campaign. And if that campaign could be stopped who could say what might happen? Then there was a palpable sense of the gunmen drawing back from the brink. Everywhere you went there seemed to be a sense that a breakthrough was coming.

Mass rallies were called by the trade union movement to push for peace, which at that stage hadn't quite been focused down to a call to an end to IRA violence. I stood in the Guildhall Square in Derry with thousands of other workers and felt the yearning for peace. Strike action could have been called at that stage and would, I feel, have secured massive support, but the reformist leadership of the ICTU were never going to be interested in radically challenging the status quo. Thus the

mass actions were wound up just as soon as the two governments indicated that they were about to take charge of that situation.

Coupled with the Hume-Adams process the crowds on the streets indicated to Major in London and Reynolds in Dublin that they should take a firm hand on the peace process (which has in fact been underway for some time now, given the admission that long-standing contacts have existed between the British government and Sinn Féin).

And on Sunday 29th January I attended, along with 200 other people, the annual public forum organised by the Pat Finucane Centre. The debate was on the value or otherwise of the Downing Street Declaration which was the product of the meetings between Major and Reynolds. Numerous speakers advised that this declaration should be rejected out of hand. Significantly, no Sinn Féin or SDLP speaker recommended rejection.

I felt very definitely that we are at a pre-negotiation stage, a stage during which the power politics sphere of human activity dominates. The stage when the politicians really take over. The political and the peace processes, running on different but sometimes overlapping tracks, are very definitely under way. And, as a marginal voice in this whole scene, anarchists will not have much influence or impact, but will be confident that whatever way things go the real changes required to bring freedom to Ireland are still a long way off.

Dave Duggan

## Calling all Anarchists!

Dear Editors,

In response to your comments (*Freedom*, 5th February) on my article 'Talking to Ourselves?', I would like to make the following points.

We do need to make anarchism understandable to non-anarchists, even those persons "... faced with, and affected by, the political and economic situation" whom you perhaps assume are already aware of anarchist ideas. Being in the above position does not automatically make anarchists. Many people, unaware of anarchist alternatives, turn in desperation to authoritarian solutions such as fascism or racism. We need to be there at such times with our anarchist viewpoint, explained lucidly in plain English.

That a particular method of advertising the existence of anarchism, to a wider public than that reached by *Freedom*, is expensive is beside the point. The question is whether it is effective. A quarter page advert in the *Guardian Supplement* would cost a lot of money, but it might possibly be read by 300,000 to 400,000 people. I for one would be willing to contribute to a Freedom Press fund for such purposes.

Jonathan Simcock



Terrible lies are served up every day to the world public about the causes of conflicts in the area of the former Yugoslavia. The journalists talk about civil war, about religious, ethnic or secessionist combat; even about a war of liberation. All these lies fit very well into the enormous quantity of information which is directed every day at the foreign observer. For him it is just another completely absurd and irrational conflict with which he is constantly bombarded by the media. Falling deep into resignation, and conscious of his own helplessness in front of that avalanche of violence, he accepts one of the versions which is presented to him. And really, the official power-holders and the new ideologists are the true causes of three years of conflict, causes very efficiently hidden in ideological nonsense about 'genocide', 'endangered historical areas', 'centuries-old dreams' and similar phrases. The truth is that all conflicts start as a fight for *power and power only*. And not for any kind of power: for strong, centralised, one-party power. In other words, there is no question about the situation of the Serbs in Croatia, or the Croats in Bosnia, or the Albans in Kosovo (or, why not, the English in Northern Ireland), only a question of the individuals who want to be at the head.

#### How it all started

To ensure victory in the 1990 election HDZ<sup>1</sup> and Tudman made their party programme in which was only one 'constructive' point: the making of the national state. But *their* idea of the national state was not like the idea of the nation state in the

1. HDZ (Croats Democratic Association) is the leading party in Croatia then and now. The English press called them 'right-wing nationalists' who want territorial expanding of Croatia.

## Out of the mouths of (political) babes ...

The millionaire George Soros, who is well known for his philanthropic gestures, has donated £33.8 million to Bosnia in the past twelve months to alleviate suffering and, he had hoped, to make a political difference for the good. He is reported as saying: "There are three parties fighting in Bosnia and a fourth party – the civilian population – which is a genuine victim".

While in Sarajevo recently, Soros met some UNICEF officials, one of whom told him that all sides, including the Muslim government, had abused and betrayed the people, with Bosnians killing Bosnians as a result.

At the end of his visit Soros declared: "The \$50 million Soros humanitarian aid fund for Bosnia is almost exhausted and I must declare it a failure ... the humanitarian situation is worse than when we began". The overwhelming failure, he said, was a political one: "The UN is part of the system that maintains Sarajevo as a concentration camp".

Whatever Soros is (and he is certainly no anarchist), he is not a politician, so we may treat his protests as we would truth coming out of the mouth of a babe. In stark contrast, what are we to make of the recent Vatican criticism of the Catholic Croat leaders' aims in Bosnia: "A peace built on territorial trading or, worse still, on exclusively ethnic foundations, cannot be a lasting peace"? Was that a slap on the wrist – or reassurance from Daddy that they can carry on as usual so long as they don't get any worse?

No doubt George Soros has wondered why the Pope has not called a summit between the three religious hierarchies involved in the Bosnian tragedy, but it may be that he has not grasped the unholy connection between churches and governments as has Lord Owen, who said, after meeting the Pope recently: "The Vatican can play an important role in Bosnian peace efforts because religious divisions have contributed to the war".

Ernie Crosswell

## The truth about the conflicts in the Balkans

nineteenth century. They had no interest in the values which were established by those states. They had interest only in enormous power which is hidden in the national differences. Later, in Bosnia, they used religious and cultural differences, with the same success. So, in the 1990 pre-election campaign you could hear: 'anyone who thinks seriously must be a hawk'; 'Serbs in Croatia are not Serbs, they are Croats baptised into the Orthodox Church by a trick'; 'Muslims are part of the Croat nation which was proclaimed a nation by Tito's marxists'; NDH (Independent State of Croatia) – Quisling State in IIWW – 'has much that is good'<sup>2</sup> and so on. The best example of all is the official party programme of HDZ, in which is not a single word about the social policy, education or health service, but which includes this: 'HDZ want economical, spiritual and cultural unification of Croatia and Bosnia and Herezegovia, because they constitute a natural, indivisible geo-political unit'. After they won the election they started by firing all non-Croats and Croats who didn't agree with the official policies. Also there began a great wave of demolishing the Orthodox and Jewish cemeteries (no single person was ever caught). On the other hand, from Serbia came similar ideas: 'Croats are a genocidal nation'; 'fascism rides again'; 'the historical area of Serbia is to the Adriatic Sea', etc. The situation culminated with the blocking of roads, which was at that time only an extreme form of civil disobedience. Both governments were to find plenty of extremist-oriented individuals and put them amongst the people. It was a very successful tactic – they committed a lot of murders and crimes and created great anxiety in the masses. With that kind of manipulation, a people (Latin = *populus*) was transformed into a mob (Latin = *vulgus*). And even Bakunin wrote about differences between *populus* and *vulgus*. He wrote that *vulgus*

2. For those who want more information about NDH, I recommend the novel *Kaputt* by Kurzio Malaparte.

did not know any positive, creative values, only negative and destructive ones. And the rest is history. Conflict became combat and combat became war, a war never proclaimed. That situation was good for both sides because in war it is much easier to centralise authority and to get rid of the political opponents. In that way they created two states in which dogma is an emperor, everybody is a slave to the leaders, and complete unification of thinking is imposed. When they established that kind of state they came to the conclusion (rightly) that war is not a profitable business, especially on their own territory. So, war was 'turned off' and today the situation is a lovely *status quo* with only small incidents to remind us of the horrors of war.

#### Moving into Bosnia

So they achieved their aim. But now both states have a lot of people under arms. Most of them are criminals taken directly from the prisons. There is also a large number of people with a post-Vietnam syndrome. Nevertheless, real peace could be very dangerous for a strong, centralised government. Economic questions could replace political, and politicians' wills have to surrender to businessmen's. Because of that, the war game is transferred into Bosnia. With the same recipe, conflicts were initiated from outside, and very soon the whole war machinery was at work again. But things ran out of control. There was nothing left of all the ideological package. All became purely and simply a lie. All that is left in conflict are extremely well armed mobs. They have no common idea, aim or ideology, except one: extortion, murder, robbery. They don't care about national or religious differences between themselves, so on the battlefield they form alliances in all possible combinations. They don't care who they kill or rob and, in line with world trends, especially pick on the helpless. Favourite victims of today's civil war are women and children. Not only is a *chetnik* proud when he massacres the inhabitants of the hospital.

Everywhere are the helpless ones moved from the face of the earth.<sup>3</sup>

#### The situation today

The permanence of this conflict (I am not sure what word to use because it is simply *bellum omnium contra omnes*) is a wonderful opportunity for keeping on with the politics of the strong hand. Everyone who is against the government in any way gets mobilised and taken away to the battlefield or somewhere else. The situation is very good for exploitation of civilians. Different kinds of deductions, taxes and contributions add up to approximately 65% of gross salary in Croatia. The censorship of the media is as hard as steel, because 'the situation is very complex and we can't allow any kind of disinformation'. Syndicate work is simply strangled because 'what do you want, when hundreds of people are dying'. That same government killed – with their politics – those people, but that is irrelevant. For everything that doesn't work properly, from the city transport to the economic collapse, there is a simple answer: 'we are in a war situation and we have a very large number of refugees'. And who can argue with that? The higher dimension is provided by the concordance between state and holy church, and to the satisfaction of both sides. The number of 'believers' is today three times bigger than three years ago. The government is removed into the divine sphere, so it is unquestionable and untouchable. That is a short description of the situation in Croatia, but as far as I know in Serbia it is more or less the same, except that there they have a problem with international economic sanctions. But we all know very well who is hit by that or any other kind of sanctions: the masses only.

And for that reason I have one appeal: please don't ever equate the victims and the aggressors, like so many foreign journalists. Once and for all: the aggressors are the Tudmans, Milosevics and all others like them who want power and authority no matter what the cost, and the victims as always are ordinary people who don't want anything but to live and work in peace and freedom.

from a correspondent in Zagreb

3. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg*, Frankfurt-am-Mein, 1993.

## Inside India

When the Rajiv Gandhi government took office in India in 1985 amongst other things it devoted itself to the eradication of illiteracy. Accordingly on 5th May 1988 the Prime Minister launched the National Literacy Mission (NLM). Nationwide the NLM now has a massive profile and amongst other things it is attracting an army of workers to support its work. In many ways, though, the NLM is steeped in bureaucracy and, despite its laudable aims, it remains a centrally controlled body which is often out of touch with local needs at both an organisational and pedagogical level. Volunteers to the mission complain of limited access to funding and an inability to get programmes off the ground quickly after interest in literacy classes has been generated in villages and local communities.

Almost a year after Rajiv Gandhi announced the formation of the NLM an equally significant development took place in the Ernakulam district of Kerala in South India. This was the launching of a total literacy campaign (TLC) on the initiative of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, well known for its activities in the areas of education, health and the environment. The Ernakulam TLC has had outstanding success with over 150,000 adults alone becoming literate. Figures for children are not yet available, but are estimated to be somewhere in the region of 200,000. The district is said now to be 'fully literate'.

The literacy issue is a big one in India and it is worth examining how the Ernakulam TLC was organised for there are many lessons there for the NLM, indeed for anyone involved in literacy campaigns in developing countries. The development of the Ernakulam TLC also raises many questions about the meaning of literacy itself.

Three features distinguish the Ernakulam TLC from its centre-based predecessors. Firstly the Ernakulam TLC adopted a mass

campaign approach. It earmarked compact geographical-administrative areas, identified a specific target group of illiterates, e.g. an age cohort, set a time limit for action and then carried out a mass campaign to get larger numbers of people excited about the programme and create a literacy-friendly environment.

The organisation of the campaign reveals the second distinguishing feature of the TLC in Ernakulam. It was based on a participatory approach where people were encouraged to participate actively in the campaign by joining literacy committees at the block, district or village level, literacy street-theatre groups and groups making resources and learning aids. This promoted the perception amongst people that the programme was theirs and not that of any external agency.

Thirdly, the TLC was based fundamentally on voluntarism. This helped to create a situation where there was no feeling on the part of local people that here were another batch of affluent and well-paid 'do-gooders' from another world.

Moving from area to area within the district the campaign consisted of three phases. The same model was used in each area. First there was a phase of motivation and mobilisation during which a literacy-friendly environment was created through print and audio-visual material. In particular the TLC used powerful street plays highlighting the need for literacy, exhorting the already literate to come forward as volunteers to help organise and teach and motivating prospective learners to join literacy centres. Secondly there was a training phase. In a one-month intensive programme whilst the first phase was still in motion, with literacy centres being set up, a core group of 15-20 key resource volunteers trained a body of lead teachers from the designated area. These people were mostly already literate. In turn these teachers then worked intensively

with volunteer instructors teaching literacy at the same time as imparting teaching skills given that the volunteers would in their turn have responsibility to impart literacy to a group of ten learners. This was the third phase of the campaign and on average learners achieved the norms of literacy, numeracy, functionality and awareness specified by the NLM in 200 hours of instruction spread over six months.

The teaching methods used in the Ernakulam TLC were highly political. The volunteer instructors were 'taught' as a group of people in similar circumstances and were encouraged to share their perceptions of common experiences to learn how those experiences could be represented permanently in the written word. Hence key words and generative themes became the focus of attention. Interestingly, often the first words learnt were words like freedom, justice, struggle and exploitation. In their turn the volunteer instructor's mission became one of teaching people to go beyond reading and writing to learn how to read and write the reality. This essentially was a functional approach to teaching literacy comparable to the methods developed by Paulo Freire.

The Ernakulam TLC has become attractive to other developing total literacy campaigns in India. Its decentralised and non-bureaucratic character, its emphasis on mass participation and its significant multi-dimensional societal impact, to say nothing of its deep success, give it an instant credibility. However, it is not without its critics. Politicians of various hues have voiced their concern about the Ernakulam TLC, threatened both by the product – thousands of newly literate people politicised by their experience – and the process – a massive people's movement. The truth is though that it is too late. Ernakulam is literate and their TLC model is available as a model. The question now is how far the NLM will embrace it as a model for the future of the NLM itself.

John Shorton



# Pyrite for the Tsars

One must have sympathy for the unfortunate John Major for no matter how much he tries to lead the people of these small islands along the true path in the 'Return to Basics' the good-time Charleys of the Tory Party will insist that it is skirts up and trousers down for party time in the wining-dining true meaning of the term. Two exhibitions given over to two of the world's major religions should have had the masses back on their knees, but as ever the soulless multitudes viewed the exhibition of Russian Religious Art within the Victoria & Albert Museum and the exhibition of Hinduism within the British Museum and, having felt the orthodox ten minutes of Freudian guilt that all religious objects from the Christmas card to the elderly nun occasion, returned to *The Sun* tabloid for their salvation if not of the next world then of this.

We are creatures of the visual in that our understanding of our fellow men and women comes from our world of images, be it stage, film, television, magazine, newsprint or advertising, for those few seconds condition our thinking by their constant repetition and a brief viewing of Russian Religious Art or visual Hinduism mysticism must go the way of all flesh when the Royal Academy exhibition of the 400 sketches by the late Modigliani ease the crowd into the RA's ancient halls. Be they Mickey Mouse or the Mona Lisa, Scarfe or Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers', Turner's 'Fighting Temeraire', Goya's 'Disaster of War' or Sir Edwin Landseer's whisky advert 'Stag at Bay', we are conditioned to accept other's evaluation of these works for constant repetition dulls the judgements, so too with ideologies and 'historical facts', so too with Modigliani's 400

sketches collected by his friend. Accept them as trivia and it is an enjoyable way to spend the hour, but neither fume with rage nor simper with praise but as in one's approach to the brutalising of daily living, our past and our future try in justice to one's self to form an honest judgement and if one cannot then spread the hands outward, a gentle smile and accept that one does not know.

Never was this, the cult of wealth and trivia, more demonstrable than the exhibition of the products of the imperial jeweller Fabergé that he churned out for the Russian ton from the Tsars to the Russian Orthodox Church and the various riff-raff such as captains of industry and various lesser breed European and Asian royal families. Housed within the great halls of the Victoria & Albert Museum we walked, wine glass in hand, among the glass cases containing the jewelled eggs, candlesticks, snuff boxes and the rest of the jewelled trivia, but like rabbits to the snake it was always back to the imperial Easter eggs that yearly the tsar would give to the Tsarina. It is so easy to mock the works of Fabergé and the bad taste of the Russian royal family for this jewellery has the vulgarity and the bad taste of fairground, seaside or airport art, but they gave a small pleasure and, for those who bought Fabergé's trinkets, bought it not because it was kitsch but because they were made of silver and gold, spotted with diamonds and pearls and had the air of those Swiss cream cakes, pretty to the eye but fatal to the gut. Bad taste and vulgarity is not the peculiarity of royal households or those with more money than us, comrade, for it pervades even those with the true message, as I explain to the Queen Mother, for anyone who can drink Guinness in preference to lager or orange juice needs no lectures from

ravenous lettuce-chewers. We wish to believe that there are absolutes in our world but always it is compromise for an acceptance of the lesser evils, be it Lenin's NEP or banking or commercial house ownership within an



"Cut the salami jokes, Laverne, or you'll get us kicked out for political incorrectness."

'anarchist society', etc., so too with the Town and his footslogging frau as they ignore the magnificent *free* exhibition within the British Museum of Holbein's exquisite miniatures and brilliant drawings of the court of Henry VIII. It is a preference for the trivia of Fabergé's fairground art and Modigliani's 400 sketches to that of the master Holbein, yet why not for as in war time if there is a queue then join it and be one with the Russian royal family except in the executioner's cellar. It is all within the Royal Academy, the V&A and the British Museum with 'The Art of the Ancient World' in the RA with its Bull Man from Umma and as always back, or to, the Greeks as ever. But 300 'masterpieces' of mankind's history that has pulled in the crowds in Yeltsin's Holy Russia from St Peterburg to frozen Moscow should be worthy of our cultural catwalk. Yet what holds me, he said with a saintly lowering of the head and a clasping of the hands, is the exhibition within the Museum of London, that tiny oasis of civilisation hidden within the barren concrete jungle of London's Barbican, tracing 'The Peopling of London' back to the last 15,000 years back to 1994. The changing populations of one of the world's great cities are there in the artifice of the times be they gravestones, graffiti, tools or weapons, and the tracings of popular migrations as they trudged westward from northern Africa and the Middle East to the western shores of Europe. It is a time when one could – and there are those who will – become maudlin, but this is the history of peoples seeking food and shelter. But what held me were the photographs of the black-shirted fascists marching through London's East End and the miserable terror they brought to people living in that great slum ghetto in the 1930s. 15,000 years and in 1994 the slum ghetto is still there, feet away from this anarchist bookshop, and the frightened people are no longer the pre-war Jewish people but peoples from India and political right-wing violence still mocks people whose only demand is food and shelter. There are the 1900 photographs of all the poverty and the loss of human dignity that is the by-product of economic 'Back to Basics' slum life, but let me disagree with Leslie Geddes-Brown of *The Daily Telegraph* who wrote that "the exhibition is fascinating though over-complex and, I suspect, a bit too politically correct. Africans get a lot of space, as do East End Jews – white Americans appear as an afterthought, and I could find no reference at all to London's Scottish and Welsh colonies", to which I answer "bullshit" in the spirit of political correctness for Scottish, Irish and Welsh disperse within one generation while the Jewish people trapped by poverty, fear and a spider's web religion huddled generation after generation for social warmth within their ghetto, and the coloured minorities chose to believe that their colour marked them as victims. But London – and I love it – absorbs, absorbs, so fan out, fan out, and the Town is yours for the blessing and pyrite, comrades, is fool's gold.

Arthur Moyses.

## Food for Thought ... and Action!

**First and Last Emperors: the absolute state and the body of the despot** by Kenneth Dean and Brian Massumi, published by Automedia. A comparative analysis of the first unified Chinese state and its emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, and (post) modern America and its archetypal leader Ronald Reagan. This work is written in a style that is heavily influenced by French post-structuralist and post-modernist intellectuals such as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (authors of the book *Anti-Oedipus*). Like the work it draws on, this book is not easy reading – full of specialised and very obscure language. Anyone not reasonably familiar with such writing may find parts of this book hard going, despite its many interesting observations. 208 pages, illustrated, £5.95.

**Beyond Blade Runner: Urban Control – the ecology of fear** by Mike Davis, Open Magazine Pamphlets series. From the author of the excellent book *City of Quartz* comes this equally excellent analysis of post-uprising Los Angeles. The author examines how urban planning has become ever more a means of social control. The proliferation of surveillance technologies and the privatisation of public space offer a grim view of the urban future, with relevance for cities everywhere. "Can emergent technologies of surveillance and repression stabilise class and racial relations across the chasm of the new inequality? Will the ecology of fear become the natural order of the 21st century American city?" 21 page pamphlet, £2.95.

**Anarchy: a journal of desire armed** #39 (Winter '94) edition of this very well produced and always interesting anti-civilisation magazine from the USA. This issue includes: 'Left Communism or State Department Surrealism' by Keith Sorel (an account about one man's highly bizarre theoretical journey, subtitled 'From Munis to Meese'); 'Rioting and Looting as Modern Potlatch'; 'Spurious Opposition' by Raoul Vaneigem (a reprint of part of his classic *Revolution of Everyday Life*); 'In the Aftermath of the Spanish Civil War' (another instalment of M. Gonzalez's story) and a new essay by John Zerzan, 'Time and its Discontents'. Also includes book reviews, features ('The Sad Truth of the Yeltsin Coup', 'On Gogol Boulevard' about activities in Eastern Europe) and

only 12 pages of letters – a lot fewer than normal! This is the best of the North American mags at the moment. The high quality graphics are matched by high quality content. Well worth a read. 83 pages, illustrated A4 magazine, £2.50.

**Alternative Press Review: your guide beyond the mainstream** #2 (Winter '94). The second issue of this interesting review of the 'alternative press' contains the following articles reproduced from a wide variety of sources: Eco-fascism (on the fusion of racism and environmentalism amongst some in the USA); an interview with Ramsey Kanaan of AK Distribution; the second part of 'Cults of Consumption' by Marx Cafard; 'Rap, Race and Politics'; Daniel Brandt's essay on 'Clinton, Quigley and Conspiracy'; and a reprint of John Zerzan's excellent essay 'The Mass Psychology of Misery' (an analysis of the 'Psychological Society') which includes the following attack on New Age moronism: "... the New Age, booming since the mid-1980s, is essentially a religious turning away from reality by people who are overloaded by feelings of helplessness and powerlessness ... Religion invents a realm of non-alienation to compensate for the actual one; New Age philosophy announces a coming new era of harmony and peace, obviously inverting the present, unacceptable state. An undemanding, eclectic, materialist substitute religion where any balm, any occult nonsense – channelling, crystal healing, reincarnation, rescue by UFOs, etc. – goes. 'It's true if you believe it'." 83 pages, illustrated A4 magazine, £3.50.

**Fifth Estate** volume 28, #3 (Fall/Winter '93). Latest issue of this uncompromisingly anti-civilisation paper contains articles on Bosnia, subtitled 'The End of the State or the State of the End' (with a critical response – good to see someone tackling this thorny subject); the PLO/Israeli treaty; Biosphere 2 (an eerie, scientific project to simulate the Earth's eco-system within an enclosed area); the problem of anarchist organisation (on the split within the controversial *Love and Rage* collective). Also includes book reviews, features and readers' letters. A good read and an improvement over recent issues. 32 pages, illustrated A3 newspaper, £1.50.

**Wildcat** #17 (Spring '94). Articles on Somalia; Waco; 'How Wild is Wildcat?' (on civilisation, the work of Fredy Perlman, author of *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!*, and the Marxist theory of progress); a good long review of A. Cohen's pamphlet *The Decadence of the Shamans*; more on the democracy debate, plus readers' letters. This magazine has, in their own words, become more theoretical recently. This seems to reflect an abandonment of a progressive Marxism – all be it in a 'council-communist' form – and a move towards an anti-civilisation perspective, as put forward by individuals/journals in North America like the papers *Fifth Estate* and *Anarchy* and writers like John Zerzan and the late Fredy Perlman. "There has always been some awareness of the dangers of class domination and how to oppose it. People with leadership obligations, e.g. shamans, try to permanently usurp their responsibilities and turn them into a system of class domination. The communist programme has always been immanent in the struggle to prevent this happening, and to reverse it once it has occurred. This position turns marxism on its head, the political has precedence over the economic. If this makes us closer to anarchism than marxism, so be it." This issue is very interesting. 60 pages, illustrated A4 magazine, £2.00.

**Asylum: a magazine for democratic psychiatry** #4, vol. 7 (Autumn '93). All survivor issue. First-hand accounts by people who have had bad experiences at the hands of the mental health establishment. Also contains some theoretically oriented articles. In these times of genetic determinism, particularly in the area of mental health, it's good to see some are raising the question of the social causes of dis-ease. 36 pages, A4 magazine, £1.80.

**Please note:** the title of the pamphlet by Aleister Crowley, listed in the last 'Food for Thought ...', should have read *The Banned Lectures* and not *The Band Lecture*. Ooops!

Jez

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## — ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

## An Awkward Prophet

There's a character who flits through biographies of Kropotkin and Reclus and the histories of anarchism, and whose influence permeates the writings of Lewis Mumford, and evidently fascinates the people who rediscover him. I have been reading a new paperback, *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner* by Helen Meller (Routledge, £14.99), which gets to the heart of his contribution to the libertarian approach to housing and planning that some of us propagate under a specifically anarchist label.

Of the six earlier biographical books about Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), one of the most accessible was Paddy Kitchen's *A Most Unsettling Person*. This is precisely how I have imagined him: the kind of person who would buttonhole you in the street and lecture you on its history and evolution, the significance of its trades and occupations, and their relationship with the whole city and region and economy. Before you got away, you would find yourself enrolled as one of his helpers in a campaign of his for some institution or improvement which was overwhelmingly desirable but which depended on funding that would prove not to be forthcoming.

Helen Meller's absorbing study confirms this impression, but it does him the compliment of unravelling the origins of his world-view in the biological evolutionism he learned from T.H. Huxley, the sociological imagination he absorbed from Comte and Le Play, the regional geography that linked the two and that he eagerly gathered from Elisée Reclus and Vidal de la Blache, and the ideology of cooperation rather than competition proclaimed by Peter Kropotkin.

You could go through an academic degree course in any of the disciplines that Geddes synthesised without hearing more than a passing reference to any of these figures, and certainly without hearing of him. Each subject has moved on in its specialised field, and his frequent references to classical and religious mythology as well as his idiosyncratic prose style form a barrier between him and us. The paradox is that Geddes had an enormous faith in universities. His own chair in botany at Dundee was endowed for him just to provide a base for his worldwide activities, and he had a hand in the founding of academic institutions, ranging from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem through a variety of Indian cities to the *College des Ecossais* at Montpellier. Dr Meller reminds us of the common sense he brought to his expansive visions, since he insisted that:

"the new university should start modestly with perhaps a small library, an institute and a garden. Then it would grow with the cultural evolution of the people and would always remain 'of the people'. In this way, cities like Indore might be 'materially small but culturally great'. The message was a new version of his vision for Dunfermline in 1904; the potential of provincial cities to be centres of culture regardless of their size and location, and to provide an environment for life-enhancement through the proper application of modern ideas."

This is a theme that runs through all his activities. In 1886 he and his wife Anna moved into a slum tenement in the Old Town of Edinburgh and set about organising its improvement, and then persuaded affluent friends to buy more ancient buildings to make the first self-governing student hostel in Britain. Then in 1892 he borrowed the money to buy the building at the western end of the Royal Mile in which a previous owner had installed a camera obscura, which has been known ever since as the Outlook Tower, which, for Geddes, was a "sociological museum and laboratory" to enable the citizens to grasp the nature of the city and its region. It was conceived as an educational device, a planning tool and a vehicle for citizen participation, and it is sobering to learn that the financial problems it has experienced in recent decades were there from the start for the disciples entrusted with its management when Geddes was off conducting surveys and providing planning recommendations for any

of the world's cities that would employ him.

For many of us, his most valuable legacy was the series of reports on Indian cities that he produced during and after the First World War. A valuable little volume of extracts is worth seeking out in libraries (*Patrick Geddes in India*, edited by Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, London: Lund Humphries, 1947), but Dr Meller adds a great deal by explaining the circumstances in each instance. British engineers, both military and civilian, had a series of expensive plans for coping with what they saw as the chaotic squalor of the Indian city: wholesale demolition of substandard housing, the filling of water tanks as breeders of malaria, water-borne sewerage that no one could afford, and the construction of efficient modern main highways.

The Geddes approach was entirely different. He declared that "we now start with the idea that cities are fundamentally to be preserved and lived in; and not freely destroyed, to be driven through, and speculated upon". Consequently he advocated what he described as 'conservative surgery': the minimum interference with existing dwellings and districts so as to retain the pattern of the old bazaar town. He recognised that "the craftsman and artist at their labour, the housewife at her daily tasks, the girl watering a tulsi-plant, the sweeper on his humble round, all and each are helping their town towards its development in health and wealth". In other words, he saw the importance of the informal, unmeasured, invisible economy. He also saw the significance of small improvements, rather than grand schemes, so that "the woman returns from the repaired well with purer water and uninfected feet, and from small beginnings, begetting delight instead of disgust, a new interest in sanitation will arise".

Perhaps the most intuitive of his perceptions from those days, important for anyone East or West who believes that future urban populations can be confined to the city, was his declaration that "I have to remind all concerned, first that the essential need of a house and family is room, and secondly that the essential improvement of a house and family is more room". Not only in the poor world, but in Britain and the United States and in all the rich cities of the world, the Geddesian message was ignored. Expensive technical expertise was hired and all it produced was urban devastation. The various ideologies of community development that have emerged in the past twenty years would have been thoroughly understood by Geddes, whether the miracles of self-organisation in self-built settlements in Latin America, Africa or South East Asia, or the struggles, after the grand plans had displaced the urban poor, of groups like Coin Street Community Builders south of the Thames in central London, or the Eldonians at Vauxhall, Liverpool, or the Girescope Cooperative in Hull.

What would have astonished and perplexed him is that it took us so long to absorb the message. Dr Meller is right to say that however flawed Geddes' voluminous writings may be, they are full of quotable phrases that, for us, illustrate his "passionate commitment to put people first in planning". Take, for example, a remark of his at the end of the First World War, which is an ideological challenge to the centralist assumptions of politicians, and has even more force today:

"The central government says 'Homes for heroes! We are prepared to supply all these things from Whitehall; at any rate to supervise them; to our minds much the same thing.' But are they? Can they? With what results, what achievements? At present we have the provinces all bowing to Westminster, whence they are granted doles; so the best people leave for London. They send their money to Westminster, which (after ample expenses have been deducted) is returned to some of them in the form of a grant. But why not use this

money themselves in the first place? Why not keep your money, your artists and your scientists, your orators and your planners - and do up your city yourselves?"

We, of course, know the answer to his rhetorical question, which is the virtual monopoly of revenue-gathering by central government's Treasury. You only have to visit the grand Victorian civic centres of, say, Glasgow, Leeds, Birmingham or Manchester to be reminded that the city authorities of today have had their scope for independent action stripped away by central power.

Where do we place Geddes politically? According to Dr Meller, he owed more to what she sees as the "now extinct" form of anarchism espoused by Kropotkin:

"which gave him a sense of social progress in terms of the immediate environment and possible improvements, rather than vaguer concepts of individual rights, justice and equality. From the earliest pamphlets he wrote in the 1880s, he had been offering 'the third alternative', neither conservatism nor state socialism (which he describes as 'Lib-Lab Fabianism'), while insisting that the objective was to enable every individual, regardless of wealth, status and class, to achieve his or her personal potential."

Geddes himself amplifies this interpretation. He once wrote an article for the annual report of the Co-operative Wholesale Society with the title, paradoxical for many socialists, 'Co-operation versus Socialism'. His objections to socialism as an ideology, rather

than as an ordinary habit of daily life, were, he said, because it too often meant dreaming dreams, but not actually getting anything done, and because it implied that "until every thing and everybody is ready for the millennium, nothing can be got ready at all". Whereas, in his view, cooperation:

"does the daily duties which lie nearest, refuses no bird in the hand today for the sake of two in the bush tomorrow, and thus not only lives and grows, but daily strengthens towards larger tasks; since, in fact, getting a bird in the hand today is the best practice for getting two out of the bush tomorrow."

Reading this outstanding book, I am continually reminded of the contemporary relevance of the stream of ideas that flowed from Patrick Geddes. His activities exemplified the later slogan 'Think Globally, Act Locally', his ideas fit exactly the view of current propagandists for a Europe of the Regions rather than of nation-states. His ecological assumptions give emphasis to the importance of gardens, tree-planting and the composting of sewage. His approach to planning insisted eighty years ago that:

"town-planning is not mere place-planning, nor even work-planning. If it is to be successful it must be folk-planning. This means that its task is to find the right places for each sort of people; places where they will really flourish. To give people in fact the same care that we give when transplanting flowers, instead of harsh evictions and arbitrary instructions to 'move on', delivered on the manner of officious amateur policemen."

We can see his life as a heroic series of failures and we would be right, but we can also see him as a stimulating guide to the art of regenerating cities.

Colin Ward

## Anarchist Communism: its development and criticism of its ideas

Anarchist communism is a very important current of opinion in anarchism. Probably, in recent times, there have been more books, journals and groups of an anarchist communist persuasion than any other type of anarchism. In this article I intend to examine the history and development of anarchist communist theory. I will criticise what I see as its weak points and try and suggest more helpful lines of thought for libertarians.

Many people have claimed all sorts of ancestors for modern anarchist communism, including such people as early Christians, Anabaptists and Diggers. In many ways I think the French Revolution could be considered a flawed beginning for anarchist communism. The groups to the left of the Jacobins, such as the Enragés and Hébertists, have at times been suggested as proto-anarchists. Many of these groups were advocating and practising direct popular revolutionary action. Also, however, many groups were advocating and at times practising actions of extreme violence. They all perished at the hands of the more centralistic Jacobins, who saw the more extreme wing of the revolutionary movement as a threat to their power. The popular movements of the Parisian sections have also been quoted as early examples of libertarian organisation.

I tend to think many libertarian writers have been very one-sided in their assessment of the anarchist nature of these groups, emphasising the libertarian/populist actions of these groups yet at the same time ignoring a lot of the violence. I feel a similar view could be expressed about some of the revolutionary behaviour at the time of the Paris Commune in 1871.

I now wish to move forwards in time to the days of the First International. This was split due largely to disagreements between Marx and Bakunin. Besides both men having strong personalities, there were deeper political questions which came up as issues. A major point was the issue of the state. Bakunin, by the later stages of his life, wanted the state to be destroyed by the revolution. Marx wanted a political party to take power. Although Bakunin was not a communist, his ideas and actions were important for the later development of anarchist communism. In his writings he attempted to deal with the problem of the rôle of a minority of conscious revolutionaries in a potentially revolutionary situation. He

embraced a federalistic view of society with an inner circle of revolutionaries forming what he called "an invisible dictatorship". This, of course, can be seen to have definite authoritarian leanings. However, it can also be said that Bakunin did have some grasp of the problems facing libertarians as revolutionaries. This is the problem of revolutionary minorities and the comparatively uncommitted majority. Of course this is a problem that has troubled leftist movements for a very long time. Anarchist theory, by its very nature, faces the problem in a very acute form.

In economics Bakunin was a collectivist. In modern terms the means of production was to be held by the collective association of workers, but each worker was to be paid according to their work. Bakunin's followers and associates, in the early days, also opposed communist economics. The Jura Federation in the early 1870s, which largely consisted of watchmakers who were skilled craftsmen, definitely opposed communism. At this time, it seems to have been felt that communist economics were associated with Marx and his followers and the danger of state tyranny. Things began to change at about the time of the death of Bakunin and ideas which had been in germination came to fruition. At the congress of Florence the Bakuninist wing of the International voted to accept communism.

Perhaps a factor in this change of heart could be that it was felt that the collectivity could easily turn into another government. This fear could have led many anarchists to have a desire for communist economic organisation in which everybody freely makes their contribution by production and then consumes freely according to their needs. Probably many anarchists at the time saw this as a way of eliminating all conflict. I feel that behind much of this thinking, despite their opposition to his politics, is a large element of belief in the economics of Karl Marx. Bakunin had been much impressed by the economic ideas of Marx and had offered to translate *Capital* into Russian. Also built into these anarchist communist ideas was the need for a social revolution that would remove the state and capitalism.

The Paris Commune of 1871 was another factor in the development of anarchist communism. Of course many left wing groups see the Paris Commune as a model of anarchist communism. (continued on page 8)



# Back to Basics

Dear Friends,  
Donald Room with customary prescience wrote tartly about boring and obscure history (*Freedom*, 8th January 1994).

Like Dai in the valleys, he begs the questions 'Where are we going boys?' whilst we lay anarchists, like young Scandinavian men on a bender, put our heads against a telegraph pole and kick hell out of the pole to rid ourselves of all the pent up frustrations brought on by the stultifying measure of lies and half-truths with which our politicians bend our ears. In short, I believe we have lost our way.

The present theme of 'back to basics' promoted by the loony malevolent right may be something of a laugh on the political front, but the theme is apposite for anarchism today. What in essence is our philosophy, and what path do we follow to reach a fulfilment? How do we propose utilising technology? How would we cope with the demi-gods in fancy dress or hoodlums with homicidal intent and the wherewithal to destroy? What time scale are we thinking of and what speed of change, small steps at a time or one massive leap?

It seems to be within our grasp to live in a consensual society, and that the technology is available to convince others that an information flow is possible on which sound decision making is a practical proposition. Human beings have a great gift in being able to assimilate information and make decisions or observations thereon. Why on earth they continue to concede that ability to elected representatives to do with as they please is difficult to understand. It is a negation of freedom, a testimony to reactionary propaganda.

Free men are fettered by the present parliamentary system and those MPs who would have us believe that democracy has reached its zenith, and that all is well with the world except for a little pump priming here and there. Currently each of them is on a £31,000 basic to confirm them in their belief. The Labour party offer the crimson apple 'vote for us and get rid of the detested Tories', but as always it is the wicked queen's apple of more of the same. Labour's trousers may be pink but their waistcoat is pure John Bull.

The parasitic disease of capitalism rampages virtually unchecked

throughout the world, evidenced blatantly in policies of 'buy our fags or you will get no medical aid' or 'buy our guns or you will have no dam to supply power'. One shivers at the disgusting brutality of it all. We calmly accept a privileged few having title to vast acreages of land, and do not have even the capitalist muscle to make them pay a rent scaled to each acre. We also accept vast acreages of land being taken up for industrial development on the basis of jobs being available and then discover that technological advances (it is claimed) have made the work redundant. But the profits do not spill back to those made redundant, or dispossessed from the land.

As anarchists we must convey simple messages to our fellow men. The messages must be reinforced with clear illustrations of the way forward. Historians have their uses, but they are not leaders - they are foreboders of doom.

Garry Bradford

## Social freedoms

Dear Editors,  
Paul Petard (5th February) described my assertion that every social freedom interferes with some other social freedom as "just rubbish". Fair comment, although vigorous; but does he make his point? He mentions only two freedoms and each of these, when exercised, does interfere with another. His freedom to undermine workfare and refuse low-paid work interferes with the freedom of bosses to get work done cheaply, and the freedom of employers and government ministers to choke on their dinners interferes with their freedom to enjoy their food. (Apologies if that sounds trivial; I have to take the examples given.) The freedoms interfered with in these cases (and in many others) are not ones valued by anarchists, but they are none the less freedoms and none the less interfered with.

After Paul's letter it remains true that no reader of *Freedom* has been able to

Dear *Freedom*,  
I am neither for nor against Jean Baudrillard and Guy Debord. I simply find some of their ideas useful as a means of understanding the society we live in.

Jez, in a *Freedom* review of Baudrillard's *Silent Majority* ('Food for Thought and Action', 22nd January), says it reads "like a hyperbolic version of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*". Debord's 'spectacle' and Baudrillard's 'hyperreality' are indeed similar.

Both writers make essentially elitist assumptions about their readers. They write for their 'intellectual peers', inventing their jargon as they go along, not seeing it as a duty to share their insights with as many people as possible in language accessible to all.

Neither offers many concrete examples to back his ideas. This I assume is left to the reader. The chosen role of Debord and Baudrillard is that of 'informed' commentators.

These are differences, however. Debord's work implicitly assumes that only an intellectual elite can see through the spectacle; the masses are stricken

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bring forward any social freedom that does not interfere with another. Even the establishment of anarchy would not alter this. Consider: in an anarchist society, would people be free to behave in non-anarchist ways?

We can speak, in general or abstract terms, of freedoms that do not interfere with the freedom of others, but we cannot present a concrete account of any one of them, and even less can we practice them. In order to realise freedom we always have to choose, supporting this one and suppressing its contrary. Freedom is hard, complex and strenuous; its advocates do not help either freedom or their own movement when they hide its difficulties behind an evasive phrase.

George Walford

# About Baudrillard

with 'false consciousness'. Baudrillard attributes the withdrawal of the masses from the social to their cynicism and disenchantment.

Debord acknowledges that as individuals we can see the reality at the centre of the spectacle, and therefore leaves us with hope. Baudrillard sees no hope. For this reason, Debord is more likely than Baudrillard to meet with anarchist approval.

My initial reaction to any work by Baudrillard is the same as that of Jez: 'That parts of this essay may correspond to reality seems almost coincidental'. His main problem is that he has reduced society to what he refers to as 'the masses'. His work can make depressing reading, since his main thesis is that the masses have been irredeemably driven into a passive mode of behaviour by the modern industrial state.

'There is no other ideal of [the masses] to imagine, nothing to deplore, but everything to analyse in the brute fact of a collective retaliation and a refusal to participate in the recommended ideals.' The masses believe in nothing, are committed to no ideology, and are therefore essentially passive in their retaliation. To obey is to be free. To obey avoids 'hassle'. This is hyperconformity. We can only lament "the withdrawal of the masses into the domestic sphere, their refuge from history, politics and the universal, and their absorption into an idiotic humdrum existence of consumption".

Patronising, yes. But is there not a little truth in this? Any political activist who goes knocking on doors will tell you that 'withdrawal' is an understatement. The masses see the public antics of the door-knocking 'politico' as an infringement of their privacy. And admit it, how many times have you felt this about those bloody Jehovah's Witnesses? Jovo, politico, they're all selling dreams.

Few anarchists delude themselves that poor turnouts at elections can be interpreted as a mandate for anarchism. There is no intentional boycott; the electors simply can't be bothered. And of those who do vote, surveys suggest that they do so for instrumental reasons, because they perceive that they will be 'better off' under one regime rather than another. Considerations like 'the good of

the nation', 'class struggle' and 'moral standards' take a back seat to the economic consideration of themselves and their families.

Baudrillard's masses are 'differentiated' (isolated, separated), and their very differentiation makes them an undifferentiated mass, ineffectual in their myriad divisions. They resist all manipulation by silent defiance. "No one can be said to represent the silent majority, and that is their revenge".

Baudrillard's message is reactionary in that it assumes little or nothing can be done, the great ideas of history are dead, and the masses don't care. For anarchists, of course, the ideas and hopes that have collected under the banner of anarchism are 'great ideas of history' that we insist on keeping alive.

I hope I have retrieved Baudrillard's reputation somewhat by showing that his ramblings have a core of truth which anarchists might consider.

Ron Millichamp

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Thanks!

# Anarchist Communism

(continued from page 7)

Commune as an ancestor. Marxist-Leninists use it as a justification for the dictatorship of the proletariat. A more likely modern interpretation would be that it was a municipal revolt involving a decentralised political organisation. Peter Kropotkin, a well known Russian anarchist communist, wrote a book called *The Conquest of Bread* which argues how a city under siege conditions could feed itself, and comes to communist economic conclusions. Kropotkin also wrote a series of books attempting to show that technological/social progress was helping society move in an anarchist communist direction. At times Kropotkin's writings, while containing many interesting and inspiring insights, seem clearly to fit in very much with late nineteenth century evolutionary progressive optimism.

Élisée Reclus, another anarchist communist, was like Kropotkin a geographer. Reclus was in some ways a forerunner of the modern Green movement. For example, he advocated vegetarianism and had a belief in the importance of the right lifestyle. Like Kropotkin, he had an influence on the biologist and town planner Patrick Geddes.

Errico Malatesta was probably the most practical and realistic about the prospects of anarchism. He did not think it possible to immediately establish free communism everywhere and believed in the possibility of a whole range of economic organisational forms after a revolution.

After the experiences of the 1917 Russian Revolution a group of anarchist communists felt that the theory of anarchist organisation which had been applied in Russia was inadequate to the task

when faced with the rigidly disciplined centralised Leninist forms of organisation. The outcome of this was a pamphlet called *The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*. It demanded a tighter and more organised form of anarchism. At the time it was criticised by many prominent anarchists as being authoritarian. However, it does raise a series of questions about the rôle of anarchists in a revolutionary situation, to which I will return later. Later on, in 1953, the *Manifesto of Libertarian Communism* by Georges Fontenis was published in France which raised similar issues.

Whilst anarchist communism aspires to be a revolutionary movement, various critical questions can be raised. Clearly an important question is that of economics. How would an anarchist communist society function from an economic point of view?

With imagination it is possible to visualise a moneyless society with a very elementary technology. This would be a self-sufficient agrarian society. It would have to have a very low population to make it capable of existence. In such a society consumption could be according to needs, but high levels of responsibility would be expected.

Unfortunately most anarchist communists and most other people in the world would not feel it was desirable to go back to such a low level of technology. In a complex technological world some sort of market mechanism does seem necessary and to me this seems to involve some form of money.

In the past Malatesta realised the difficulty

involved in the immediate creation of communism and felt that there could be possible in society, after a libertarian revolution, a whole variety of economic arrangements. Perhaps in this sense the post-revolutionary society would involve, like modern society, a whole range of economic arrangements. Libertarians would of course continue to promote economic arrangements which they felt would favour their particular ideals.

This leads on to another aspect of anarchist communist theory. Like much socialist thought, many of the ideas are rooted in nineteenth century thought. A question to be faced is the question of the social revolution. This would be achieved by class struggle and the working class by its revolutionary efforts would abolish capitalism and the state. The belief in sudden total transformations of society can be attributed to a certain scientific optimism about social progress in existence before World War One. Whilst the twentieth century has given the world many revolutions which have amply justified the anarchist criticism of the state, anarchists have usually found themselves the early victims of other groups taking power.

It seems in revolutionary situations there is a problem for anarchist communists. This takes the form of the fact that it is easier for a minority to seize power with at least passive support from the rest of the population than for virtually the total population to destroy the state and prevent the creation of a new one. Clearly anarchist communists would reject the first alternative but desire the second situation. Also the majority of anarchist communists would accept the need for some form of organisation both before and during the revolution. Some anarchist communists would desire some sort of 'platform' organisation and here

there is a considerable danger of them sliding into some type of bolshevik organisation and practice.

It seems to me that revolutions are unlikely to establish an anarchist society. In effect various revolutions that we have seen over the last two hundred years have been minority revolts (even if at times a large minority). Modern anarchists need to seriously reconsider the whole question of the revolution. Pursuing a course of insurrections would seem to be inviting more failure. Most citizens at least in Western Europe (not being anarchists) regard people who talk about revolutions and the actual events with horror. Groups of self-styled 'revolutionaries' who talk about the need for violence but are incapable of organising or even getting on with each other are fortunately not taken too seriously!

I would suggest that a revolution can overthrow a weakened state but because of continuing forms of dominance cannot stop the creation of a new state.

Obviously if anarchists would like to help society to move in a libertarian direction they need to reconsider ideas. It would also seem that implementing anarchism will always be incomplete. I feel it implies the need to accept social reforms that give less than the abolishing of the state and capitalism. In the present, perhaps, modern anarchist communists should consider involvement in radical green groups, various cooperatives and schemes such as the LETS (Local Exchange Trading Scheme).

I would conclude that anarchist communism, at its best, does provide some of the best libertarian literature available. However, some of its ideas need to be examined and altered in the light of the late twentieth century.

D. Dane