

# ANARCHY 76

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## The melancholy scenario

PAUL GOODMAN

WE HAVE HAD MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS of the Cold War, whether as containment, deterrence, or now, evidently, expansion on our part. This is a long time and it has probably had irreversible effects. For a generation it has dislocated our economy, technology, science, and system of education. More new capital has been invested in military machinery than in all other production combined. Vast regions and their populations are entirely dependent on the war business, and we have developed a tribe of brainy and university-trained people who are good for nothing else. And finally, persisting year after year and dispensing subsidies, those who are the leaders in this enterprise have inevitably come to occupy the chief positions of power. Being what they are, they cannot think in any other terms than force or threat. Policy is made accordingly.

The American Republic was not designed for this career, and the signs are that it has lapsed. Certainly debate, considerations of justice and prudence, and shifts of public opinion and votes do not make much difference. The big money is allotted and the big deeds are committed anyway. When a proposal involves ten zeroes after the integer, there is no serious parliamentary review; it is only matters that are a hundred, a thousand, or a million times less expensive that are hotly discussed. There is a rising tide of a more populist kind of protest but it has as yet influenced no action, except stopping the bomb-shelters

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*This is the Preface to PAUL GOODMAN's new book Like a Conquered Province: the moral ambiguity of America (New York: Random House, \$4.95) which consists of his six Massey Lectures given on the Canadian radio last Autumn. "I would almost say," he concluded, "that my country is like a conquered province with foreign rulers, except that they are not foreigners, and we are responsible for what they do."*



and perhaps hastening the ban on nuclear testing.

By an unfortunate coincidence — except for the atom bombs **themselves I do not think it is an essential connection**—these years of the Cold War have also seen a new flowering of scientific technology, and this has been systematically abused for aggrandizement and power as well as the more traditional purpose of profits. A large part of new invention and productivity has been sequestered for war. Domestically, the new technology has been used mainly not for need, the simplification of existence, or the improvement of the environment, but for the aggrandizement of producing corporations and to increase a middle-class standard of living of diminishing satisfaction. And the export of technology to backward regions has not been tailored to their needs but has rather tended to shatter their societies, make them poorer and more degraded than before, and involve them in the Cold War.

Armed with our know-how and equipment, our present direction is clear. We are bound for the American Century when, hopefully, we will fall heir to much of the former British, Dutch and French Empires, to which we can export our Great Society in the form of technological wonders that we produce in too much profusion for our own use. We can usually find political leaders in the various regions who think that this is tip-top, though occasional farmers of varicoloured skins do not trust our good intentions.

I assume that the cold warriors of other Great Powers have had or will have roughly similar histories. And so the world is acting out the melancholy scenario of George Orwell's *1984*, the end of democracy, the abuse of technology, and indefinite war among a few giant empires.

It should be obvious by now that the vital conflict today is not between one bloc and another bloc, nor between Left and Right, but between a world-wide dehumanized system of things and human decency and perhaps survival. Yet only the young seem to recognize this—in remarkably identical language from Berkeley or Prague or Warsaw or Madrid. The people of my generation cannot see the woods for the trees. But the students will not come into their own for another 20 years, by which time there may not be any world left to come into.

I had the honour to be asked by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to give the Massey Lectures on a political theme. I should have liked in these lectures, if only to avoid repeating myself, to get away from morose criticism of my own country. What we need is philosophy, not polemic. Modern times confront us with such unique conditions and really confusing problems that it is a waste to spend one's spirit in attacking obvious abuses caused by bad motives and stupid policy. But alas, I must speak as an American. My family, friends, and fellow citizens are trapped in the events, and as a citizen I am responsible for the events. So I have come again to growling and complaining, and cheering on the few who want to make a change. . . .

## Police cameras and commandos

JOHN O'CONNOR

DURING 1964 THERE WAS AN UNUSUAL NUMBER of features and news items in the Liverpool newspapers whose subject was the state of the city's police force. They seemed to result more from urgent press releases and cries of woe from the police themselves than from a sudden interest in the force from press or public. We were told continually that the force was drastically undermanned and using outdated methods to fight a rising crime rate. On November 13th, 1964, we were given the first indication of what it was all leading up to.

Mr. Herbert R. Balmer, then Acting Chief Constable of Liverpool, announced his intention to form a commando force, his own romantic name, which now seems to be the official description of "just over 100 specially selected men and women from the city police force who would mix in disguise with the general public". They would work in conjunction with television cameras, "scanning the streets and transmitting pictures to a monitor in headquarters. Any suspicious behaviour would be passed on by radio to the commandos for quick action". While Mr. Balmer was announcing his plans they were already being given effect:

"Television engineers yesterday toured the centre of Liverpool, looking for vantage points for a closed circuit television system, which the acting Chief Constable, Mr. H. Balmer, has proposed should be installed to combat the rising crime rate. A report will be made as soon as possible and submitted to the Watch Committee for consideration. If the plan is accepted, cameras would be positioned on the tops of buildings in certain streets, with the pictures being relayed to a manned monitor in the police headquarters. A special squad would be available to act when needed." (*Guardian*, 14/11/64.)

If this tentative announcement of the cameras, as though their use was still under consideration, was a testing of public opinion, the police



must have been astounded at how quietly it was received. The only complaint about the proposal to install cameras, which showed any awareness of the implications was a letter, complete with Big-Brother comparison, to the *Guardian*. And even this came from somebody in Edinburgh.

Three days after the announcement of their existence, the new commando force came into operation. The sight of them, after their first briefing, brought a lyrical description from a *Liverpool Echo* reporter (16/11/64): "Then they walked from police headquarters in Hardman Street, some of them looking like young married couples or sweethearts about to buy engagement rings, others in twos or threes like young men looking for work or enterprising business men wearing trilbies and carrying rolled umbrellas."

Before the end of the week the cameras were also in operation. Presumably suitable sites had been found for them, a report prepared, the report submitted to the Watch Committee and the Watch Committee's consideration and approval given, and the work of installation started and completed—all in less than a week. Or perhaps, with the carefully prepared plans announced to a carefully prepared public without a murmur, work could start right away. It is difficult to imagine police cameras being introduced into almost any other British city with so little opposition. Not even in Manchester, a little more important for commerce than Liverpool, and certainly not in London, the base of dozens of reasonably enlightened pressure groups. Liverpool lacks a strong middle-class to be outraged about encroachments upon its privacy. The same middle-class, we hope, who will provide the main opposition to any scheme to fingerprint the whole population. And including the same influential people who were able to cause a fuss about mail-opening and phone-tapping. The immediate result of any liberation of people is always to remove pressure from the bonds which restrict freedom in the social reality. This is especially so in Liverpool, where the attitude of a mainly working-class, happy sort of people is: "If you've done nothing wrong, you've nothing to worry about".

On the same day that two-way radios were issued to Liverpool's constables on the beat, for the first time in Britain, it was announced that there was a meeting of police chiefs to discuss the previous night's traffic hold-up in the city centre. Who was surprised when they decided that the solution to traffic chaos would be to post three cameras to watch all the approach roads to the Mersey Tunnel, including London Road, St. John's Lane, Manchester Street, Lime Street, Dale Street, Whitechapel and Byrom Street? "The cameras will give us an on-the-spot picture of the traffic situation in the city centre. This means that we will be able to divert traffic before it approaches the vicinity of the tunnel. . . . The cameras will be manned 24 hours a day." (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 19/1/65.)

Unfortunately the last bit gave the game away. Anybody who

knows these streets, and anyone who doesn't know them, will guess that for at least a third of the 24 hours the cameras will be pointed at near-deserted streets. Or rather at lines of shops, offices and public buildings and odd people out at night. The fact that the police feel the need for deception at all, after so much success with their plans, shows that they at least are aware that the whole question of cameras watching the public is an unexploded bomb, even if so far the public has shown little interest in finding the fuse.

In what little publicity has been given to the activities of the commandos and the use of the cameras, the police have been able to lay stress on their use in an area of life which most people feel doesn't concern them. A world of coffee bars, criminals and Salvation Army hostels.

"Some obvious looking members of the tramp fraternity who booked into lodging houses in the central and dock areas of the city; long haired mods and rockers who were actually wearing wigs tapped their feet and fed money into juke boxes in the more sleezy joints, were never for a second suspected of being the Commando Crime-busters. For hours into the morning they listened to members of the underworld who scheme and plot in such places." (*Liverpool Echo*, 17/11/64.)

This naive and nasty piece of reporting might be too funny if it wasn't such a good example of the idea that there exists a dastardly criminal type living in his own sordid world apart. However, the police have not yet allowed, or what comes to the same thing with a timid local press, have not yet encouraged anyone to report the day to day activities of those policemen and policewomen disguised as students, housewives, workmen and businessmen. Where do they go and who do they mix with?

After the cameras and commandos had been working together for a week, a report was made to the Watch Committee. Alderman J. J. Cleary spoke on behalf of the Committee: "The committee accepted the report but insisted that the use of television would be restricted absolutely and entirely to crime and traffic." In a television interview, Mr. Balmer gave the assurance that the cameras would only be used for "crime in its narrowest sense".

In a remarkable interview and demonstration of the cameras, given to the *Illustrated London News* (16/1/65), in contrast to the restrained and carefully worded releases to the Liverpool press, the police couldn't resist showing just what their new cameras could do. "I know that character there," said one constable monitoring a screen, as he focussed the lens on a figure in the street. He tracked the man from litter-box to litter-box. 'I think,' the constable added, 'I would always recognise known criminals from my division in the street.'

And so we learn, for the first time, that if a constable watching a television screen fancies someone as a known criminal, he can focus



the cameras on him and follow him down the street. Also in the same article, in case any honest folk still believed that the commando at least wouldn't touch them if they did nothing wrong: "Disguises were so successful at first that more than once, one team of commandos spent more than 45 minutes watching another team, whom they thought were acting suspiciously, and only found out their real identity when they tried to move in on them."

Plain-clothes policemen are not something new, of course. Nor, for special work, are policemen in disguise, which I take to mean something different. But infiltration, on this scale, of policemen into everyday life is a horrible new step. At present the number of men and women in the commando force is probably well over the original 100 or so. And one effect of the change-over from uniform to disguise, together with the increasing use made of motor-bike and patrol car for those policemen still in uniform, is that the recognisable "bobby" is becoming a rare sight in the city centre. Only one or two recruits and the seven-foot coppers, who wouldn't be disguised as anything else, seem to be left. The modern police force, in Liverpool as in the rest of the country, is putting aside many of its plodding social duties and becoming an efficient little army concentrating on what we always knew were its main purposes. (In Kirkby, a morgue of a new industrial estate near Liverpool, some trouble began among a big crowd of young people outside a chip shop. Within ten minutes 17 police cars had arrived at the scene!)

The new methods used by the Liverpool police do not extend their function but intensify it. All the institutions of the modern state, with the help of science and their studies of society, are moving towards the conclusion of their own logic. If we are to have a police force at all, why not the most efficient force which technology and psychology make possible? This is one of the questions about which a Communist or a liberal, both moving arbitrary lines backwards and forwards, will find it increasingly difficult to settle on an answer. What will one day be the absolutes of the modern state will have as their only alternative the absolutes of anarchy. Even in the microscopic situation of there being police cameras in Liverpool, for instance, it would be unrealistic to seek limitations on the use of the cameras and commandos and not to expect the police to use every instrument placed in their hands to carry out every aspect of their function. To expect a policeman, say, who sees a drunk twisting car aerials into pretty shapes, not to pass the news on by radio because the offence isn't covered by the definition "crime in its narrowest sense".

In December 1966 the cameras were used outside Liverpool for the first time, at Old Trafford, Manchester, to watch the crowd at the Liverpool v. Manchester United football match. This has further significance in that football hooliganism is a recently defined area of offence, not a new phenomenon. The police now haul out of the crowd, quite at random, people they hear using offensive language. As usual,

whatever the indignation of the day happens to be, it has little relation to reality. Was anybody embarrassed when a small voice noted that there were more prison breaks in 1965 than in 1966? A situation in which it is difficult to see who is mirroring what, has obvious advantages to the police. They have only to declare all-out war on thefts from public telephone boxes for all lesser public menaces to realise that telephone boxes have money in them, and so come out to meet the police on a few square battlegrounds which the police themselves have chosen. The power of any authoritarian minority depends, of course, not so much on its physical presence as on its ability to draw the mental lines around which all the skirmishing takes place. As a father defines the badness of his children or a society decides for its rebels their acts of rebellion, so the police define their own criminals.

In many areas of behaviour, however, things which used to be considered deviant have been absorbed into the accepted, whereas the police continue to increase the isolation of the things they deal with. (Perhaps providing another example of the way in which a balance seems to be kept between an illusory personal freedom and real state power. Not that we can flatter those with that power by thinking that this is a conscious aim, but things work that way, and in the meantime a lot of the harmful energy which won't be needed to press a few buttons, can now go round in circles in a betting shop or various beds.)

At the moment, the police would not define too great an area of crime completely beyond their control. They must always be seen to be in the front line, taking all the knocks and just managing to hold back the horde of evil-doers. A time is conceivable, however, when what is considered crime at present, could be almost stamped out by a modern police force. What other forms of deviant behaviour will be defined as crime by this idle and magnificent force waiting to flex its muscles? Walking along a road at, say, 2 a.m. is regarded by most policemen as highly abnormal. Unfortunately, since it isn't an offence, when a good prospect is seen committing this act he must be descended upon in large numbers and be proved to have committed something in the book. And if he hasn't up till then, there's always the possibility that he'll be driven to hit one of them, give a wrong name and address, or say a bad word.

Whatever the reasons any individual might have for joining a police force, and they are probably quite honourable ones, he becomes a worker whose productivity is measured by the number of convictions he has some hand in. (More true of the individual policeman who, after all, is the one most likely to meet the customers, than it is of the police chiefs who might have more of an interest in seeing the number of convictions in a district decrease.) This gives a policeman one of the most obnoxious of vested interests and we cannot suppose that he won't act out of what, in a different context, would be a normal wish not to harm the market for his services. Or that he won't give the thing a little stir during the slack periods. If a policeman is to be a



good policeman he must become as ugly as the function he performs; and it's odd that a society which puts men into this position, and the social theorists who see no way out of it, when both hardly expect their leaders to act out of much else except personal ambition, should expect in their policemen a vague love of justice to overcome logical self-interest.

The new methods used by the Liverpool police against crime have been very successful in the way intended. Infra-red cameras are being used during the night and it has recently been announced that cameras are being positioned in outlying districts of Liverpool, although we don't yet know which ones. The 1966 crime figures for Liverpool, just released, show a huge drop in the number of offences committed in the city and a huge increase in the percentage of those detected. Many other forces in the country must be looking on enviously.

In the House of Commons, Mr. John Tilney, Conservative MP for Wavertree, has spoken of the remarkable success of Liverpool's new crime fighting methods. "We want crime in Britain abated and Liverpool has shown the way to do it." In answer to a question by him, it was stated that the Liverpool police are co-operating with the Home Office—providing statistics to enable analyses to be quickly completed and that any useful results would be quickly communicated to other police authorities. It must now be only a question of time before police in other cities attempt to install cameras to watch the public, but I don't think it will happen as quietly as it has been allowed to in this Northern city. It will become what is known as a "national issue" with attendant publicity. Any strong opinion which emerges against what is admittedly mainly a vast potential menace at the moment, could have repercussions in Liverpool, perhaps even forcing the dismantling of the cameras.

## How many years to Nineteen-Eightyfour?

R. SMILDE

GEORGE ORWELL'S *1984* is part of traditional Western thought on totalitarianism. The book has not been widely read for a decade or so, and remains unread by thousands, but readers and non-readers alike are familiar with Orwell's bleak picture of a life dominated by the Party. But, alongside Huxley and Kafka, *1984* is treated as a grim, totalitarian fantasy and as such its content is largely dismissed. Its main function as part of Western ideology has been in support of the cause of anti-Communism, which, of course, was not the whole of Orwell's intention. Unlike *Brave New World* and *The Trial*, *1984* contains a quite serious piece of social theorising which I believe deserves closer attention. (It appears interpolated in the narrative in the form of a revolutionary treatise which is instrumental in Winston Smith's downfall.)

Before going on to give a brief account of Orwell's views, it should be noted that his treatise is of the most generalised kind. Written in 1948, it purports to be an account of relations between the great powers from the '50s onwards, the pattern of wars and of overall tendencies in society. It is perhaps best described as dealing with the sociology of war. Orwell's outlook is one which ascribes little significance to stated ideals, aims and intentions, to justifications, agreements and alliances, and to the particular way in which conflicts begin and end. Nevertheless, I believe he illuminates present day relations between America, Russia and China and especially, in his treatment of Central

R. SMILDE's article is reproduced from *The Bulletin of the Libertarian Society of Sydney University*, where it appeared under the title "The Endless War".



Asia and the nature and location of modern war, illuminates the present conflict in Vietnam.

It is best, I think, to start with Orwell's predictions, since they were wrong in at least one important respect, a respect which led him to a picture of future society which is "way out" for most people and enables them to treat his work as a fantasy.

Orwell postulated an atomic war in the early '50s, creating an extreme state of emergency in which it seemed natural and necessary to hand over all power to a small caste. It meant the end of the democratic forms of government, and led to a specialised, self-conscious form of totalitarianism. Orwell saw the seeds of this modern form of government as already present in Eurasia (Russia and Europe) and Oceania (America, Britain, and the Atlantic islands, Australasia and South Africa). During the '50s a third super-state emerged, Eastasia (China, Japan and various nearby states). The atomic war is called off by mutual, unstated agreement when it becomes clear that its continuance will leave the ruling groups with nothing to rule over. In the following decade, the three super-states, while in some sense continually at war with one another, consolidate their positions and become all-powerful within their own territory. Each of the three powers stockpiles atomic bombs, maintains an arms race and has as its overall aim the destruction of the other two. War hysteria is continual and universal in all countries. It is in this setting that the narrative unfolds (Orwell takes Oceania but it could have been either of the other two).

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"To understand the nature of the present war—for in spite of the regrouping which occurs every few years, it is always the same war—one must realise in the first place that it is impossible for it to be decisive. None of the three super states could be definitively conquered even by the other two in combination. They are too evenly matched and their natural defences are too formidable. Eurasia is protected by its vast land spaces, Oceania by the width of the Atlantic and the Pacific, Eastasia by the fecundity and industriousness of its inhabitants."

Orwell sees the three states as inviolate and the balance of power as always roughly even. This fact of inviolability is tacitly recognised, to the extent that none of the three ever really makes a move which could lead to all-out fighting in one of the three super-states.

Modern war, then, is continual but necessarily indecisive. In addition it takes place, not in the centres of civilisation, but in the disputed territories.

"War is no longer the desperate, annihilating struggle that it was in the early decades of the 20th century. This is not to say that either the conduct of the war, or the prevailing attitude towards it, has become

less bloodthirsty or more chivalrous. But in a physical sense war involves very small numbers of people, and causes comparatively few casualties. The fighting, when there is any, takes place on the vague frontiers whose whereabouts the average man can only guess at. In the centres of civilisation war means no more than a continuous shortage of consumption goods. War has in fact changed its character. Motives which were already present to some small extent in the great wars of the early 20th century have now become dominant."

What are the motives of modern war? Orwell recognises an economic motive, but sees it as comparatively insignificant.

That disputed territory between the three super-states, a rough quadrilateral bounded by Tangier, Brazzaville, Darwin and Hong Kong, contains a fifth of the world's population and is rich in certain primary products, notably rubber. Whoever conquers all or part of this territory has at his disposal the labour power of scores of millions of hard-working and ill-paid coolies. But this labour power, in Orwell's view, will only be used in the race to increase fighting power, to turn out more armaments, to capture more territory, to control more labour power, to increase fighting power and so on indefinitely. The increase in labour power and material gained through conquest adds nothing to the economy of the super-state, which is state-controlled, self-sufficient and geared to war. "The labour of the exploited peoples round the Equator is not really necessary to the world's economy. If they did not exist, the structure of world society, and the process by which it maintains itself, would not be essentially different."

Orwell sees continuous war as the essential element in the process by which the hierarchical structure of world society maintains itself. The belief underlying Orwell's pessimistic view of society is a familiar one which requires no elaboration here. It is a belief in continuing oligarchy; the inevitable outcome of revolution, no matter in what name, is the establishment of a new ruling class. This theory is meant to inform major political and social changes in past as well as present times. But there is a crucial difference between the 20th century and those previous.

Most of the revolutions of the past were carried out in the name of liberty and equality, and were supported by the dispossessed in the hope of future utopia. But in the 20th century the fantastic advances made possible by science and the machine heralded a new era in which general wealth, and hence equality, became a real and obvious possibility.

"It was clear that an all-round increase threatened the destruction of a hierarchical society. If it once became general, wealth would confer no distinction. It was possible, no doubt, to imagine a society in which wealth should be evenly distributed while power remained in the hands of a small privileged caste. But in practice such a society could not



long remain stable.”

Orwell's central view, then, is that: “The primary aim of modern warfare is to use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living.”

There are other ways of restricting the output of goods, and of restricting their distribution: ways which we in capitalist society are familiar with. Deliberate waste, stockpiling, financial manipulation, simple mismanagement and inefficiency, recessions and depressions. But these breed discontent and vocal opposition and tend to undermine the stability of government.

The point about continuous war and war hysteria is that it accomplishes the destruction of the products of human labour in a psychologically acceptable way. A continuing state of emergency engenders fear, and acceptance of authority, and makes opposition an act of treachery. In such circumstances, it seems natural to let the leaders do the leading and to stifle one's demands for a “better” way of life.

The true motive power, then, of modern war is internal political stability. Given these conditions—a troika of invulnerable powers, and a continual war, distorted by propaganda but in fact limited in purpose and location—the ruling group is free to continue and extend its sway over its subjects. In an atmosphere of insecurity, punctuated by sudden crises, the ruling group extends the state apparatus and the state power and looks to its *own* security, without having to worry about the possibly disastrous consequences of a *real* war. In such a society, opposition is harshly dealt with, even though feeble; science and the machine are used for war and the control of the populace, and any man who often dreams of what might have been achieved by the machine will surely go out of his mind.

(Note: With reference to Orwell's claim that some of these features of modern war were already present in earlier wars, one should note Randolph Bourne's *War is the Health of the State*, written in America during World War I.)

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It is clear that modern society has not taken the form that Orwell predicted. The disastrous consequences of an atomic war are central to his view. That war has not occurred, and society has not been divided into three super-states along strict Orwellian lines. The democratic forms of government have not been destroyed and economies are not completely state-controlled.

Life in our society is not the bleak, impoverished, thoroughly repressive one of 1984.

Nevertheless, there is a compelling accuracy in some of his predic-

tions, an almost uncanny aptness in his description of modern war, which suggests that his thesis is of value if taken as exhibiting *tendencies*, rather than hard facts.

To approach the problem of evaluating Orwell another way, do you not find that there are several puzzling features about the turn of events in the '50s and '60s?

What happened to the imminent atomic war of the early '50s, and to World War III between America and Russia?

Why is it that none of the crises have led to a major world war?

In particular, why was there no possibility even of Western intervention in Hungary? Why did Khrushchev “unaccountably” back down in Cuba at the last, crucial moment?

Orwell's theory of the inviolability of the great states offers a coherent explanation, particularly, I would say, with regard to Cuba.

Although Orwell predicted an atomic war, he also predicted its cessation before the destruction became really devastating. We have not experienced such a war; and is it not the most likely explanation that American and Russian leaders knew that each had at their disposal bombs hundreds of times more powerful than those that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki? (Truman could “afford” to drop those bombs, Japan being helpless and unable to retaliate in kind.)

While people, for several years after World War II, thought in terms of a major war between the great, hostile states, what in fact has happened is very much along Orwellian lines. China is emerging as a third force, a factor which has, temporarily at least, changed the nature of American-Russian relations. And what fighting has taken place has been located in the “disputed territory”, i.e. in Malaya, Korea, the Middle East, along the Indian frontiers, and now in Vietnam.

If the Orwellian picture does not really strike home up till now, it surely does in Vietnam.

Is not this conflict, most clearly, an indecisive one, for all that it is being fought with the fury of a major war and accompanied by appropriate propaganda? It is located in a part of the world little known to most Westerners till now. The presence of America in Vietnam is a mystery to most of us, and the stated aims of the war rarely make sense. The interests of the Vietnamese themselves are clearly secondary, if not totally unimportant. The description of Eastasia as a powerful state protected by the industriousness and fecundity of its inhabitants would surely strike home to those American and Australian soldiers taking part in this unwinnable war.

Speaking more generally, for twenty years now we have lived in a



continuing state of Cold War, flaring from time to time into a fierce but limited and indecisive conflict in a region remote from the hearts of our society. Throughout this time we have been conditioned by periodic confrontations and crises to think in terms of preparedness for emergency, and to accept vast expenditure on defence as a necessary condition of survival. None of the fears accompanying these crises have been realised, but each crisis *has* been accompanied by outbursts of patriotism and political repression of the familiar anti-Communist kind. Never was this more clear than in the early '50s, when, with Korea in the background, the fear of atomic war reached hysterical proportions and McCarthyism was rampant.

Considerations such as these strongly incline one to discard the traditional explanations of war, and to look closer to home for the true motives.

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It is the brilliance of some of Orwell's predictions that draws attention to his theories, though this is not sufficient to demonstrate the validity of those theories. It is sufficient to ascribe considerable relevance to his views, a relevance which becomes the more compelling in the absence of other coherent explanations.

One of the consequences of taking Orwell seriously is a complete hardening of whatever anti-Vietnam and anti-conscription feelings one has. Conscription is not simply an interference with individual liberty, or a "misplaced" military expedient, it becomes yet another mechanism for inducing a state of fear and emergency, another mechanism for reinforcing authority and stifling opposition, another mechanism for wasting the products of human labour.

The fact that (in Australia) conscription has met with such unexpected resistance is a mark of the fact that we do not live in 1984. But only if that opposition leads to a withdrawal from Vietnam and a reversal of Western involvement in Asia, could one say that the themes of 1984 are really remote and fantastic.

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## The noble experiment

JACK ROBINSON

IN THE YEAR 1993 the dangers of the inhalation of the nicotine tars came to be a focal issue in the campaigns waged by women's organizations. Women like Judy Knight had waged a hatchet war against cigarette machines; and lobbying had succeeded in getting cigarette posters banned and advertising time denied to the agencies on television. Certain clergymen with largely feminine congregations (which meant a great many of them) preached sermons against nicotine and failed to find any scriptural sanction for the noxious weed. The anti-cigarette faction found allies in the Empire Party which wished to limit foreign imports, and since tobacco was a product of the United States it was un-British to smoke. Even that little of the fragrant weed which was grown in the British possessions was "wasting acreage which might be used to grow food".

The Empire Party and the United States supporters (backed by the tobacco companies) stormed the country with a campaign for and against smoking. Bands against dope were formed with pledges signed renouncing the vile habit of inhaling, or exhaling. The Church was so largely committed to the anti-tobacco interests that personal salvation seemed to imply the renunciation of tobacco.

The history of the struggle against the cigarette was long and complicated. The definitive history has yet to be written but a summary, although omitting some of the details, can give but an outline of this history of human stupidity.

The first step in the regulation of the traffic was to prohibit minors from buying cigarettes. Birth certificates were demanded at the shops but this was circumvented by adults getting cigarettes for minors. Minors were prosecuted for smoking but this risk was found to give an additional "kick" to an already forbidden pleasure. The "smoke-shops" (which sold nothing else but tobacco) were granted limited licences, their numbers were limited, based upon the populated area, and their hours were severely curtailed and strictly supervised. No smoking was allowed *off* the licensed premises and if a customer was seen exhaling smoke after leaving licensed premises he was deemed to be under the



influence of nicotine and was summoned and fined. If a motorist was detected dropping ash in his car he was arrested for the criminal offence of driving whilst under the influence of cigarettes, his eyesight was tested and if it was below perfect he would lose his driving permit. Regulations were made that smoking was allowed in the "smoke-shops" standing up but not sitting down, some "smoke-shops" had a licence for cigarettes to be supplied with alcohol only, and smoke-clubs sprang up that could supply "smokes" at all times to members. During all this period the tax on tobacco rose higher and higher. At first it was thought to be a way of limiting the consumption of tobacco but such was the craving that any amount would be paid and the government began to rely upon the income from the tax to balance their budgets.

The licensed trade, as the tobacco trade was known, decided to try and set its own house in order. It decided to classify tobacco into these categories: "A" for adults only, strong in nicotine; "X", strong in nicotine and tars; and "U", weak in nicotine. Children were only allowed to smoke "U" tobacco alone, they could smoke "A" if an adult was with them to see that they didn't inhale. Adults could, of course, smoke "A", "X" or "U" brands, but they tended to develop a taste for "X" brand. Now and again the government of local authorities would ban a complete consignment in a rather arbitrary manner. It was thought in the main that the trade was not the proper body to regulate consumption so this fell into disuse.

An early experiment in the complete banning of tobacco was tried in one county with severe imprisonments and fines for possession of tobacco. The merest shred was sufficient to produce a conviction and the campaign in this county was so vigorous against "the weed" that detectives covered themselves with glory and a reputation for zeal by "planting" cigarettes or fragments of tobacco on likely candidates. At the same time, the seizure of loads of tobacco tended to make an artificial scarcity and increase the price. Addicts found themselves resorting to other crimes in order to raise the necessary price for a "puff" or a "draw". Imprisonment was accompanied for addicts by the sadistic torture of total withdrawal of supplies which led in some cases to total mental collapse.

In a neighbouring county tobacco smokers were classified and issued with cards from their National Health doctors as registered "tobacco addicts". They were given regular chemists' prescriptions for a daily allocation which they were allowed until such time as, in their own words, they "kicked the habit". Irregularities invariably occurred such as forgery of prescriptions and alteration of quantities, but in the main the "habit" tended not to increase, except by immigrants from neighbouring counties and the registration and issue of prescriptions served to de-glamorize the cigarettes for teenagers.

Outside of these two counties another attempt was being made to control smoking by legislation. From time to time various brand consignments of cigarettes were seized and the manufacturer, grower and

shopkeeper were charged with manufacturing, growing or offering for sale tobacco, "the nature of which is likely to deprave and corrupt the taste of any person into whose mouth such cigarettes may be placed". The defence was usually made that the cigarette was not made with such a purpose in mind, that cigarettes of equal calibre had been marketed for many years but it was pointed out by the magistrates that cigarettes over a certain age and cigarettes in a high price category were obviously outside the reach of the man-in-the-street and could therefore do him no harm. The market was flooded with expensive cigarettes generally scented and wrapped in rose leaves, and with antique vintage tobaccos which had been held by the magistrates to be harmless.

On the other hand the other side of the market was flooded with cheap, nasty and harmless cigarettes, made, so some alleged, from horse manure. Nevertheless, the magistrates, "having no scientific tests or training for measuring depravity and corruption of taste" (indeed assuming such a thing existed, as some scientists doubted) prosecuted these along with the rest.

A Mr. Jenkins introduced a variant on the procedure by putting through a bill which made it necessary for the magistrate (or the jury) to smoke a whole cigarette instead of taking a few "drags" and then condemning the assignment. It was also rendered admissible as evidence that the ground on which the tobacco was grown should be healthy and that the motive of the makers and vendors should be pure and not merely commercial; artistry in the manufacture of cigarettes was also found to be a mitigating circumstance. However the production of cigarettes or tobacco did not decline.

An attempt was then made to control the sale of cigarettes by limiting them to credit customers who would then get them by post. The postmen were fully employed in the delivery of cigarettes. A small illegitimate cigarette trade was carried on furtively at street corners and in workshops. So frequent were police prosecutions in this matter that it was felt that the time of the police was being unduly occupied.

The result was the Street Offences Bill which increased the penalties and drove the peddlers underground. Notices appeared in shop windows "Young Lady gives sexual intercourse", "Unusual sexual tastes catered for". This was a smoke-screen for what really went on. The retail small-time peddler of cigarettes went out of business and "smoke dens" sprang up in Paddington, Bayswater and the better parts of Fulham governed by "tobacco barons".

The differences between men and women smoking had always been insisted upon and coupled with the Street Offences Bill—there was a drive against male smokers, even if it took place in private. Detectives loitered in public conveniences and offered male persons cigarettes. If they accepted them they were arrested for "importuning". Females could hand round cigarettes amongst females with impunity.

The religious repercussions of smoking were curious. The Catholic Church had an unyielding objection to filter tips, theologians of the



church devised methods of exhaling without inhaling, of not finishing cigarettes, of times when smoking was safe. It was rather difficult to buy filter tips, the market being a hole and corner method. In many countries filter tips were banned altogether and an extensive smuggling trade went on.

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All these measures of regulating and limited controlling of cigarette consumption were found to be failures. In 1994 the acute menace of war and the absence of a great number of citizens on mobilization service made it possible to be put on the statute book the Eighteenth Amendment to Magna Carta prohibiting the manufacture, sale or importation of tobacco. This was rushed through parliament by reason of the need to conserve shipping space for foodstuffs and the need for workers and fighting-men to be in fit physical condition to face up to the menace of whatever would be the menace when they were fit enough to face up to it.

There were, of course, loopholes in the law. It did not apply to Scotland, Wales or Ireland and border guards had to be strengthened to keep out tobacco smugglers.

The price of tobacco on the illegal market rose so high that the trade attracted vast numbers of hoodlums and racketeers for the transport, smuggling and marketing of the "bootleg" tobacco. "Smoke-easies" opened up on almost every corner and police, judges and politicians were bribed and bought to permit the importation of tobacco.

Bootleggers went into the tobacco manufacturing business and the uncured rhubarb leaves were mixed with small quantities of real tobacco and palates ruined for lack of the "real stuff" surreptitiously inhaled this garbage and many died or ruined their bronchial tracts with the foul vapours. College students took to carrying illegal cigarette cases in their hip pockets and many a necking party was followed by inhalation with its attendant evils.

In addition to this, prohibition created an empire of suppliers who corrupted the police, prohibition agents, judges and politicians for the privilege of marketing tobacco. There grew up disputes about territories, hi-jacking of loads and the double-crossing which is the normal outcome of business relationships but, being denied the sanction of legality which dignifies such disputes in the boardroom, the law court, the stock exchange and the bankruptcy courts, the disputants resorted to the machine gun, the sawn-off shotgun and the "pineapple" or hand grenade. This alarmed both smokers and non-smokers and in 1994 an opportunist President gained cheap popularity by freeing tobacco from prohibition under a "New Deal". The gangsters transferred their activities to kidnapping and bank robbery.

Since then there have been few legislative attempts on such a grand scale to control the noxious weed. It has been realized that smoking is a disease of civilization. For civilization, alas, there seems to be no cure. One inevitably dies of it.

## Stay-in strike at Besancon

**CHRIS MARLER**

THIS INTERVIEW was recorded by Chris Marker at the Besancon branch of the Rhone-Poulenc cartel, during a strike which involved the occupation of the factory on 25th February, 1967. Rhodiaceta is one of the two textile corporations owned by Rhone-Poulenc. Rhone-Poulenc is managed by the former governor of the Bank of France, Wilfrid Baumgartner. It employs 100,000 workers, its total turnover is about £1,000 million a year. It possesses a number of chemical works, two pharmaceutical factories, Specia and Theraplix, and manufactures 33% of all synthetic fibres in the Common Market. Until the beginning of this year, Rhodiaceta had the French monopoly for polyester fibres (sold under the name of "Tergal") and was the second largest French producer of nylon and the largest producer of cellulose acetate (artificial silk).

Rhodiaceta has factories at Besancon (3,000 workers), in the Lyon area (7,000 workers, at Vaise, Saint-Fons, and Venissieux) and at Peage-de-Rousillon (4,000 workers producing acetate silk).

Chris Marker's comments of the effect of the interview on himself are as follows:

"On 9th March, I went to the Rhodiaceta factory at Besancon armed with a tape-recorder. It had been on strike since 25th February and had been occupied by the workers. They spoke to me for three hours, quite frankly and openly raising and debating amongst themselves all their problems whether immediate or not. The conversations below are extracts from these tapes.

"Several important themes can be located. First of all the description of the condition of the working class which contradicts all the great contemporary myths about the 'consumer's society', 'abundance' and the disappearance of class barriers. Even if they underline mostly nervous exhaustion, culture poverty, more than hunger and physiological poverty, the acuity of unsatisfied needs and the intensity of poverty are denounced just as thoroughly as they were a century ago but in a different language.



"In the time of 'the end of class struggle' and the 'collapse of Marxism', these workers define alienation ('they want to make us into robots'), the new dimensions of pauperisation ('I lived better seven years ago'), the necessity for working class solidarity ('it's not just us alone that will make Rhone-Poulenc shake'), and proletarian internationalism ('if you don't give a damn about Cuba, the blokes at Lyon could say they don't give a damn about Rhodia at Besancon').

"Finally, and most important, it is striking how these workers unite their immediate economic claims to a fundamental questioning of the working class condition and of capitalist society. Man's dignity as a worker, the meaning of work and life, are at the head of any list of their ideas. Hence the point is not that they want to negotiate only wage claims, insuring their integration into the 'affluent society', but to challenge that society itself and its means of 'compensation'. The myth of 'integration' by means of the automobile, the washing-machine, falls to bits, and one is struck by the evidence that, despite all kinds of differences, the revolution remains just as vital an idea in the France of 1967 as it did at the time of Villerme's study."

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*A:* Our work never stops. The shops never shut down. There are four teams that keep the factory going twenty-four hours out of twenty-four hours. That means, mate, that we've got only one free Sunday out of a month. All other Sundays we work either mornings, nights, or afternoons. Family life is completely wrecked. A bloke is asleep when the kids are about, and when he's off to the job at night he misses any kind of contact with the kids. What's more, most of the blokes at Rhodioceta live in council flats where it's damned hard to get a good night's sleep, a life that ties in with the kind of work they want from us. The social situations of blokes at Rhodioceta don't do anything at all to improve work conditions. In fact, our lives outside the factory become just as marginal, outside life, as work in the factory.

*B:* More and more we're tied down to production in the most disgusting way. I mean that there's only one thing that counts in this factory and that's production. If the workers decided to occupy the factory it's because they just couldn't stick it any more. They had to take the situation in hand. Everyone must realise that man is tied only to profit . . . increasingly. That's what we want: we say that we want to live holding our heads in the air.

Some blokes here have been part of a team for ten years. What happened to them? They've got stomach troubles. They're not exactly alcoholics but they're getting that way more and more. . . . Take a bloke who stays at home in his council flat after a night's work. At 10 a.m. or even 9 a.m. the neighbours begin sweeping or banging on the central heating. He finds he can't stay in. So he goes out. It's mostly among the blokes who've been in the shops longest that you find the ones who drink; because it's the only possible way out, that's what. The more you've got a new factory . . . (this one's only ten

years old, this shop), the more you find beaten men. It's a big problem for the union. In fact, man's own personal dignity is destroyed in such a factory.

*A:* What's more the work turns us into animals. That's exactly what they're looking for, proles, blokes who don't operate except that they're there to work and that's all. How do you expect a bloke who's slaved away in the shops for eight hours at Rhodia to try to develop his intellect? Out of the question, that. A bloke goes home, bango there's the telly, so he goes to sleep in front of it before an hour's up. Our whole life is so bloody conditioned by this work that we do in the factory that we've just got to do something.

*C.M.:* How did all this business begin?

*B:* For the last few months, in the first place, there've been these stoppages of about two hours on Sundays. And one day, a really fine Saturday, 25th February, two teams got together by their shop stewards in front of the shops decided that this time it's finished, we'll not go into the shops again, and then, we'll go in but only to work. We'll occupy the shops. It started just like that.

*A:* Yes. Since last November there've been stoppages every Sunday. Twenty-five in all, to improve work conditions especially for the teams.

*B:* You ought to know that we work with the temperature at over 85 and a humidity of 75%. We work on machines in stages. First there's the hot sheet of metal, then the heating wheels, and the bobbins which are about 20 pounds to lift in a space of time judged by a timer. Once that's done you do the same thing again. Resting time between one machine and another is five minutes. If you go to piss, if you sit down too long, you miss your bonus, they deduct 3-5% from your pay or some trick like that.

*A:* Yes . . . it just couldn't go on like that. But the bosses never took our stoppages seriously. They were still hiring blokes until the beginning of January. Then on 15th January they announced: "I've got too many hands around, I've got to sack some of you". They told us: you've got rest days coming to you (that's 'cause we work on holidays); well, then, why don't you just take them? Well, how's that? We need our rest days when things are going well, not to be unemployed. Besides this kind of unemployment, it's absolute crap and we've said it. Hence our mates decided to do something about it. That was Saturday, 25th February. We wanted all sackings stopped. Some of our mates slave away in these teams on short-time for £7 a week. With a family it's just unthinkable.

Then we took this big step. We occupied the factory and we've been here ever since. We'll hold on, but this movement of ours is also against the whole society that we live in. The workers are conscious of what it's all about. We ought to be able to participate in making the economic life of this country, not letting it fall into the



hands of five or six blokes. As far as unemployment, the union had fixed it all up. The shops were worried by other factories that pay more than we do, there was lots of orders in Rhodia for its blokes, and they could have filled them. That's what I mean, this sacking business is absolute crap. It's planned to stifle the feelings of us blokes.

*B:* Excuse me. I think it's a point that a lot of blokes have said is awfully important. Me, I don't think it's important at all. If the bosses decided to put R. in Besancon, that's because R. ought to be in Besancon. I don't think by taking things out on the local manager that we'll give the blokes a good perspective on the struggle. I don't think that by writing "R. is a dictator" in the streets that's really going to solve any problems, just the opposite. It's just folklore and doesn't solve anything, nothing at all.

*A:* You don't want to make a big noise about the bloke, but it's only to show the blokes that for the four years here he is, and never have we been able to have any kind of contact with the bloke.

*B:* Oh no. We ought to thank him, I say, because now the real problems have come up. It's class against class, like we're fighting now. And R., well he's just a poor representative . . . caricature of that class, and that's great . . . all the better I say, they've really messed up here. . . .

*C.M.:* What's the present state of things?

*A:* There are negotiations both on the local and national level, the national ones in Lyon. You ought to know that from the very first day our mates in Lyon have done just what we're doing here, except that they're not occupying their shops, but anyway the factory's completely deserted and has completely shut down. Because of that, the bosses have been forced to negotiate on a national level, and that's just what we've always wanted, 'cause we're not mad, not us. We 3,000 workers at Besancon are not going to shake Rhone-Poulenc on our own. But once all of Rhone-Poulenc is at stake—that is, Lyon, Besancon, Roussillon, Valence, Saint-Fons—well, then they'll crack. Take yesterday, over 14,000 workers at Rhodiaceta were practically on strike.

*C.M.:* For the same things?

*B:* No. To be precise about things, the strike started with the workers who work as the 4/8 (four teams working eight hours—C.M.) production workers. But we also raise the claims of all those blokes working 2/8 and even the hourlies. 'Cause the bosses have tried to divide our blokes in Lyon and Besancon working on the 4/8 from those working on the 2/8 and the hourlies. We will only negotiate on the level of the whole industry, because the workers, and I mean all the workers, all have claims to make, and we're fighting so that all the claims will be satisfied.

*A:* There's something important here to be pointed out and that's what the tribunal said. (The High Tribunal of Besancon condemned the strike for threatening private property—C.M.) It seems we're illegal

now. Well, what is being legal? When our fate as human beings is at stake, their legality no longer exists.

*B:* Legality, it makes me laugh, given that three months ago the same Tribunal condemned the bosses of Rhodia for re-hiring a fired comrade, a shop steward, and he never had been re-hired anyway.

*C.M.:* How's that?

*B:* Well, during an interview the Prefect of the area asked us: "What do you want from me? How can you expect me to put two companies of police about so that one of your shop stewards could be re-hired?" Well, now, today they've got two companies of police standing about the factory so as the bosses can go into the shops. Where is legality there?

*A:* It's class justice, that's what.

*C.M.:* In Paris, we've the impression that your action has started a different kind of social climate in France.

*B:* That's just what we felt the first day of the strike. And if we feel it any less now, that's because we're in the midst of the strike. But the first days it was pretty clear. We felt it, the blokes who came felt it. Something was really happening just then in Rhodiaceta. . . . There were blokes who said: it's 1936 all over again. I should point out that Rhodiaceta is a factory that really moves, and we felt that we had used up all the classical approaches. We've had everything here at Rhodiaceta, even a lock-out. Now we wanted to change. It's a strike that started out on the shop floor.

*A:* Well, with everything we've done here, we got nothing.

*B:* C. Will tell you that in Cuba the revolution started with 80 men.

*A:* I don't give a damn. Cuba means nothing to me. The Americans have only got to stop bugging them about, the Russians too for that matter. Me, I go home, they've got a pitchfork in hand, they want to eat, there isn't anything, that's it.

*B:* Well, you're like the public. They say, Rhodia, I don't give a damn.

*A:* Of course not.

*B:* Sure, that's because you don't give a damn about Cuba.

*A:* About others' troubles, sure I do! But for the moment we're here, let's talk about us.

*B:* Your sense of reason is off. If our mates in Lyon said, "Oh well it's only the business of the lads at Besancon, nothing to do with us." . . . It's just the same thing.

*C:* It's the same problem. Our mates in Lyon could have answered the same way you did. "Well, it's their problem, let's not get mixed up in it." Well, that's wrong. If the blokes in Lyon didn't go with us, behind us, we would have had it.



*B:* It's the same problem for our mates in Cuba. I don't see how, when you say "I don't give a damn about Cuba", the blokes in Lyon couldn't just as easily say "We don't give a damn about Rhodia". . . .

*C.M.:* What's your essential claim?

*B:* Like I've said, it started with the blokes on the 4/8. Two days we work mornings, two days afternoons, and two days nights. Then, at the end of the cycle, in theory there are two days off. But it doesn't add up to two full days. 'Cause we stop at 4 a.m., well, then you've got to sleep until midday. The next day, well we've got that except the night 'cause you've already got to go to bed early 'cause you've got to be up at 3 a.m. to get to your post at 4 a.m.

*A:* Even two and a half hours before that 'cause of all the miles to go to get to the shops.

*B:* Well, we've asked for extra days off, a somewhat better material life. We've got extra because we work 8 hours. But 8 hours without eating, that inhuman. We ask for a bonus for each post, something to eat at night. There are women, 20% of the factory are women who've got housework to do. For ten years we've been asking for Saturday afternoons off for them. It's normal. They've got to shop, do housework, and that'll allow a woman to do what a woman does, to have a family life. She can't when she doesn't finish work till 2 p.m. and by the time she's got home Saturday's just ruined.

*A:* Then there's the leisure problem. We can't fight only through the union and through politics if we don't at the same time fight on the level of culture, on the level of the development of the personality of intelligence, etc. . . . Because if we want to keep up with a big cartel like Rhone-Poulenc if one's uncultivated one can't. If tomorrow we've got to take the factory over we've got to know how to run it. . . . The capitalists for their part run their battle and their battle is to make us incapable of doing what they do. Are you really conscious of these things? That you've got to work with blokes trying to work towards cultural development? We don't have many things available to us. There's the Centre for Popular Culture in Palente-les-Orchamps run by Berchoud.

*B:* In the Rhodia library there're hellish books. . . .

*C.M.:* Do you read them?

*B:* You read for two minutes, and then you fall asleep.

*C.M.:* What, in general, can leisure be for you after 8 hours of work?

*A:* Go out. . . .

*B:* Nature. . . .

*A:* What happens is that they build these big centres and then there aren't any sports grounds for the kids so that, as soon as you take

them out, the little time you've got, you lose whatever time you would have had to read because you've got to be after them all the time.

*C.M.:* And television?

*B:* No doubt about it, it's flagrant, the government's got it in its pocket.

*A:* What we wait for is something to make you relax, a cowboy film, a comedy, something lively, something that inspires everyone.

*B:* What we really want is something instructive. Like *Lectures pour tous* (Books for everyone) but we can't look at it. The bloke who wants to read, to find out about the new books, it comes on at 10 p.m., and if the bloke stays up until 3, there's no time . . . it hurts. . . .

*A:* There's a real scandal for you. It's called "How's your money doing?" Well, they're just making fun of us. . . .

*B:* Outside, they don't know how much a bloke at Rhodia earns. With what's put in the newspapers you'd say what's he complaining about—£25? Why do they go on strike? They see the July and August pay slips when our bonuses for the whole year are counted in, and they think it's like that the whole year round.

*A:* Blokes who come here from town say "Look at all these cars. Soon there'll be no more room. It's all those workers at Rhodia".

*B:* You've got to have a car if you have to live about 8-12 miles away.

*A:* And how many have actually paid their cars off?

*B:* I've been at Rhodia for seven years, and relatively speaking I lived better seven years ago than I do now. Well, anyone who wants to say the opposite. . . .

*A:* Ought to point out that we only get a good wage about twice a year. Well, then a bloke goes out and buys a fridge, you know same old story, credit and savings by credit.

*B:* That's what eats away at us. Credit. As soon as you get your July bonus of about £80 a bloke goes out and buys what he needs—a fridge, a car—and then he's got to get credit, that is if there's anything left from paying off previous credit.

*C.M.:* Officially it's said that the more "France" becomes rich, the more everyone will profit from it, the working class as well.

*A:* But what is this business of profiting from life? What does it mean to have a television or a car still not paid for? What is it? It's a downtrodden man. Do you call that profit? There are not only questions about money here at Rhodiacta, there are also questions about man, about the family. More and more they're turning us into proles who can't think. . . .

*B:* But what will happen to our kids in ten years' time if we allow this to go on? They won't be kids any more but just complete robots. And this is what we've got to stop.



## Rose-coloured spectacles

TONY GIBSON

THIS ARTICLE IS ABOUT THE ROSE-COLOURED SPECTACLES which the Establishment provides so generously to tint the vision of those who might otherwise become disturbed (and therefore troublesome) by the nature of many aspects of contemporary society which social science tends to reveal. And I mean *science* not technology.

As Mr. Vine has used some of my writings to expand his own point of view in ANARCHY 74, I should like to try to put right some of the fundamental muddles which his essay contains. This is not specially for his benefit, but for the sake of many readers who must be considerably perplexed by an essay which purports to offer a "realist alternative", but which does nothing but propose, with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, that the best we can do is to go up and up and up, and on and on and on.

Vine has a valid case to discuss regarding what he calls the "simplist" point of view, in that one may make nonsense of any issue by oversimplifying it, and this is sometimes done by anarchists. It is also done by non-anarchists, and indeed by Vine himself when he muddles together so strangely such clearly diverse viewpoints as those of Ellingham and mine. He writes: "The essence of the simplist view on such matters (i.e. *violent coercion*) is that it goes beyond the obvious point that an anarchist should try to work towards the abolition of violence/forcible restraint and interference in people's lives, and comes down categorically for the abolition of these."

It is easy, these days, to discuss such matters in an armchair, since few of us are actually called upon to commit violence on other people in a direct manner. But it is not so very long ago when we in the anarchist movement had to consider such issues in immediate and practical terms. I remember disputing with men of my age who agreed, in principle, with the abolition of violence, but who went on bombing raids at night to kill the populace of such cities as were designated as their targets. I mention this to call attention to the fact that all war-resisters are regarded as "simplicists" by their opponents, and that Vine is not arguing against some strange new heresy on the fringe of anarchism, but against a principle which is at the very core of anarchism. It is a very real philosophical problem how far we should try to abstain from doing-evil-that-good-may-come-of-it. To evade proper consideration of this problem in an essay which purports to discuss "simplism" is quite ridiculous. Any fool, or any hypocrite, can take the job of a bomber pilot, prison governor or professional politician and

justify his violence, coercive measures or policies as being measures necessary for the working towards libertarian and human ideals in an imperfect society, as Vine suggests. But what is anarchism all about unless it embraces an attack on this pathetic fallacy?

Vine now shows us that he is no "well-intentioned liberal", for the main substance of his attack on anarchism is from a specifically Fabian point of view. By Fabianism I mean the later version as developed by Shaw and the Webbs and not the original movement in which some anarchists participated before fundamental divergencies of approach were clarified. It is odd to read in ANARCHY in 1967 the Fabian arguments of over half a century ago. Fabianism had its value in promoting social research, but as in the natural sciences, we have had the emergence of the technocrat alongside of, and often ousting, the scientist. The Webbs began as social scientists anxious to get at the facts, but later, armed with facts and figures, they became social technocrats with the arrogant assumption that they, the "experts", knew what was best for the man in the street. When they went to Russia they were only too willing to wear the rose-coloured spectacles which Stalin provided so generously, and I suspect that Vine has culled many of his arguments straight from the Webbs.

I know that I have dismayed some budding do-gooders by my questioning the wisdom of giving such figures as psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers arbitrary power over the lives of other people in the way of "adjusting" so-called deviant individuals to what they judge to be the desirable norm. This mistrust of mine is strongly reinforced by my experience as a social scientist in the course of which I encounter many people who are regarded as experts in matters of human engineering, who are really the crudest of social technocrats. They are characteristically opposed, in practice if not in theory, to scientific research. It is a sad day for the Emperor when he is discovered to be clothed in nothing at all but bluff and his illusions.

Although a great deal of lip service is paid to scientific research nowadays it is instructive to compare the position in the natural sciences with that in the social sciences. The former are well advanced and a great deal of effort is directed to research; the latter are grossly undeveloped and it is with reluctance that the Establishment permits any research at all. The more authoritarian and reactionary the field, the more research is opposed and hampered. Take, for instance, the field of the judiciary; here, genuine research of a scientific nature is practically unheard of. Judges go purple at the very idea of it. Do we know anything about how juries reach their verdicts, or the efficiency of the sentencing policies of individual justices in preventing crimes? To venture to inquire in a scientific manner is to invoke a barrage of hostility from the judiciary.

In certain other fields of human engineering, so-called research bodies are set up as the window dressing for government departments, but key men are maintained whose function it is to see that no research findings radically inimical to the Establishment will emerge. It would perhaps be unwise of me to give more detailed facts in this matter, but



they are acknowledged by everyone engaged in research in authoritarian fields who is not the merest tyro—or who wears the rose-coloured spectacles of the Establishment. Unless one is prepared to face these realities, one can get nowhere in pursuing the art of the possible, i.e. in carrying out what genuine research is practicable in the circumstances. The best school for a revolutionary anarchist is not the study of Bakunin, but the study of the mechanism of the power structure as it exists today.

I do not wish to make a fool of Vine (he does not need my aid) but his essay is like a rich plum cake stuffed with the fruit of Establishment clichés. He writes: "I include in 'education' the prison service and approved schools." Such a view is either very naive or very perverse: it is just not sensible to overlook the fact that the principles of retribution and deterrence are built into the penal system. Such myopia is not only intellectually dishonest, it carries idealism to the point of obscurantism. We know that prison screws are often nasty rough men and prison governors are often officers and gentlemen, but prisons are *not* nasty places *because* of the poor human quality of the screws, as Vine suggests; rather, nasty types of men gravitate to nasty types of institution. But the prisons are intended to wreak vengeance on the unfortunates of society as a matter of deliberate policy. Perhaps someone will now write to ANARCHY to say that, in his opinion, the armed forces, too, should be included in "education", for surely the peasants of Vietnam are being taught a lesson.

Vine adds that "I maintain that these institutions cannot be eliminated overnight by anyone". This implies that some strange writers in this journal are seriously maintaining that it is a practical possibility to eliminate prisons overnight, and are therefore "simplists" who claim "Total Freedom Today". I have not read such a claim. I know very well that neither the prisons nor syphilis *can* be eliminated overnight, but I am quite clear that a policy of misrepresentation and hush-hush will not contribute to abolishing either of them. What is needed first is understanding of the social, psychological and physical factors which maintain both of them. While natural science has gone a long way along the road to abolishing syphilis (in the teeth of opposition from the Moral Welfare types), social science has a much harder battle before it in the task of eradicating the disease which is represented by the prisons.

A lack of comprehension of the nature of the problem is illustrated by Vine's quoting the "delightful" story of boys due for release from an approved school who committed minor crimes in order to be allowed to stay on in the institution because they liked it there. This he quotes in approval of the system. But could there be any worse condemnation? If this story is true, then the institution, far from fitting the wretched boys to live fully in a free society, institutionalizes them so that they fear freedom and are fit for nothing but living in institutions. It is actually true that a large proportion of boys released from approved schools return, or simply graduate to Borstals and prisons. This is the problem which the social technocrats of our time refuse to face realistically, perhaps because they actually

prefer dealing with masses of people who, however criminal (poor weak sinners!), are docile and institution-minded.

Much of this applies to dealing with the mentally sick, but here there is a contrast. Quite a lot of stuff which appears in ANARCHY from time to time about lunatics is actually out of date in terms of what has actually been accomplished, not by weirdies like Laing, but by ordinary doctors working under the National Health Service. Here the field is less authoritarian than the judiciary and penal system, so much more genuine research is possible and revolutionary changes are taking place. The changes are in the direction of *closing down* mental hospitals rather than making them bigger, brighter and better; mad people are generally a lot less mad if they live in the community rather than in bins. The schizophrenic has as much right to live at home and be treated by his G.P. as has the diabetic; unfortunately the ordinary medical practitioner has, by tradition, only a rudimentary knowledge of how best to treat such conditions—but that is his job. There is little call then for crusaders "to enter the mental hospitals as psychiatrists, psychologists and nurses", as Vine suggests. Fortunately, mental hospitals are already dwindling in size as society progresses to a saner orientation to those diseases which are labelled "mental".

Although I have used Vine's essay as material for going over a number of issues fundamental to anarchism, I find it very sad. Sad because its writer has obviously been reading ANARCHY for a few years, and so obviously the theory of anarchism which has been put forward in this journal by so many writers has simply not penetrated. One is forced to wonder how large a section of the readership of this or any other anarchist journal (even those who consider themselves anarchists) continue to wear the rose-coloured spectacles of the Establishment. The trouble about anarchism today is that it has suffered from becoming so much the O.K. thing. No longer is the anarchist supposed to be a farouche, bomb-throwing madman; now he may even be a smart young university lecturer in the social sciences who is just a little more "with it" than his fellows. Because of the sustained high standard of this journal it has done its part in creating the new image. But here is the danger. While it is all very well to be clever-clever while one is young, the Establishment offers rewards to the educated provided they abstain from any effective attack on the institutions of power. It offers the rose-coloured spectacles to those who find the realities of our society emotionally disturbing, and they are a pleasanter remedy than that offered by the Troll King to Peer Gynt when he found the sights of his palace disturbing. So anarchism is permissible providing it implies nothing more drastic than discussing ecology and cybernetics and the re-education of the criminal classes, while being prepared to implement "the system". So the earnest young social technocrat can preserve the intellectual cachet of being "an anarchist" while preaching Fabianism, and no Establishment figure minds. But those who use the methods of science to expose the workings of power in society, and pay no tribute to its supposedly moral basis, a total embarrassment to this new image.



## Anarchism and the needs of men

ALAN ALBON

I AM ALL FOR RE-EXAMINING OLD IDEAS AND ILLUSIONS, and Ian Vine in his article on anarchism as a realist alternative, certainly took a swipe at many anarchist points of view. To me anarchism is a fairly simply proposition, that is: free co-operation in the activities one undertakes with other men. As yet I have to be convinced that this is not a realistic and sane proposition. I presume that if such a society is possible for me it is possible for other men. I believe modern society is unnecessarily and dangerously complex and the units of production too large, giving the feeling that this complexity is the only way to meet the needs of mankind. I see no evidence to support the extreme views of Francis Ellingham in condemning all human society. Most life appears to be organised in communities and in man, especially, the importance of communication and the stimulation this provides appears to be paramount. I would not dispute, however, that the present institutions of human society tend to condition the individual rather than the reverse. The individual has to regain control of his human community. There is no continuity in the pattern of human life and the institutions have ceased to have any organic purpose or function, to a very great extent.

The techniques of our society are harnessed to power and commerce, men are not even sure what their needs are and society has become an overcrowded treadmill. I do not believe that capitalist society and techniques can coincide with the needs of mankind and that anarchists must show clearly where and how this is so and advocate a change of direction. To throw the baby out with the bath water and condemn all machinery is to admit that man is unable to use more developed tools with wisdom. At the same time to regard science as the font of all wisdom is to replace one kind of religion with another, science is a tool that can be used constructively or destructively. If it has a definitive purpose, as it has largely now, instead if an infinitive one, it can be dangerous to mankind. The kind of thing I have in mind is the large amount of research that is carried out for

limited purposes for sectional interests and in the interests of powerful groups on insufficient knowledge. The methods undertaken to disperse oil from the *Torrey Canyon* were done with these dangerous limitations. Indeed, not enough research has been done on the whole subject of the use of detergents domestically and industrially.

Contrary to Ian's view that we cannot reverse the industrialisation of agriculture, the facts are that we may have to, even from a purely economic point of view. In spite of the immense amount of capital equipment poured into agriculture since the Second World War production has hardly risen *in toto* from each acre of agricultural land and now, in point of fact, it is beginning to decline. In the West, agricultural techniques have reduced costs and enabled fewer people to produce more, but with the same wasteful consumption of resources that dominate every facet of power-structured human society. This is no sentimental viewpoint. Some months ago Dr. Schumacher warned that industrial agriculture was no answer to the world food problem, and the other day Mr. Henry Fell, managing director of a company farming 2,150 acres in North Lincolnshire, spoke to the Farmers' Club on the deterioration of husbandry standards resulting from continuous cereal growing, disturbing old crop rotation patterns. This had been dictated by economic pressure. The evidence of it lay in increasing proneness to plant diseases and to weeds, lower yields, and the failure to carry out timely cultivations because of acute labour shortage. Continuous cereal growing is the basis of industrial agriculture and there must be widespread evidence of the bad effects of these practices, as the Government, in the last Review, in an effort to induce farmers to introduce a break crop, are subsidising field beans. This tinkering will not have much effect when the whole basis is, from the human point of view, short-sighted.

The farm was once a self-fertilising community of animals, crops and humans; it had an organic viability which built up soil stability, and crop and animal vitality, upon which the present methods were able to get their impetus but, when this vitality is spent, the situation will become worse. Contrary to the view in Ian's article that the large scale exporting of food must continue, I would say that it is the source of bad agricultural practice it replaces in areas where food is most short, a system of mono-cropping of commercial products that places the inhabitants in a condition of dependence, and their soil open to disease and infertility.

Industry is a source of power and agriculture is a source of life, and it is vital if man is to have a future to get these things into their right perspective.

What could be the most satisfying of man's achievements, the development of the means of communication, has been bound and perverted by commerce. There are opportunities of an expansion of the environment and of expanding human relationships but the semi-detached suburban Mr. Jones has retreated to his mechanised domestic prison where he can, he thinks, safely communicate electronically with other humans, without the difficulties—and the



satisfactions—of relating directly with other people. There is no doubt that the Western pattern of society has made people fear freedom and all the difficulties of running a society by the interaction of the people involved, instead of by rules made by other people. As men retreat into their boxes, the institutions that control the total environment get larger and the individual has less and less control over them. Men are not unaware of this: there is a growing demand for more regional control, and in the most materially adequate boxes there is among women the feeling of isolation and dissatisfaction.

Personally I agree that there can be no sudden revolution but the time for change is when it can be done consciously, and in the West there is an opportunity for this before the forces of space, population, and food shortage impose an irrational solution and sweep mankind willy-nilly into a more totalitarian social structure than we have now.

To think that the existing problems can be overcome without thought by the institution of an anarchist society is unrealistic, as unrealistic as believing that the existing institutions are likely to change their direction. Therefore anarchists have to be aware of the problems, of which the biggest are food and population. Both are connected and both are going to affect the developed countries also. The cause of the population explosion in the *West* is largely, I believe, to do with the unsatisfactory nature of personal lives: in fact an attempt to infuse more life and colour into the domestic scene. Therefore, if the population is to be kept within bounds, a different social arrangement should be considered. Small families within the context of our present social milieu have their own emotional and social difficulties. I have always believed that the family unit, as it is known, is intimately connected with our social condition and is a vulnerable and unstable unit susceptible to authoritarian pressures.

The basic community, in my view, must be one through which the members are able to supply collectively their basic needs in shelter, food and emotional relationships. This, as I see it, is the only real basis of freedom. It presupposes an end to private property of which, of course, the family is the social base.

There could be an exciting future of participation, for the problems of architecture, space, agriculture, transport, industry and communications are many. While specialisation has brought important technical advances, it has, as a whole, inhibited the vast spectrum of human material necessary for man and his society to develop sufficiently to control the power that technology has placed at man's elbow.

It would be better if technology lagged and man and his society advanced. At the moment technology and science is geared to an insane, illogical, commercial and political power structure, wasteful and destructive. It is supported by an educational system designed to produce specialists, and factory hands conditioned to produce and to consume almost anything. I do not think that society is evolving. It is stagnating. The young, after a brief rebellion, either seek oblivion in some way or other or sink out of sight in its vegetating mass.

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