

'Unbelievable Savagery'

THAT is the comment of J. Carter (Ex-President USA) on hearing that some of the 52 Americans released from Tehran had been ill-treated. This involved things like solitary confinement and sensory deprivation. Also, various forms of psychological torture such as blindfolding and then clicking a rifle bolt. One was told that his mother had died (she hadn't). There was shoving and hitting. Several had broken teeth.

R. Reagan (President USA) is 'outraged' at this treatment of 'prisoners of war' and 'innocent heroes'. Howard Baker (Republican Senate Leader) refers to 'brutality, barbarism and possibly even the atrocities.'

The western media is generally indignant.

These various people have not given a definition to the treatment given in Iranian prisons before the Revolution. This included whipping, electric shocks, burning, general mutilation and death.

Before the Revolution, Iran was an ally of the USA. The American Embassy in Tehran was regional headquarters for the CIA. Ex-Ambassador Richard Helms used to be Director of the CIA, new Vice-President George Bush used to be Director of the CIA. The techniques used by the CIA have been widely reported.

William Daugherty, who was in solitary confinement in Tehran for 425 days, worked for the CIA. So did Malcolm Kalp (374 days). John Limbert (about nine months) says he didn't. His title was 'Political Officer.'

The USA is currently supporting dictatorships in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, all sorts of places. It has just resumed military aid to El Salvador, after a fit of pique when 4 actual American citizens were killed.

The USA's ally, Great Britain, has been found guilty of the use of sensory deprivation and similar techniques by the European Court

of Human Rights. This was called 'torture'.

The Sunday Times prints a comment from an (un-named) 'Senior Official', that Carter instructed the State Department 'to focus all public attention on building up a wave of resentment against the Iranians'.

And when all this disingenuousness has been accounted for, we ask 'What do you expect?'

'Would all you spies please come along and be our guests for a while?'

It is wrong to hold hostages. It is wrong to mistreat them. It is also wrong for these people to get sanctimonious about it. Why not leave that to the liberal press. For example, those in Britain who are now so shocked that the SAS shot some of the Embassy seizers

after they had dropped their weapons.

And what does Iran get out of all this? As President Bani-Sadr said in his newspaper, they get some of their own money back, they get the lifting of sanctions, which were imposed only because of the hostage-taking and they get a pledge that America will not interfere in Iran's affairs, which, says the President, will satisfy the 'most naive and simple minded'. And the Royal wealth, which helped to start the whole thing? They haven't received a 'dollar with a hole in it' from the ex-Shah's 'degenerate family'.

So Bani-Sadr gets some ammunition to use against his opponents. And Iran gets to afford some real ammunition for its war.

And the Iranian people, what do they get? Ali



If you care...

AT an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Labour Party at Wembley (more often the scene of important national events like the football Cup Final, or visits from the Harlem Globe Trotters) last

Saturday, a new method of electing the leader of the Party was established. This meant the setting up of an 'Electoral College' rather like that which elects a Pope, although it is not yet clear whether

smoke will emerge from anybody's nostrils or chimneys to indicate that a decision has been reached.

There are three main, recognised, parts of the Labour Party, viz: the 'Constituency Parties' - which are the local branches of the party throughout the country; the Parliamentary Party - the number of Labour Members of Parliament in the House of Commons at any one time; and the Trade Unions, which originally founded the Labour Party in 1906 to represent the workers in Parliament (oh do stop laughing!) which remain the main source of money for the Party and which to this day still have the privilege of nominating candidates for election, who almost certainly go through on the nod, both for nomination and in an election - for they are usually candidates in industrial areas offering safe Labour seats.

It is thus assumed that all members of trades unions are members of the Labour Party and so at party conferences union delegates are allowed to vote by the block vote system, whereby they simply raise their union card and something like 1,284,976 votes may be recorded. You may think this gives the unions immense power, but since they are themselves as divided as any other family, their immense block votes often cancel each other out.

Party Conferences have the task of drafting the Party Programme for the following year and, together with the unions, as aforesaid, this is where the constituency parties come in. They pass motions, discuss, accept or reject amendments, go in for horse-dealing, etc, and vote according to the number of members in their branches. Potential candidates will certainly vote along with their constituency parties - but actual Members of Parliament are not so likely to do so because:

The Parliamentary Party is a law unto itself. Once a Member is in the House he becomes a Representative. That is, he represents the constituency in the House. All the constituency, including those who voted against him in the election which put him there. He does not therefore always follow the party line.

Further, this numerically small section of the Party has the power to elect the Party leader.

The Party Leader also has the power to elect his own Cabinet.

There are therefore many nice jobs to be handed out - Ministers for This and Chancellors for That - in the course of which many profitable contacts are made and many jolly good sensible, practical and pragmatic ideas can be absorbed. Not only, therefore, is a job in the Cabinet valuable in itself in terms of salary, expenses, privilege and power, but it opens doors to a safe future in the event of not winning a seat in an election.

This is how it was in the good old days before last Saturday.

Now things are vastly different, so we are told. It had been decided at the usual Annual Conference last Autumn that changes must be made in the procedure for electing the Party's Leader and that the power to do that should be taken out of the hands of the Parliamentary Party. This decision in itself was enough to raise howls of pain from the extreme moderates of the party who saw the move to give greater control of their Members of Parliament to the rank and file of the Party as a deep laid plot by extreme extremists to introduce Trotskyist dictatorship by the back door.

Part of the joke of course is that this is precisely what it is. Since the four-way split in the old Revolutionary Communist Party in the late forties (was it 1948?) there has been a faction practising 'entryism' boring from within. You cannot be a member of the Labour Party and any Bolshevik party as well, but the Trots are careful (unlike the Communist Party, for instance) not to be a party. Trots love tendencies, so what they are is the Militant Tendency.

Inside the Party, general dissatisfaction with increasingly reactionary leaderships and the patently undemocratic structure of the party have given the Militants their opportunity to bring pressure to bear from below in favour of changes giving the rank and file more control of their MPs. Smug establishment figures like Shirley Williams reacted hotly against the very suggestion that MPs should be expected to face their own supporters every election time and be reassessed for re-election - a fairly mild and sober suggestion you might think.

Anyway, to cut a long and boring (sic) story short, a resolution on re-selection was passed last year, as also was one making the choosing of the Party's leader a matter for the whole Party and not only the Parliament-

-ary Party. This week's special meeting was arranged to settle the procedure by which the Leader is to be elected.

Several balances of power between the three sections of the Party were proposed, and of course there was a lot of horse-dealing in smoke-filled hotel room rooms. The one that carried the day was immediately hailed by the Press (which has had a jamboree lately about the extreme Left capturing the Party and that devil Tony Benn, etc, etc) with a particularly loud shriek about a Left triumph.

Do you know what it was? It was a decision that gave 40 per cent of the votes in the Electoral College to the Trades Unions, 30 per cent to the constituency parties, and 30 per cent to the Parliamentary Party.

The only way in which this can be construed as a victory for the Left is if you think of the Unions as leftish. Now it is true that the structure of most unions and the apathy of most of their rank and file membership makes it possible for 'militants' to sway resolutions, just as the Trots have been able to do in the constituency parties. . . But in the Unions, the Communist Party (Stalinist) have their infiltrators and 'militants' and there's no way they will collaborate with the Trots in the local parties - so they cancel each other out.

Anybody who proclaims the Trades Union Council as 'left' either wants their head examined or is looking for bogeymen. So, really, the right of the party is still safe. But having shot their mouths off so strongly, the 'Gang of Four' (Shirley Williams, David Owen, William Rodgers - joined now by Roy Jenkins, fresh back from a cushy job in Brussels) have got to make their own arguments stand up - so they are in process of forming another 'Centre' party.

All this by way of a caption for the cartoon on Page 1 showing William Rodgers, left, and David Owen, ex-Foreign Minister in the last Labour Government, who faithfully maintained his support for the Shah of Iran after the Iranians had toppled him from his vile dictatorship and right up to the time the Shah fled the country with all that money. Owen proved himself more faithful to the Shah in adversity than he has to the Labour Party. If you care about such things, that must tell you something. PS

Libertarian Scapegoats

See also Octavio Alberola's letter in FREEDOM, 17 January.

BETWEEN the 19th and 30th January, Paris will see the beginning of the trial of 10 libertarians, charged seven years ago, in 1974. They are charged with being found vaguely connected with anti-Franco activities, activities claimed, in fact, by GARI (International Revolutionary Action Group) which had as its immediate aim to prevent this last European dictator from killing other militants, after the assassination of the Catalan anarchist, Salvador Puig Antich.

The accused have been at liberty for seven years, but now, in the name of the sacred democracy of France, are due to experience again French prisons. They include two Spaniards, one Scottish girl, five French girls and two Frenchmen. Plus one Frenchman, who has since died. . . .

- Octavio Alberola (printing editor of 'Quotidien de Paris')
- A riano Gransac-Sadori (painter)
- Lucio Urtubia (tiler)
- Anne Urtubia (lab assistant)
- Jean Helen Weir (nurse)
- Chantal Chastel
- Georges Riviere (composer)
- Annie Plazen (press circulation

manager)
 - Pierre Guiber (teacher of Physics)
 - Daniele Haas (student)
 After the release of Suarez (Paris director of the Bank of Bilbao, who was abducted on 3 May 1974), these ten were arrested in France. They were detained for periods ranging from 2 to 9 months. Those charged have their different qualities and points in common: differences in age, nationality and political commitment - some are militant libertarians of long-established organisations. Some are with CNT (anarcho-syndicalists), FLJL (Iberian Federation of Young Libertarians), solidarity committees for Latin American refugees - others define themselves as libertarian communists, outside any established anarchist movements. Others are friends of the militants. As for points in common; whether militants or sympathisers, they all abhor totalitarianism in all forms. They are part of an international comradeship and solidarity, who, during Franco's reign published illegal pamphlets, posters and hooklets. The accused, according to the French paper BASTA, are guilty of one thing only - of failing to denounce their comrades to the military police.

Now, with the present trial,

Giscard and Peyrefitte lift the lid of fascism in the name of democracy. Unable to bring the abductors to their theatre of the Assises, they throw out their stinking net into the air and bring in (where have we seen this before?) sympathisers, friends, courageous activists of 'Guilt Unknown'. The name is security and liberty - the game the mobilisation of an oppressive force to make a land fit for whom ??? The bowed and broken.

We call on all readers to stir all support for the 10 accused. Letters of solidarity may be sent to: Comité de Solidarité avec les Inculpés anti-franquistes, Anne-Marie Agurre, Cercle Garcia Lorca, 15, rue Gracieuse, 75005 Paris. To organise the publication of texts, posters and other propaganda to counter the distortions, hysteria and lies of the international establishment press will take substantial funds, so please send any donations to the same address. The task of turning public opinion against these shameful mock trials and all forms of judicial oppression must take priority if we are to expose the all-pervasive rotteness and obscene theatricality of judicial processes and all they claim to Protect and Defend.

Ann

Direct Action OK?

IN recent weeks, fur shops in various parts of London have had their windows broken by A. L. F. activists. Other fur shops have had their locks stuck up with superglue in order to hamper their despicable trade. Fur shops and butchers' shops in Brighton have also had their windows smashed by the A. L. F.

The windows of several shops in Enfield, Middx., that were displaying posters advertising Chipperfields Circus have recently been smashed by A. L. F. activists. This was because the circus has performing animals which are often trained by cruel methods to perform degrading tricks, and kept confined in small cages for most of the time. Shopkeepers had been warned to take down the posters a week before the attacks. Shops in Wandsworth displaying posters for David Smart's

Circus have also been broken. by the A. L. F. in the past few weeks.

Just after Christmas, several dogs were rescued by the A. L. F. from a vivisection laboratory in North London. Some had undergone experiments and needed treatment from a sympathetic vet, but all have now been found good homes in various parts of the country.

As you probably read in the national press, very early in the morning of Sunday January 4th., A. L. F. activists painted slogans - on the houses and cars of vivisectioners in Oxford, Cambridge and London. Vivisectioners in many other parts of the country also had their cars and houses painted, but these incidents were not reported by the national media. Vivisectioners usually try to keep their home addresses secret, but through careful intelligence work A. L. F.

now knows the addresses of well over 100 throughout the country. The Southgate Gazette of the 11th of December carried a story headlined 'Militant animal lovers threaten traders'. The article mentioned that several A. L. F. members have been jailed in the recent past for breaking into laboratories using animals in experiments and rescuing animals from factory farms.

A Chipperfields Circus spokesman was quoted as saying that he did not expect shopkeepers who displayed circus posters to 'bow' to this threat from the militant animal lovers.

'If I know the London shopkeeper he will tell them where to go. They will not be dictated to by a long haired bunch of thugs.'

Some shopkeepers have declared that they would take the posters down rather than suffer the cost of paying for repairs to damaged shop fronts.

Moral . . ?

Lynne

Valpreda accused again!

INCREDIBLE as it may seem (at least to those who are not entirely cynical) Pietro Valpreda, the Italian anarchist, has been once more accused of responsibility for the 'massacre of Piazza Fontana' which took place 11 years ago in Milan. He is now threatened with a life sentence.

For those in this country who may not have heard of him, Valpreda was a member of an anarchist group - called '22 March' which, on testimony which has never been anything but dubious, was implicated in the massacre. Fourteen people were killed on that December day in 1969. The murder of the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli, who was 'defenestrated' from the window of a Milan police station while being questioned in connection with the massacre, has become well known through Dario Fo's well known play *Death of an Anarchist*. Valpreda languished in prison for four years awaiting trial, but was released after the examining magistrates in Milan and Catanzaro (scene of the trial, when it at last began) agreed that there was insufficient evidence to send him to trial. By then the work of certain examining magistrates - notably Alessandrini, who was recently murdered by the left-wing group *Prima Linea* - had unearthed evidence of the involvement in the massacre of a fascist group and, beyond that, of the Italian state security service, SID, which has since been disbanded (but replaced of course by another).

As evidence of fascist and state involvement accumulated it became more difficult to maintain the case against the '22 March' anarchists. The prosecution argued, however, that this group had been infiltrated by members of a fascist cell, and that they became the (albeit unwitting) tools of fascist strategy. (According to this, successive massacres would so enrage people against the left that the Christian-Democrat led regime, in power since the war, would be irreparably discredited and a right-wing coup generally acceptable.)

Concrete evidence against Valpreda consists in the main of the following points:-

1. The testimony of Cornelio Rolandi, a taxi driver who claimed to have driven him to a place near the Banca dell'Agricoltura where

the bomb exploded; the testimony of a former army lieutenant who claimed that during his military service Valpreda had been a bomb-maker; the testimony of people in a Roman bar who claimed to have seen him there on the evening of the 13th or 14th December, just after the massacre, thus contradicting a defence alibi that he had spent that time with relatives and friends in Milan.

These pieces of evidence had been discredited while Valpreda was still awaiting trial. It was found that Rolandi's description of his passenger bore no relation to Valpreda's appearance, that he had been shown a picture of Valpreda while in the police station and put under some pressure to incriminate him. There were also discrepancies in



Valpreda in his original trial in 1971

the rest of Rolandi's statement - concerning the length of time Valpreda was supposed to have been in the taxi and the colour of the bag in which he was alleged to have carried the bomb.

Valpreda also denied that he had been a maker of explosives in the army and the written evidence of this turned out to have been forged. He also produced defence witnesses to confirm that he had spent the day of the 12th December (day of the massacre) at his aunt's house, and remained in Milan on the days immediately afterwards.

Other prosecution arguments have also never been substantiated. And the fact that no new evidence - has been produced makes the present situation all the more astonishing.

The new threat to Valpreda came in the closing speech of the public prosecutor, Domenico Porcelli, at the appeal proceedings at Catanzaro last December. While requesting confirmation of the original sentences for 20 out of 26 people convicted in connection with the massacre, including Treda, Ventura and the SID agent, Gianetti, Porcelli also accused Valpreda of being 'effectively responsible' for the bombing, and asked that he be given a life sentence.

The new threat to Valpreda is also, of course, far more than just that, as anarchists in Italy have pointed out. At a press conference held by the anarchist 'Circolo Ponte della Ghisolfi', Luciano Lanza of 'A'-*rivista anarchica*, declared: 'This press conference has many analogies with the one held here 11 years ago on 17 December '69. We stated that Valpreda was innocent and Pinelli had been murdered, and that the massacre was a massacre of the state. You said we were raving; only after our campaign of counter information did you realise that the anti-anarchist manoeuvring was a massive invention with which to attack the revolutionary movement and the left. Now *procuratore generale* Porcelli wants to conceal the responsibility of the state apparatus by putting the blame on Valpreda once more...'

In a statement to the Italian Anarchist Federation he invited, 'all democrats, all workers, all those who have fought on the street or in the press during the last 11 years to reveal the truth about the State Massacre to mobilise at once, and decisively, to prevent the final blow to the remnants of liberty in this country: the liberty of Pietro Valpreda, the truth about 'Piazza Fontana' are fundamental liberties; beyond these this arrogant regime would no longer find any effective obstacle to the crushing of a left which, in its political and intellectual struggles on account of the State Massacre, has succeeded not only in defeating the various authoritarian endeavours and conspiracies but, above all, in defending those areas of liberty firstly from fascism and then from Christian Democracy.'

DIY Tombs

FOLLOWING the fiasco of the now withdrawn Protect and Survive pamphlet, I have it on very good authority that the government is preparing what is thought to be a more plausible successor to that inept and damning document.

There are going to be illustrated plans on how to build an A frame shelter in your back yard, that is of course if you have a yard. If not however, perhaps it could go in your cellar, or sitting room. The

main aim of the new document appears to make sure that as many of us are buried as well as dead when our rulers come out of their deep shelters to continue to rule the society they have conspired to decimate. No doubt somebody will make a profit on these plans.

Apart from the impossible attempt to achieve the impossible in defence against nuclear attack, this will not contemplate such a desperate waste of life and resources and that is the development of the anarchist theories of responsibility and self government.

A.A.

IT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S DUTY TO ENCOURAGE ALL OUR CITIZENS TO SPEND THEIR OWN MONEY ON A PROPER SHELTER-CUM-DO-IT-YOURSELF-GRAVE IN CASE WE HAVE TO START A NUCLEAR WAR.



Kilner - A Good Start

THE ARTICLE 'Kilner Squat: The End' (FREEDOM 17/1/81) is so inaccurate, so gloatingly negative and its emphasis so misplaced that the significance of what were three months of hard (and successful) struggle is entirely lost. As an active participant in that struggle I must reply to correct the obvious errors in the article and make clear the many positive aspects of the biggest piece of direct action in housing for years.

The author gets even the basic details of the eviction wrong. Let me correct them. The eviction began at 6.50 am. not 7.50 am. The gate was ripped off by chains attached to the lorry, not bulldozed down by the lorry. There were three arrests not two, one being for an offence for which the bloke arrested was already wanted. (Four arrests if you count the press photographer who was released without charge after half an hour.) One of the arrests was under Section 10 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (the criminal trespass section) This is significant as its use has yet to be regularly established.

Other pertinent facts omitted are: the cops came in through the back fence too, thus executing an attack from both sides. The press were also forced out of the courtyard and beyond the police cordon so as not to witness anything the police saw fit to do. It is not at all surprising that your correspondants version is so botched up as he was busy sleeping elsewhere when the eviction took place.

His thinly veiled ridicule in his brief description of the events from the Sheriff's visit on the 5th to the eviction on the 9th needs also

to be answered. It is true that the press (and supporters) were 'regaled' with 'political slogans' on the morning of the Sheriff's visit. They were also 'regaled' with facts on the housing crisis. We thought this was more relevant than, say, giving a weather forecast or singing 'Rule Britannia'. His statement that 'on one occasion almost everybody in Kilner went for a drink in the pub' is a 'slight' exaggeration. Certainly some people went for a drink, but at a time when evictions never occur, in the evening. At all times during that week the gate was well staffed and many people remained in the block throughout. To ensure that the gate was staffed permanently and that other necessary tasks were carried out some people from behind the barricades went down (at specific times and under controlled conditions) to help out. It's called mutual aid. Had he attended the meetings that week he would have known all this.

The author then goes to great lengths to show that the squat was some kind of game. He writes, 'Kilner was definitely a theatrical event above all else' and 'Kilner House was a great publicity stunt and that is all'.

Was it a 'theatrical event' to seize an entire block of 60 flats of public housing to prevent its sale to private tenants at a time when there is a huge housing shortage? A 'theatrical event' for the 200 and more people who had a warm, comfortable home at various times during those three months? For those who immediately before coming to Kilner had been sleeping in cardboard boxes? For the battered wives that took refuge there? Was it a 'public-

ity stunt' for the woman with five kids who had previously been sharing two rooms with her sister? For the alcoholics and other social outcasts? For those who lost much needed pay (and some their jobs) for taking time off work to keep the squat running?

Oh yes, it was just a fucking spiffing wheeze, old man. A jolly joke to pass the time of day.

The authors grasp of the present level of social misery, its causes and consequences, leaves much to be desired. In order to make his highly selective version of events appear substantial he deliberately ignores the reasons behind and the nature of the three months struggle and concentrates his attention on the final hectic week, just like a Fleet Street hack. It is the job of the bourgeois media to reproduce bourgeois 'reality'. He reproduces the bourgeois media with a spectacle of his own making. And you all thought that satire was dead, didn't you folks?

Elsewhere in the article (and again with his lens voyeuristically concentrated on the final week) he says, 'Kilner House then was never primarily to provide accommodation for homeless people, but was in existence to make political capital out of the decision of the Tory GLC to sell the flats.' But at that time Kilner could not have been a viable form of accommodation as the 'blue' invasion was imminent. He himself was no longer resident at that stage. And moaning about making 'political capital' out of the GLC's decision to sell the flats is akin to George Tremlett's whining about us being 'political activists'. (Tremlett is the Fuhrer of the GLC Housing Policy Committee.)

When the organising of the squat is discussed in the article (when it is discussed) it is claimed that it was carried out by the London Squatters Union (LSU). The author knows that Kilner was organised by the inhabitants with help from a few outside supporters only one of whom was associated with the LSU. Decisions were made at general meetings which, considering the circumstances, were the most practical and fair manner of running the squat. Tasks were volunteered for or openly delegated and constant report-backs made to meetings.

It is on this very point of organisation that he could have made some constructive criticism. But no, he prefers to mock and evades any discussion of the problems that arise when 150 disparate and desperate people with conflicting aims and different levels of political awareness come together under pressure in a politically sensitive mass squat. My main criticism is of the slow but sure evolution of an unofficial leadership, the most serious consequence of which was a bad breakdown in communication at the time of the first expected eviction (mid-November). This led to some unpleasant moments from which I hope everyone involved learned something. This is perhaps the problem of organising resistance to capital — how best to demonstrate to the uncommitted that if they want an end their oppression they have to act and act for themselves. The unfortunate fact at Kilner was that there was so much pressing work to do, so little time in which to do it, and not enough people to do it that these problems couldn't be adequately tackled. Even so, I think events have shown that the organisation at Kilner was, on the whole, equal to the tasks which confronted us.

The comments on the 'Squat Against the Cuts' campaign (now re-formed as 'Squat Against Sales') should have been given more thought so as to situate the campaign in its proper context. As its title clearly shows, the campaign does not cover all aspects of squatting but focuses attention on a more easily contestable area of the housing struggle the better to facilitate a more organised and visible form of direct action. In terms of numbers it is a small part of the squatting movement. In terms of organisation, consciousness and activity it is at the moment the most able squatting group. It is not only convenient for an attack on the Tories but also for

an attack on any government or party which forces through anti-social housing policies. It is as yet in its infancy and forthcoming events will test whether or not these aims can be adhered to and whether or not conditions will favour an extension of such organised squatting into other areas. More, much more, active commitment is needed.

In the same paragraph in which he dismisses the campaign he is in such a hurry to show that 'workers' (his contemptuous inverted commas) 'couldn't give a fuck about squatters' that he falls over the facts which he himself cites. He grudgingly acknowledges that unions and individual workers supported the squat thereby guaranteeing two of the three basic necessities he lists in his conclusion: shelter and warmth, but he does so only to illustrate that these acts of solidarity are somehow the exceptions that prove his rule. Such acts should not be spat upon but should be latched onto, publicised and extended to show what can be achieved when you try hard enough. It is a sickening truth that many individual squats have their services cut off (and not only squats — mark the nature of the 'Right To Fuel' campaign), but this again points to the need for squatters to not let themselves be isolated but to awaken to their situation and to accept the responsibility of their act of seizing property by organising themselves, propagating their case and broadening the movement by establishing contacts in those areas where they are needed. The fragmented nature of squatting militates heavily against this, but this is the situation that presents itself before us at this moment of capitalist decay and we can either tackle it or retreat before it. At Kilner we tackled it and were largely successful.

There were also other positive aspects of the squat which don't get a mention in the article. Inexperienced people came to Kilner and passed on to other squats at least a shade more confident about how to handle attacks from the authorities. Seven families and 44 single people are to be rehoused permanently by Lambeth Council. Of the extensive media coverage virtually all of it was positive compared to the usual muck on squatters. After the eviction it was the Police that were given a bad press, always a help. There were few arrests at the end. Kilner has inspired groups elsewhere to plot along the same lines and the Kilner Video project will help get the

message even further afield. Many people actually enjoyed living there, especially the kids, and sound working relationships were established which will prove useful in the future. And of course, Kilner House is now almost certain to remain public property. To call the squat a defeat is to view it through a Nelsonian eye-piece.

The concluding sentiments of the article are, on the whole, short-sighted. The criteria given for a successful squat — to defeat the establishment and retain possession — are admirable. But, in the case of Kilner, impossible. In these terms only by reversing the high court judge's decision or by fighting off 500 'cops' armed with riot shields, crowbars and sledgehammers could we have succeeded. But we were not a People's Court, nor a People's Militia (alas and alack). And in making this point he overlooks the many squats of longstanding in London which have done precisely what he desires, defeat the establishment and retain possession. For example within a stone's throw of Kilner there are St. Agnes Place and Villa Road, not to mention whole swathes of Lambeth which have been squatted for years.

Then he asks the naive question, 'Why can't London be like Amsterdam or Berlin?'. The answer is simple. Because it isn't Amsterdam or Berlin. It's London. It has its own social history, its own specific location within the global domination of capital and its own squatting movement, whose task it is to get on with the struggle here and now. Of course where experiences can be exchanged internationally they will be. To this end a visit to London by Dutch squatters has been arranged through the good offices of the LSU, 21st February at the South Bank Polytechnic, Elephant and Castle, London. After Kilner we've got a lot to share with them.

Theory and Practice,

SHERLOCK HOLMELESS

Next LSU meeting:

7pm. Sun. 1st Feb
48 William IV St.
WC2

Note

Our Letters page has been scrapped for this issue, owing to the perennial problems with our typewriters. We apologise to our correspondents; their letters should appear in the next issue.

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Orwell and the Anarchists

GEORGE ORWELL died in 1950. He had become famous with the publication of *Animal Farm* in 1945, and much more famous with the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1949. But he was too ill to enjoy his fame, and he died of tuberculosis at the age of 46. Since then, he has grown steadily more and more famous, and after becoming a classic in his own life he has now become a name known by virtually everyone who reads at all. Almost all his books have been continually reprinted, and most of his shorter writings have also been conveniently reprinted in the four-volume *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*. Of all modern writers, in fact, he is one of the easiest to get hold of; he is also one of the easiest to get to grips with, for all his work has a style and structure which are so spare and simple and a personality and purpose which are so peculiar and powerful that introduction and explanation are virtually unnecessary. In a way, then, there is no need to read about Orwell at all, only to read Orwell; but this hasn't stopped many people writing about him.



There have been many studies of his work, but few are more than useful and most are less than useless. Orwell himself asked that no biography should be written, and none appeared for more than twenty years. But again, there have been many studies of his life, the most valuable material being personal reminiscences by some of the people who knew him, nearly all the rest being valueless or worse. Apart from sheer ignorance and irrelevance, one major problem was always that Orwell's widow, whom he married just before his death and who controlled both his copyright and his papers, refused to allow either a full account of his work with all the necessary quotations or a full account of his life with all the necessary information. This frustrating situation changed in 1972, when the first instalment of a two-volume study of Orwell's early life by Peter Stansky and William Abrahams managed to be at the same time so detailed and so dreadful that Sonia Orwell at last authorised a proper biography by Bernard Crick, professor of politics at Birkbeck College, London, and a well-known democratic socialist and literary journalist.

The result, which was published eight years later as *George Orwell: A Life* (Secker & Warburg, £10), is by far the best book yet on Orwell's whole career. Crick's most obvious advantage is that he is the first person to have complete freedom of quotation from the whole of Orwell's published and unpublished writings and of access to the whole of the Orwell Archive at University College, London, so his book is based on a much wider range of material than ever before. A less obvious but just as serious advantage is that he shares many personal and political characteristics of Orwell, and is both genuinely well-informed about and generally well-disposed towards his subject. Crick's book doesn't entirely supersede the Stansky-Abrahams ones -- *The Unknown Orwell* (1972) and *Orwell: The Transformation* (1979) -- since their coverage of Orwell's life up to 1938 is

twice as full as his and they have used a few sources he hasn't; but it will certainly become the standard biography.

The book was widely reviewed when it was published last November, and little would be gained by further general comments at this time in this place; but it will be interesting and may be useful to consider one particular aspect of Orwell's life and work which is obscure but which the appearance of Crick's book makes clearer than before -- his relationship with anarchism and anarchists. In such a case -- and there are of course several others, including Shelley, William Morris, Oscar Wilde, Edward Carpenter, E. M. Forster, Herbert Read, and so on -- there is no point in going too far in either direction, in saying either that Orwell was essentially an anarchist all the time or that he never had anything to do with anarchism. In Orwell's case, the former mistake is made, for example, by Julian Symons, the writer who was associated with anarchists during the Second World War and has remained sympathetic to anarchism ever since, and who was a close friend of Orwell. In an article in the *London Magazine* (September 1963), he first drew public attention to Orwell's own association with anarchists at the same time, but he went on to argue that Orwell continued to support libertarian socialism for the rest of his life and that this ideology "was expressed for him more sympathetically in the personalities of unpractical Anarchists than in the slide-rule Socialists who made up the bulk of the British Parliamentary Labour Party".

George Woodcock, the writer who was associated with the anarchists during and after the war and was also a close friend of Orwell, describes this view as being "substantially correct" in his book *The Crystal Spirit* (1967), which is the most satisfactory study of Orwell's

work yet written. Woodcock states:

Conservatism and socialism form the two poles of Orwell's political thought. What holds them together is the never wholly abandoned strain of anarchism...Anarchism remained a restless presence in his mind right to the end.

In the light of Crick's book, it is now possible to trace this presence from the beginning to the end.

With Orwell, it is always important to begin at the beginning, since he himself drew so much of his inspiration and ideology from his own childhood -- or at least from what he made of his own childhood. His writings about early life at home or at school are often contradicted by the memories of his family or friends, but it is clear that the young Eric Blair was remembered by his contemporaries at Eton as a leading member of an "antinomian" party, rejecting all religious and political orthodoxy, and by his colleagues in the Burma police as a discontented member of the British establishment, repelled by social and national prejudices. Orwell himself, in the political autobiography which fills the second half of his first successful book, The Road to Wigan Pier (1937), mentioned that by the time he left Eton in 1921 he "was against all authority", and that by the time he left Burma in 1928 he had "worked out an anarchistic theory that all government is evil, that the punishment always does more harm than the crime, and that people can be trusted to behave decently if only you will let them"; immediately and typically adding that "this of course was sentimental nonsense". Yet from a slightly different, increasingly personal, perspective this was his position when he first set out to be a writer:

I had reduced everything to the simple theory that the oppressed are always right and the oppressors are always wrong: a mistaken theory, but the natural result of being one of the oppressors yourself. I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants.

False consciousness, perhaps, yet a form of consciousness which is better than unconsciousness and which is capable of development. Hence on a personal level the adventures as a tramp or down-and-out which are so vividly described in some of his earliest and best writings. A couple of years later, when he was beginning to make his way into left-wing journalism in London, he was apparently describing himself as a "Tory anarchist" -- according to his friends Rayner Heppenstall, in Four Absentees (1960), and Richard Rees, in George Orwell: Fugitive From the Camp of Victory (1961) -- though when he described his political position in public he always seems to have been identified with some kind of socialism.

The significant development in Orwell's politics came in his mid-thirties. The first event was his journey to the North of England in 1936 to investigate poverty for his book The Road to Wigan Pier, in which he first expressed his unrestrained and unequivocal commitment to socialism. But this was a very special and peculiar kind of socialism, being neither Marxist nor Fabian, neither egalitarian nor bureaucratic. He began with the assumption that the "underlying ideal of socialism" is "justice and liberty", and that the "mark of a real socialist" is the wish "to see tyranny overthrown". He repeated that "socialism means the overthrow of tyranny", and from this he could reasonably argue that "any decent person, however much of a Tory or anarchist by temperament" must "work for the establishment of socialism". This was Orwell's basic political position for the rest of his life. The problem from our point of view is that such a view is essential to anarchism but that anarchism is not essential to such a view.

The second event, however, was his journey to Spain at the end of 1936 to investigate and indeed to intervene in the Civil War. There he was involved not with half-hearted anarchistic theories or so-called Tory anarchism, not with the relative poverty of the Depression, but with real live anarcho-syndicalists fighting to establish a social revolution in the middle of a bitter war, between the Nationalists and Fascists in front of them and the Republicans and Communists behind

them. His experience in Spain convinced him that the two great enemies of socialism were Fascism and Communism, and he considered anarchism for the first time as a serious subject.

When Orwell returned to Britain in July 1937, after first narrowly escaping death from a serious wound at the front and then narrowly escaping arrest in the purge of the non-Communist left in Barcelona, he became one of the very few people in this country who had actually been to Spain and who would defend the Spanish revolutionaries, including the anarchists. He commented that "it is almost impossible to get anything printed in favour of Anarchism or Trotskyism" (Time & Tide, 5 February 1938), and he contributed more than anyone else to the effort to change the situation.

Orwell had gone to Spain under the auspices of the Independent Labour Party (as he had gone to the North of England a few months earlier), and he had therefore fought in a contingent of its Spanish allies, the revolutionary Marxist POUM. But he wrote privately to his friend Jack Common: "If I had understood the situation a bit better I should probably have joined the Anarchists" (Letter, October 1937); and he wrote publicly in his book on Spain, Homage to Catalonia (1938): "As far as my purely personal preferences went I would have liked to join the Anarchists." At the same time he insisted that "most of the active revolutionaries were Anarchists" (New English Weekly, 29 July 1937), and that "the Anarchists were the main revolutionary force" (Time & Tide, 31 July 1937). His personal commitment to socialism had almost become a personal commitment to anarchism. Indeed Emma Goldman did her best to recruit Orwell to the cause -- a point which is not mentioned by Crick. She persuaded him to become one of the sponsors of the International Anti-Fascist Solidarity committee which she organised in 1938 as an anarchist front organisation, and this brought him into contact with anarchists outside Spain. Among his fellow sponsors were such libertarians as Ethel Mannin, Rebecca West, John Cowper Powys, and also Herbert Read, who had recently adopted anarchism as a result of events in Spain. In this milieu he also met Vernon Richards, who had been producing Spain & the World since 1936, and thus came into personal contact with the formal anarchist movement in Britain.

But Orwell was still a pretty obscure writer. For taking his revolutionary and libertarian line on Spain, and especially for emphasising the Communist treatment of the rest of the Spanish left, he was boycotted by his publisher, Victor Gollancz, and by one of his editors, Kingsley Martin of the New Statesman, both of whom were part of what he called "the Communism racket". His articles appeared only in little magazines, and Homage to Catalonia was one of his most unsuccessful books. The first edition of 1500 copies still hadn't sold out when he died twelve years later, and despite some controversy at the time it and other books like it were swamped in the flood of Liberal and Marxist historiography which was only checked several decades later by honest writers like Pierre Broué and Emile Témime, Burnett Bolloten and Noam Chomsky. Yet Orwell had some value for the anarchists themselves. As Emma Goldman wrote to Rudolf Rocker, "For the first time since the struggle began in 1936 someone outside our ranks has come forward to paint the Spanish anarchists as they really are" (Letter, 6 May 1938). For this alone, anarchists owe Orwell a debt of deep gratitude.

Despite his sympathetic attitude, however, it is significant that Orwell didn't join any specifically anarchist organisation. As Crick shows, when he came back from Spain he joined the Independent Labour Party and the Peace Pledge Union, clearly believing that the most urgent political priority was socialism and peace. Indeed for more than a year his position was virtually pacifist. This phase coincided with his first serious attack of tuberculosis, being out of action from March 1938 to March 1939, first in a Kent sanatorium and then in French Morocco. The most remarkable episode came at the beginning of 1939, when he wrote to Herbert Read "about a matter which is much on my mind":

I believe it is vitally necessary for those of us who intend to oppose the coming war to start organising for illegal anti-war activities. It is perfectly obvious that any open and legal agitation will be impossible not only when war has started but when it is imminent, and that if we do not

make ready now for the issue of pamphlets etc. we shall be quite unable to do so when the decisive moment comes. At present there is considerable freedom of the press and no restriction on the purchase of printing presses, stocks of paper etc., but I don't believe for an instant that this state of affairs is going to continue. If we don't make preparations we may find ourselves silenced and absolutely helpless when either war or the pre-war fascising processes begin....

It seems to me that the commonsense thing to do would be to accumulate the things we should need for the production of pamphlets, stickybacks etc., lay them by in some unobtrusive place and not use them until it became necessary. For this we should need organisation and, in particular, money, probably three or four hundred pounds, but this should not be impossible with the help of the people one could probably rope in by degrees (Letter, 4 January 1939).

Read must have replied discouragingly, since a couple of months later Orwell wrote on the subject again:

I quite agree that it's in a way absurd to start preparing for an underground campaign unless you know who is going to campaign and what for, but the point is that if you don't make some preparations beforehand you will be helpless when you want to start, as you are sure to sooner or later. I cannot believe that the time when one can buy a printing press with no questions asked will last for ever....



Orwell explained that he expected both the Conservative-dominated National Government and any Labour Government elected in the near future to prepare for war with Nazi Germany, that there would be a "fascising process leading to an authoritarian regime" supported by both right and left, and that the only opposition would come from the real Fascists and from "dissident lefts like ourselves" who must organise "some body of people who are both anti-war and anti-fascist".

I doubt whether there is much hope of saving England from fascism of one kind or another, but clearly one must put up a fight, and it seems silly to be silenced when one might be making a row merely because one had failed to take a few precautions beforehand. If we laid in printing presses etc. in some discreet place we could then cautiously go to work to get together a distributing agency, and we could then feel, "Well, if trouble comes we are ready." On the other hand, if it doesn't come I should be so pleased that I would not grudge a little wasted effort (Letter, 5 March 1939).

He suggested approaching independent intellectuals like Bertrand Russell and Roland Penrose. But Read must have remained discouraging, for nothing came of Orwell's plan. He supported Revolt!, which followed Spain & the World when the Civil War ended, and he also seems to have written anti-war material. At the time of Munich he wrote to Jack Common, remarking:

"I wish someone would print my anti-war pamphlet I wrote earlier this year, but of course no one will" (Letter, 12 October 1938). And he later said in his essay "My Country Right or Left" that in his opposition to war he "even made speeches and wrote pamphlets against it" (Folios of New Writing, Autumn 1940). No such pamphlet has yet been traced, though it was rumoured to have been circulated in duplicated form. But in his essay "Not Counting Niggers" he did argue against supporting the Western democracies in a war against Fascism because imperialism and capitalism weren't worth defending, and he advocated "a real mass party whose first pledges are to refuse war and to right imperial injustice" (The Adelphi, July 1939).

But all this was completely superseded by the next significant development in Orwell's politics, which came overnight at the time of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939, according to the account in "My Country Right or Left". He said that he had a dream that war had begun, from which he learnt "first, that I should be simply relieved when the long-dreaded war started, secondly, that I was patriotic at heart, would not sabotage or act against my own side, would support the war, would fight in it if possible". It was just as well that Read hadn't been persuaded to support Orwell's anti-war campaign! Instead, the anarchists and pacifists (and some revolutionary Marxists) did resist the war without his help, and indeed with his bitter opposition.

After 1939, Orwell never again defended anarchism and often attacked it. During the Second World War he had no hesitation in describing anarchists (and pacifists) as "objectively pro-Fascist", a usage which had infuriated him when it was applied by the Communists against anarchists (and Trotskyists) in Spain. He indulged in particularly extreme abuse in the occasional "London Letter" which he contributed to Partisan Review, the semi-Trotskyist American magazine. The worst example appeared in the issue of March/April 1942. As well as including both anarchists and pacifists in what he called "left-wing defeatism", he gave an account of the semi-anarchist British magazine Now which suggested that it was a pacifist-Fascist front and even stated that "Julian Symons writes in a vaguely Fascist strain". Vehement replies followed in the issue of September/October 1942 from George Woodcock, the editor of Now, and Alex Comfort. Orwell characteristically became friends with them and with Symons; but he had another angry encounter with Comfort in Tribune in June 1943, the two exchanging satirical Byronic stanzas in the course of which Orwell accused Comfort of wanting to "kiss the Nazi's bum".

He continued to attack anarchism more generally too. In a review of a book by Lionel Fielden advocating Indian independence, he included a reference to what he called "Parlour Anarchism -- a plea for the simple life, based on dividends". In his booklet on The English People (written in 1944 but not published until 1947), he mentioned that "English people in large numbers will not accept any creed whose dominant notes are hatred and illegality" -- among which he included anarchism as well as Communism, Fascism and Catholicism. In a later "London Letter" to Partisan Review he included anarchists among those responsible for the fact that, "particularly on the Left, political thought is a sort of masturbation fantasy in which the world of facts hardly matters". In a review of Herbert Read's collection of essays, A Coat of Many Colours, he argued that Read's version of anarchism "avoids the enormous question: how are freedom and organisation to be reconciled", and that "unless there is some unpredictable change in human nature, liberty and efficiency must pull in opposite directions" (Poetry Quarterly, Winter 1945).

After the war he produced two major essays in which he made serious criticisms of anarchism. In "Politics versus Literature: An Examination of Gulliver's Travels" (Polemic, September/October 1946), he says that Jonathan Swift was "a kind of anarchist" -- a "Tory anarchist", in fact, as Orwell had once described himself -- "despising authority while disbelieving in liberty"; and he adds that the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels "is a picture of an anarchistic society, not governed by law in the ordinary sense, but by the dictates of 'Reason', which are voluntarily accepted by everyone". He comments that "this ill-

ustrates very well the totalitarian tendency which is explicit in the anarchist or pacifist vision of society" (explicit? does he mean implicit?); and he continues:

In a society in which there is no law, and in theory no compulsion, the only arbiter of behaviour is public opinion. But public opinion, because of the tremendous urge to conformity in gregarious animals, is less tolerant than any system of law. When human beings are governed by "Thou shalt not", the individual can practise a certain amount of eccentricity; when they are supposedly governed by "love" or "reason", he is under continuous pressure to make him behave and think in exactly the same way as everyone else.

Again, in "Lear, Tolstoy and the Fool" (Polemic, March 1947), which is less about Tolstoy's view of Shakespeare than about Orwell's view of Tolstoy, he took the same line about Tolstoy's religious combination of anarchism and pacifism:

Tolstoy renounced wealth, fame and privilege; he abjured violence in all its forms and was ready to suffer for doing so; but it is not easy to believe that he abjured the principle of coercion, or at least the desire to coerce others....The distinction that really matters is not between violence and non-violence, but between having and not having the appetite for power.

Orwell insisted that "there are people who are convinced of the wickedness both of armies and of police forces, but who are nevertheless much more intolerant and inquisitorial in outlook than the normal person who believes that it is necessary to use violence in certain circumstances", and he added that "creeds like pacifism and anarchism, which seem on the surface to imply a complete renunciation of power, rather encourage this habit of mind".

It is hard to know whether Orwell really believed this sort of thing, forgetting how he himself made a living and a reputation out of defying public opinion over and over again, and ignoring the crucial distinction between holding authoritarian views in theory and having the power to put them into practice. After all, the most intolerant and totalitarian ideology or temperament has no effect until someone is able not only to give orders but to get them obeyed. In his own greatest books, Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four, the worst thing about the tyranny he described is not its moral conformity but its physical power, and of course the same was true of Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. Orwell cannot be taken as one of the most serious enemies of anarchism.

Indeed, the curious if characteristic thing about Orwell is that he was one of the best friends of anarchists even when he was attacking anarchism. At the very time he was calling them "objectively pro-Fascist", in the worst days of the Second World War, he was going out of his way to help them. While he was working as a talks producer in the Indian Section of the BBC, from 1941 to 1943, and then as literary editor of Tribune, from 1943 to 1945, he did his best to encourage a wide variety of opinions, including anarchists as well as pacifists, and anarchists were among his closest friends. Crick comments of this period that "he did not accept anarchism in principle, but had, as a socialist who distrusted any kind of state power, a speculative and personal sympathy with anarchists" -- like Crick himself, one may add. It was at the end of the war, when Orwell and his first wife adopted a child, that the famous series of photographs began, taken by Vernon Richards, who was still active in the group producing War Commentary, the successor of Spain & the World and Revolt!.

Indeed there is a story that this group, the Freedom Press, could actually have published Animal Farm in 1944. Crick repeats the version told by George Woodcock, that when the book had been rejected by Victor Gollancz, Jonathan Cape, Faber & Faber, and possibly other publishers, he offered it through Woodcock to the Freedom Press, but that it was rejected because the press included "many belligerent pacifists". Crick mentions that Vernon Richards "is adamant that it was never submitted", but comments that "he was in prison at the relevant time and might not have been told". Since this is meant to have happened in July 1944, before the book was accepted by Secker & Warburg

(who had published Homage to Catalonia), and since Richards was not imprisoned until several months later, it seems more likely that Richards is right. Woodcock refers only to the hostile reaction of Marie Louise Berneri, who died in 1949. The surviving members of the Freedom Press at that time agree that the book was certainly not offered to them and that if it had been it would certainly not have been rejected. There is also a story that the book was nearly published by Paul Potts, the poet who had a private publishing company, and it does at least seem that Orwell seriously considered producing it at his own expense; but in the event it was published by Secker & Warburg in 1945, and made him famous.

There is another similar story, which also seems to originate with George Woodcock. Crick takes it from a letter Orwell sent to Dwight Macdonald, the American journalist, in 1946, as follows:

When Queen Elizabeth, whose literary adviser was Osbert Sitwell, sent the Royal Messenger to Secker & Warburg for a copy in November, he found them utterly sold out and had to go with horse, carriage, top hat and all, to the anarchist Freedom Bookshop, in Red Lion Square, where George Woodcock gave him a copy.

Again, the surviving members of the Freedom Press at that time remember rather that it was a publisher's messenger who came to collect the book. But it's a good story, even if it's only a story -- though the Freedom Bookshop was of course in Red Lion Street, not Red Lion Square.

What certainly isn't only a story is Orwell's later support for the anarchists. When the Freedom Press was raided and four editors of War Commentary prosecuted for attempting to "undermine the affections of members of His Majesty's Forces", at the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945, he not only wrote articles and signed letters in protest, but he became vice-chairman of the Freedom Defence Committee, which was established because the National Council for Civil Liberties was then a Communist front. The FDC was run by George Woodcock, who has recorded that Orwell, then becoming increasingly ill, contributed time, money, and a typewriter as well as his name. He later became involved in more ambitious attempts to establish a League for the Dignity and Rights of Man with Arthur Koestler and Bertrand Russell, which came to nothing, though some of its ideas were taken up by the Congress of Cultural Freedom and Amnesty International.

The point of course is that Orwell genuinely believed in the freedom of the press -- and of speech and assembly -- not only for people he agreed with but for people he disagreed with. This extended not only to anarchists and pacifists but also to Fascists and Communists. But he never wrote for Fascist or Communist papers, as he wrote for Woodcock's Now and for FREEDOM, the successor to War Commentary after the war. It is not surprising that when the Freedom Defence Committee was dissolved in 1949, Orwell let the Freedom Press keep the old typewriter (sometimes rumoured to be the one on which FREEDOM is still typed).

One last event linked Orwell and the anarchists. When he was very ill with tuberculosis in 1949, the year after the publication of Nineteen Eighty-Four and the year before his death, he had his adopted son brought to stay near his sanatorium in the Cotswolds. Crick records that the boy was kept "in the care of Lillian Woolf, a 73-year-old veteran of the British anarchist movement who lived at the nearby anarchist and craft colony, Whitelands" (Lillian spelt her name Wolfe, and the colony is called Whiteway, but never mind). How nice to know that at the end of his life Orwell was helped by an anarchist and pacifist -- a perfect irony to close the case of Orwell and the anarchists. For us, of course, what matters is not what Orwell said about this or that kind of anarchism or did about these or those anarchists, but what he meant when he took as his fundamental political position the form of socialism based on the overthrow of tyranny and the establishment of justice and liberty, and what he said in fictional or satirical writings about the implications of such a position. At most, he was an anarchist fellow-traveller, but he was one of the best.

Martyrs to Leftism

Capitalism and Revolution in Iran Bizhan Jazani
(Translated by the Iran Committee) 151pp cloth £12.95
pb. £4.50
(Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9 DN)

THIS book contains the translated writings of Jazani, which helped to form the ideology of the 'Fedayin', now the major secular socialist opposition in Iran. It is also interesting in its attempt to adapt Marxism to a particular set of circumstances, to use it as a tool rather than as a straitjacket. It doesn't really work, the language in itself is offputting enough, but it is a fair try.

Jazani was born in Tehran in 1937. In 1953 the Shah was overthrown and forced into exile. Within a few days he was back with a flood of CIA money to help reestablish himself. The opposition was systematically destroyed and the young Jazani got his first prison sentence. He spent the rest of his life in and out of jail. After 1967 he was detained permanently. The writings in this book were produced in his cell. Eventually it was announced that Jazani, and others, had been killed 'while attempting to escape'.

The 50's and 60's were a bad time for a militant in Iran. The opposition movement was almost non-existent, particularly after another failed uprising in 1963. Left wing ideas had the extra disadvantage of being discredited by association with

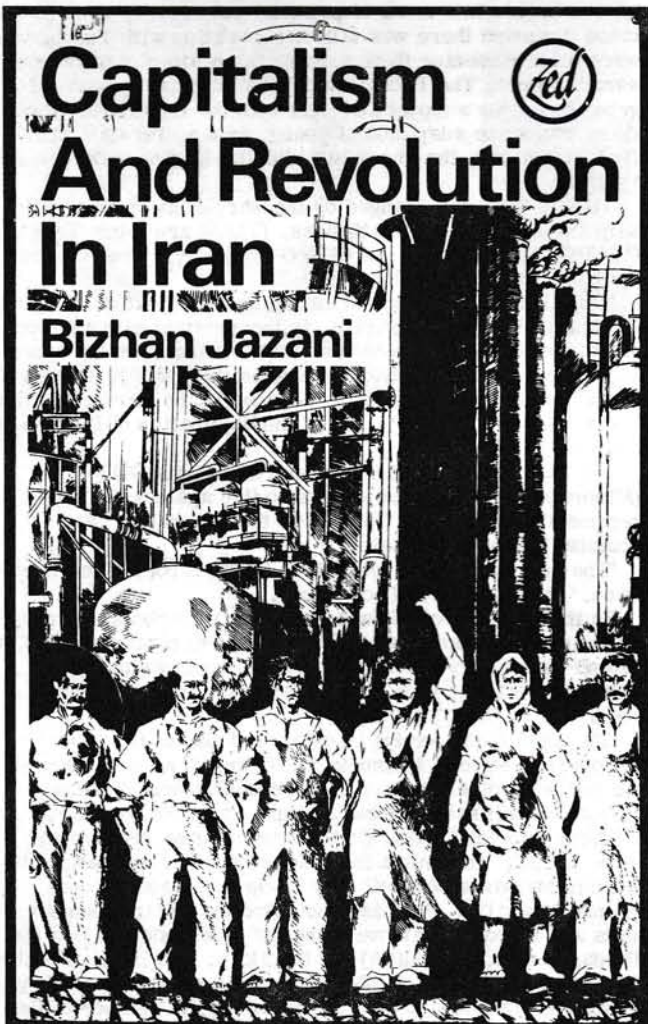
Tudeh ('Masses' - the Communist Party). After its high spot, as a partner with the National Front in the alliance which ousted the Shah in 1953, this had been systematically dismantled by the regime. It was reduced to a skeleton, mostly in exile. The name was linked with as impressive a record of opportunism, vacillation, sectarianism and slavish adulation of Moscow as you could find anywhere. No wonder people weren't interested.

In this unpromising atmosphere a small Marxist group, including Jazani, was formed. It was almost immediately smashed, apparently denounced by the head of the Tehran branch of Tudeh, who happened to be a SAVAK (secret police) agent. Three members survived to work in Tehran, whilst two others spent some time training with the Palestinian resistance. After their return the group, now up to 22 members, launched an attack on a police post at Siakhal, in the mountains north of Tehran. This attack (8 February 1971) is taken as the start of the guerilla campaign. Although a military failure, it symbolised the end of over seven years of passivity. The remnants of this group then joined with another to form the 'Organisation of Iranian Peoples Fedai Guerillas' (OIPFG, 'Sazman - i Cherkha'ye Fedayin - i Khalaj

Guerrillas of the Holy War'), the Fedayin were, from the beginning, Marxist-Leninists. The Mojahedin have never been able to decide exactly what they are. The Shah used to call them 'Islamic Marxists', a label which they resented. Their appeals were largely rhetorical. In 1975 they suddenly announced that half the membership had been expelled and that henceforth they were Marxist-Leninists. This startling change was quietly forgotten during the Revolution and, unsurprisingly, Islam again became prominent. In the Revolution they, and the Fedayin, changed from small underground groups to mass organisations. The leader of the Mojahedin, Rajavi, stood for president. He only got a handful of votes, but there again so did everybody else. There weren't many left after Bani-Sadr had his 106% of the poll, or whatever final figure was decided. The Mojahedin now propose a vague socialism, with an immense wish that our old friend the paragon of Islamic purity, Khomeini, will realise their worth and sweep aside all the self-seekers who clutter up the government and insist on persecuting the Mojahedin. In fact, they are socialist enough to recognise Khomeini for what he is, but in the ultra-Islamic Iran of today, they won't openly criticise him personally.

The Fedayin were always much clearer. The title of another of Jazani's pamphlets (not included here) sums it up, 'Armed Struggle, the Road to the Mobilisation of the Masses'. Small vanguard groups would take up military action. In the course of these, and also armed with a scientific Marxist-Leninist method, they would be forged into an effective revolution. The masses would follow, or, in the words of Ahmadzadeh, another of the Fedayin's theorists, 'The politico-military nucleus itself can, by initiating guerilla warfare and in the process of its development create the Party, the people's true vanguard politico-military organisation and the people's army.' The influences of Guevara and Debray are obvious. During the Revolution it must all have seemed vindicated. However, in practice, it suffered from the problems pointed out by Debray himself in his later writings, not least a completely unrealistic view of the effects on those 'masses' of military actions by small underground groups in the absence of any political movement.

What cannot be denied is their sincerity. 'Fedai'i' means 'devoted to death' (it is of course picked up from the Palestinians) and the list of martyrs is frightening. The writings of both the Fedayin and the Mojahedin place great stress on heroism, self-sacrifice and purity. Shi'a Islam itself makes a big thing of martyrdom ('Shahid'). It was the escalating mourning periods after each death during the Revolution that helped to build up the massive demonstrations, up to two



million in Tehran alone, at one. The significance of these in the Revolution was exaggerated due to their obvious appeal as spectacle. The Shah's regime was crippled by industrial unrest and strikes. However, the demonstrations, and the concept of martyrdom did help to hold together popular consciousness. The tone of the writing from the guerillas was also religious. As an example, from the Mojahedin, who tended to go over the top rather more, but the tendency is the same, 'The blood of this young martyr has enriched the red of the blazing star on the struggle against imperialism, feeding the wrath and zeal of the people rising in revolt.'

However, the book in question avoids these excesses. It is not so much a rallying call, Jazani provided that in 'Armed Struggle', as an analysis of social conditions. The problem is that it was written for the committed and so assumes sympathy with an 'objective, scientific Marxist-Leninist analysis.' Will these people ever learn. Oh, the sight in Tehran, of the old familiar range of Lenin's pamphlets, in yet another translation. (And it must be said, at the end of the row of tables, a streetseller from Tehran Libertarian Group, with our pamphlets and copies of 'Nafarman', 'No Authority'.) I have in front of me a stack of notes, around which to base a step by step criticism of Jazani's ideas. However, this would need a pamphlet, not an article masquerading as a review. In the meantime, we have analysis of the 'History of Contemporary Iran', 'Land Reform in Modern Iran', 'Dependent Capitalism', and 'The Revolutionary Forces', plus a foreword, (eulogy, entirely dispensable), and a postscript, drawn from Fedayin pamphlets, updating the analysis.

The 'History' is fair enough, if you can tolerate the language. There is discussion of the rivalry between Britain and Russia and the rise of the 'comprador bourgeoisie', as opposed to feudalism. This latter is a theme that will recur throughout the book. A large part of the chapter is a knowledgeable and accurate demolition of Tudeh. This section, and many of the others, would require some knowledge of the historic events to be readable. The next chapter, land reform, makes the point that the whole thing was something of a con trick. The Americans, as opposed to the British, were more perceptive and realised the value of token reform, for its 'preventive effects'. When the royal court shifted its support away from the feudalists, the thing was cut and dried. Tudeh, of course, spent its time dithering.

The core of the book is the analysis of 'Dependant Capitalism', which takes up over a third of the text. This is worth a read, if for nothing but the characterisation, for example of the Shah as 'the ultimate bureaucrat' or merely as 'the most outrageous kleptomaniac.' Pre-revolutionary Iran was an example of statism gone mad. The economy was entirely dominated by oil revenues, which were channelled through state agencies, which meant controlled by the Shah. And, of course, every enterprise had to have a member of the royal family on the board. This is, of course, a simple word for a social system like this, with the state organising everything, an all-powerful leader, a mystical ideology (in this case, harking on 2,500 years of Persian 'empire') and persecution of ethnic minorities. It is fascism. In this case it is confused by the foreign domination. Hence the term 'dependant capitalism', similar to 'neocolonialism'. Being a good Leninist, Jazani hinges his analysis on the identification of the 'contradictions' in the society. This involves the careful pinning down of the difference between the 'principal contradiction' (that between the people and the regime in the form of the Shah's autocracy) and the 'fundamental contradiction' (between the people and the regime plus the comprador bourgeoisie plus imperialism). You get the general idea. And in all this there is only one mention of the ethnic minorities who make up half the population. And try this for a conclusion,

'To sum up: because of the necessity of anti-imperialist struggle, because of the progressive nature of part of the bourgeoisie, and since it is imperative to go through a period of transition before socialism, the principal contradiction of our society (namely the contradiction upon which the present class system is based) is that between the people as a whole and their enemies.'

Sometimes I feel sorry for Marxists.

The last chapter is a discussion of the possible 'Revolution-

ary Forces'. This, as might be expected is a paeon to 'proletarian culture', defined as 'a feeling of sympathy and comradeship towards one another, sympathy and generosity towards other workers, unity and solidarity; a progressive attitude and readiness for self sacrifice, hatred of reactionary regimes and capitalists in general, and vigilance, precision, audacity and perseverance.' Intellectuals are dismissed, this from a writer. The tribes and the nomads get some coverage this time. The petty bourgeoisie are analysed and found wanting. Careful distinction is drawn between the 'sub-proletariat', (temporary labourers etc.) and 'lumpen proletariat' (thieves, beggars, petty smugglers, prostitutes and louts, practising 'slovenliness, ignorance, superstition, parasitism, vulgarity and violence, sexual perversion and sloth'). Jazani did recognise that it was the policies of the regime that compel 'a considerable number of people ... to live a parasitic existence and become an anti-progressive element.'

Its easy to derive harmless fun from this type of writing. This does not diminish its interest as an analysis of pre-revolutionary Iran. The features of that, both the society and the analysis, have helped to produce the present position. I can't recommend the book wholeheartedly. Unless you have a special interest, its a little too obscure. (There are now a number of general books on Iran. Perhaps the best, and fortunately also the cheapest, is Fred Halliday's Iran, Dictatorship and Development (Penguin)

So, after all, what are the Fedayin doing now. They emerged as a mass movement, well armed, by courtesy of the Shah's armouries. I'm not sure of their actual numbers. Members in Tehran have told me that the signed up membership is only about 5,000, but with over 1 million supporters (They also said that the Mojahedin has about the same.) You can take these figures as you like. There was sporadic harrassment. In a mess of political manoeuvres, the line was toned down and there was talk of a coalition with Tudeh, who were busy hardening their slogans in an attempt to recover some support. The Fedayin were the only major political group to openly support and fight with the minorities, though there was some suspicion of young, urban, Persian militants. By last autumn, the group had effectively gone underground again.

All this has been changed by the war. Some quotes will help show their present attitudes. (These are from 'KAR', ('LABOUR') the journal of OIPFG (Majority). There's been a split over attitudes to the war.

'The anarchist assessment alleging the defeat of the Iranian Revolution since the uprising, is inconsistent with and contradicted by all objective realities and evidence. On the contrary, all of the evidence testifies that since the uprising the process of the Iranian Revolution has deepened in the direction of its fundamental goal, that is to end the domination of Imperialism in Iran.'

'We now witness that (various groups), the OIPFG (Minority) etc ... issue orders to fire against the Iraqi regime and call it "the Defence of the Fatherland" and "combat against aggression"'

'The communists do not believe in the export of the revolution.' (and this from Trotskyists.)

'In its telegram of 26 Sept. to Ayatollah Khomeini, our Organisation stated clearly that in present circumstances, to defend the country's independence has no meaning but to defend the Islamic Republic of Iran.' (So, where is the quarrel with OIPFG (Minority).)

'The OIPFG (Majority) in defence of the gains of the Revolution, strictly instructs all its supporters to observe the following directives ... 1) Present yourself at the National Mobilisation Organisation as soon as possible.'

Khomeini even instructed the army to give weapons to these people, who only a few weeks ago were godless, anti-Islamic Marxists. And off they troop to the south to get themselves killed. And they even find that their volunteer units are forced to remove their red armbands, so that the Pasdaran (Islamic militia) get the glory. And in the meantime they squabble with each other over their reasons: are they fighting in 'Defence of the Fatherland' or 'in defence of the gains of the Revolution..'

Cancer for Culture

HEAVEN forbid that I should raise an eyebrow in the matter of tarnish gold when that base metal is molded into art beautiful. Many an early jazz pianist earned his daily crust by playing in a brothel. Giovanni Piranesi's *Carceri d'Invenzione* were magnificent etchings of halls of horror for the artist is, always was and always will be a social prostitute and who acts as middleman between the labouring peasant in the field and the artist's belly is a moral question that each artist must answer and act upon. Those who accepted Hitler or Stalin's spiced pig slop for their sycophantic servitude to a brute State will in the end find their apologists in future teaching establishments while those who refused to create their art under an authoritarian regime will die with the bile of bitter satisfaction on their lips. I honour, in my own small way, those who defied the State and I share the anger of those muted by a self created personal morality but with the Town and his frau in the final analysis we can only stand in judgement on the final created work. And so invitations at the ready we fall in behind London's lush minority up and into the National Portrait Gallery for 'The New Look in British Art' with refreshments. Chosen from over 300 entries these 45 paintings picked out by 'eminent judges' ranging from Sir Hugh Casson without whom no committee for throwing up or tearing down the London skyline is safe to Carel Weight were there with the artists while we waited glass in hand to see who would collect the £7,000 judgement clanger of the year. The exhibition is a product of Imperial Tobacco who slapped the money on the table and left it to the State culture committees to get the circus moving and to give it that touch of high drama. The Rt. Hon. Norman St. John-Stevas, MP, God's Holy Fool was there in his official capacity as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Minister for the Arts to hand out the pretties. There is a moral problem here, not my morality but theirs, that when a society and a government condemn the use of tobacco as causing cancer then it must surely follow that no State building or Minister of the Crown should be involved with any event financed by a commercial organisation that profits from the sale of tobacco that voices on every side tell me is responsible for spreading cancer among the populace and how can this same government that barred any participation in the Olympic Games for moral reasons and refused to hand out its political honours to those men and women who defied them by taking part in the games send little Norman their tame Minister of the Arts to this Imperial Tobacco funfest. I am no prig or puritan and I am not shocked only amused. The work on display is extremely good and for the record little Norman handed Margaret Foreman the £4,000, an enamelled silver medallion and a commission worth £3,000 for her portrait of Sir Richard Southern and in all sincerity I wish Margaret well but for me the choices were *Reading* by Kris Ellum who in her small painting has produced a painter's painting in that foreground and background create a unified whole, wherein there is no academic gloss but a moifing with the brush of flowers and figure so that one is conscious of each part yet nothing usurps its rightful place in Kris Ellum's scheme, Richard Stone's confident academic portrait of *Mr. Isidore Kerman* and Anthony Summers' *Sariah Leach* but my three choices were also rans but I am right for I chose the best paintings and the committee chose the best pictures. A subtle difference my masters. Back and forth across London's dirty miles with William Packer of the Financial Times to hand in our paintings to Angela Flowers for her exhibition of 'Nudes' for the New Year. Five of us in the empty gallery off the Tottenham Court Road with four gallery walls covered with nudes both great and small male and female and we drank of the wine and I admired William Packer's small watercolours. But big or small the Town, nay the world, has much rubbish to tout for it was view night

at the international Marlborough Gallery off Bond Street and as ever we drank of the wine while surrounded by what I would hold is no more than third rate work writ large. Let one be honest in this matter and state, that the national press have applauded John Wonnacott's work but like a postage stamp it is a type or style of work that improves the more it is reduced in reproduction. In face to face confrontation one has to



Departure, 1932-33 (Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

ignore the competent draftsmanship which belongs to the world of illustration and accept the great areas of slapdash painting. The Marlborough is a gallery that deals in millions of money but of late there must be a dearth of good painters for this gallery that once showed the best of the European young now appears to be filling its stable with the third rate or the remains of the living dead. This was a gallery that could display the best of the work of the Communist Renato Guttuso the Italian polemical social realist, and I would advise Wonnacott to study Guttuso's great paintings, and now fills its walls with work that appears to be the studio leavings of the painter's workshop. So much good work in their past so much bad work on display but Wonnacott moved among the wine drinkers on the Private View night confident that he had earned the applause but I still see third rate painting. Work on a massive scale has always scared the critics and the spectator for there is always that inner voice that warns men and women against protesting at the authority of any great mass be it human, material or just plain elemental. We are a society that tolerates great authority in office, huge empty office blocks, high rise working class flats wherein no lift will work and massive works of art from huge coloured daubs to miles of coastline literally draped in polythene sheeting on the simple minded premise that it must have a value if anyone or any group went to the trouble of creating it. At the Whitechapel Art Gallery was the Triptychs of Max Beckmann as but one stop on its international Stations of the Cross pilgrimage. Again as with Wonnacott and the commemorative stamps it is a type of work that gains in reproduction and reduction. Beckmann joined God in 1950 and I do not type lightly for it is claimed that when asked for the meaning within his large paintings he would point up to the heavens murmuring 'You'll have to ask the one up there.' The Nazis came into power in Germany in 1933 and he left Germany in 1937. A one time professor at *Stdelschule* and a leading figure of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement, it drew its name from the 1925 Mannheim exhibition, it was part of the fashionable chic

international anti war movements. German artists such as Grosz and Dix aimed their brushes at society and the State but Beckmann chose to move into an interpretation of the world of dreams and myths. He did good work such as his *The Night 1918-1919* now in the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein in Westfalen but it was in the fashionable polemical style of the German twenties and unlike Grosz Beckmann appeared to have a limited field of social vision. At the Whitechapel were displayed Beckmann's huge triptychs and as so often happens with an artist who creates an audience by an appeal to the mob, cultured or nay, when that emotional situation no longer exists we are simply left with crude worthless paintings and meaningful slogans dying on the wind. Almost all the lads with fashionable talent were able to walk upon water to America as the Nazi horror became the order of the night and almost without exception they became no more than high priced third rate gallery fodder. If it is felt that I wrong Beckmann then I would argue that there is hardly a public or private gallery, with wealth and limited wall space, that would take any of these large works if they were offered them. Crude and superficial in their subject matter they are like the work of

so many expatriates hanging onto and riding to glory on the shirt tail of a great revolutionary storm spent bullets fired by conscripts for a cause. But the only ones who can be faulted are the art Establishment, private or public, coffee table publication or learned thesis or nay who refuse to accept the difference between a bad painting and a 'smashing' picture. There are so many good exhibitions in the pipelines for the coming year with a major exhibition at the Royal Academy of young artists, Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg at the Tate and Giacometti at the Serpentine for there was talent and there is new talent waiting to be seen by the Town and his turkey stuffed frau (mann ed.) There is until February to see the amusing toy town work of Sam Smith and H.C. Westermann and it amuses and cannot be faulted for they make no great claims on our judgements while in Kasmin's Bond St. gallery, I see you Kas hiding in the backroom, is a non saleable exhibition of 'Favourite Postcards' and it includes Tobias Rodgers magnificent collection of Spanish Civil War postcards but not for sale comrades not for sale.

ARTHUR MOYSE

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