

Loyalty to What?

TRADE UNIONS are far too often considered to be essentially left-wing, socialist, even revolutionary organisations. In fact, despite all the propaganda on both sides, they are neither a Good Thing nor a Bad Thing, depending on your ideological position, but a neutral phenomenon with only very limited and limiting functions. Echoing the powerful guilds of the Middle Ages, but emerging in the struggles of the later Industrial Revolution, they were essentially sectional organisations for mutual aid and self-defence, and frequently little more than secret conspiracies against other workers as well as against employers.

The ambiguous nature of British trade unionism today may be understood only in the light of this background. We may still see the narrow-mindedness and self-centredness of what remain sectional organisations. We may still see the features of mutual aid and self-defence, both good and bad. We may still see the secrecy and the conspiratorial methods. We may see at the same time the tradition of brotherhood and solidarity and the tradition of prejudice against other workers and against other groups like women and blacks. We may see above all that trade unionism is part of capitalism rather than of socialism.

In Britain, the birthplace both of the Industrial Revolution and of the trade union movement, we may especially see the conflict between the older craft unions of skilled workers and the newer industrial unions of semi-skilled and unskilled workers. This is particularly clear in traditional areas threatened by economic decline or technological innovation — printing, engineering, car manufacture, railways and so on. And when there are three million unemployed, and when skills which used to be acquired after years of apprenticeship can be learnt in a few days, such a system is under increasingly drastic pressure. At the same time the big unions have been absorbed into the social, political and economic establishment, and the parliamentary party which they formed at the beginning of the century has been not just absorbed but digested. So no wonder we have a summer of discontent on top of the now regular winters.

Of course some trade unionists, and indeed some politicians, have not only seen what is happening but have tried to do something about it, but they are almost helpless against the vast inertia of all the other elements in the system. As a result

Britain and other Western countries have a general consensus between the two sides of industry, the parallel bureaucracies of management and unions, with occasional confrontations precipitated by managerial or union extremists, represented in the media as dramatic spectacles in place of the real situations which are so much harder to understand or resolve.

Anarchists have no interest in all this, except in trying to make sense of it, and in taking sides on the basic level of solidarity with the poor and weak against the rich and powerful. We have been trying to tell the truth about trade unionism for a century, and the only thing which has changed is that the poor and weak are a bit richer and stronger.

Let us repeat a few simple facts. Workers can change the nature of work only if they look more widely than their own particular area. Strikes can help only if they are directed against the right people. Closing newspapers or railways or schools or hospitals hurts only the wrong people. What is needed is not self-defence but self-awareness, an attempt to consider what newspapers and railways and schools and hospitals are for.

Of course we oppose the use of trade unions as part of the structure of the state, as in Fascist or Communist countries. But we also oppose the use of trade unions as

any kind of authoritarian institution, as in Syndicalist or Guild Socialist theory. Life is much more than work, and social revolution must be much more than a general strike. One Big Union would be no better than many little unions, and the only union worth having is one that unites people.

As we watch one union after another marching into a battle which it cannot win — as suicidally blind as the tragic psychopath Barry Prudom who was openly murdered by the police a week ago after declaring war against the world — we are reminded of William Morris looking back to the Peasants' Revolt in *A Dream of John Ball* a century ago, and pondering 'how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name'.

Isn't it time to stop fighting for the wrong thing and to start fighting for the right one — not just higher wages and shorter hours, or even workers' control, but a whole new way of looking at workers as part of the people around them and at work as part of life? But this would involve thinking rather than fighting, and responsibility rather than loyalty. No wonder we are all so afraid to try!

PLO: The Final Solution?

THE comparisons that some people have made between the actions of the Israeli army in Lebanon and the recent British action in the Falklands are really too tenuous to be worth pursuing very deeply, although it could be said that the fact that the world's attention was rivetted on the British action — or over-reaction — might have encouraged the Israeli militarists to start something they had wanted to begin for a long time (no pun intended).

If this is so, the analogy with the events of 1956 do hold water — for there can be no doubt that it was Anthony Eden's crazy adventure into Suez (in collusion, ironically, you might think, with Israelis and the French) that made it that much easier for the Russians to invade Hungary to quell a popular uprising. At the present time, the French government is keeping

very quiet, because it was their marvellous products, the Exocet missiles and the Eten-dart planes from which they were fired that played so much havoc with the British navy, EEC and NATO notwithstanding.

Any sensible analysis of these events, as distinct from merely taking sides, as our superficial opportunists on the left tend to do, leads one inevitably to the anarchist conclusion as far as the state is concerned. In the demonstrations against the Falkland fracas, the SWP and the Militant manoeuvrists in general were crying that the Falklands 'belong' to Argentina, and in their declamations on the 'Palestine' problem they have consistently called for the establishment of a 'Palestine National State' under the PLO, presumably thinking that this is the right revolutionary demand to make, statistics that they are.

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PLO

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Sadly, it is this very concept of 'statehood' which is the disease which has fouled up the original concept of the Jewish national home in the minds of many, many Jews before the establishment of the Zionist state. A place of their own is everybody's concept of security and even freedom — a state of 'their own' is everybody's guarantee of servitude.

And this is what went sour in Israel. In the Kibbutzim movement of the twenties and thirties, libertarian ideas were widespread. Egalitarian socialist and anarchistic principles were actually established in many of the collectives, where all property was held in common, work was shared and decisions taken communally. Inasmuch as all the participants — mostly ideologically motivated people from Europe — saw the movement spreading all over what was then called Palestine (just as the collectives were called *Palestinian* collectives), they conceived it as establishing a rich society of self-governing communities from which Arabs were not excluded and among which the two Semitic peoples, Arabs and Jews, would live in peace and plenty side by side.

It could be that the very success of the settlements, 'making the desert bloom', also made the Arabs uneasy and jealous, but the factor which above all changed the whole course of events in Palestine was the emergence of the Nazis in Germany and the subsequent holocaust, after which no European Jew felt safe in Europe. The ideas of Zionism were naturally fuelled and the concept of the 'national home' was embraced by millions of Jews who had no socialist or anarchist ideas but who — rightly — wanted to get out of this Europe stinking of Auschwitz and Belsen.

It was the British state which, having made much good anti-Nazi propaganda out of the Jewish plight during the war was opposed to the exodus from Europe after it. Britain still held the 'mandate' for Palestine, which it had won after the First World War and over the years had promised both to Jews and Arabs at different times. Or even at the same time.

Having bitterly to fight Britain to get to Palestine meant the setting up of paramilitary organisations of 'terrorists' motivated by Zionism. The 'Stern Gang' and the Irgun Zvai Leumi, of which we now know Menachem Begin was a member, spearheaded the struggle which was eventually abandoned by Britain in 1948, following which — naturally — the terrorists became the government and respectable and legalised their terrorism by setting up a state themselves and by driving 200,000 Palestinian Arabs off their land and into the wilderness.

The justification for this is that the Hebrews lived there 5,000 years ago and thus this particular patch of land was the Hebrew homeland, to which any Hebrew was entitled to 'return' — even though he and his immediate forebears for rather less than 5,000 years had never been there before, much less been born there — and any upstart Arab, whose forebears had cultivated the ground for only 2,000 years, had no rights of tenure, or even occupation.

You would really have thought, would you not, that of all peoples, the 20th Century Jews would have understood about being a refugee and would not have wished to award that status to anyone. But no, statism is ruthless; statism is the sacrifice of people for principles and statism has cost the Israeli people themselves very dear — to say nothing of all the Arabs who have died for *their* states.

In all the wars since 1948, the issue of the displaced Palestinians has loomed large — for apart from their plight itself being a running sore, they have been used by ambitious Arab leaders as a 'cause' to excuse attacks upon the Zionist state. Most of these have now grown tired of fighting wars they never win, and one of them — Sadat — paid with his life for his efforts to establish 'peace' between Egypt and Israel. Only Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, remains still adamant that Israel must be destroyed, and he is now an embarrassment to all the other Arab states, who are tired of the whole Palestinian problem. They wish it would go away — and none more so than Lebanon, which is now suffering because it has been unable to refuse living space to the PLO.

So Israel will do Lebanon a favour. It will blow the PLO away. It is as though at the back of Begin's mind there is a continuous echo of that phrase which once struck

terror into the Jews of Europe: 'The Final Solution'. It was the Nazis phrase for the annihilation of the Jews in gas chambers, solving forever the 'Jewish problem' by eliminating them totally.

It is recorded that Israel's first president Ben Gurion, once described the terrorist Begin as 'Nazi', rather as Lenin is said to have warned his comrades on his deathbed about Stalin — having appointed him successor! Today, it is held to be in the poorest possible taste to link either Begin himself or the statism of Zionism with that of the Nazis. But statism has its own logic, just as does war, and the two together — and they so frequently go together — lead inexorably to the corruption inescapable in total power, impatient of any opposition, and ruthless in wiping it out.

There is one glimmer of hope: that an opposition is appearing in Israel itself to Begin's ruthless expansionism. Civilians, soldiers — and even high ranking officers — are now coming into the open with criticism of the use of the Israeli army far from the borders of Israel proper — and coming out with the criticism while the fighting is still going on, when, as we were all recently told, a nation is supposed to close ranks and button up.

It would be nice to think that our opposition here to the Falkland fracas has helped people elsewhere to break mould of national dumbness — but Israelis have surely so much more to than we now have to be fed up to the back teeth with continual bloodshed. Sooner or later a *modus vivendi* must be found between Jew and Arab. If Zionism is seen to be an insoluble barrier to that — will the Israelis have the courage to try something else?

Along the lines of the original pioneers perhaps?
JUSTIN



Oppose the Truxtun

An artist's imaginative impression of the reception awaiting the USS Truxtun in New Zealand

Torture in Italy

DURING the last few years capitalism has achieved a profound and widely articulating restructuration, which has translated itself into a model traversing all the different spheres of time and space within the relationship between capital and work. This traverse is not just a way of adjusting the economy, it also represents the real model of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. In effect this model pervades all of society just as the social (il sociale) is the sphere of the reproduction of capital's command, consensus and control over the proletariat. It moves across institutional space, moulding it to its own requirements, coordinating all political parties, which become a rigid system internal to the dynamics and development of the repressive institutions of the state. In Italy at the present time the political phase is that of the transformation and redefinition of the relations between classes during which occurs a redefinition of the relations of production and also of the norms and regulations of social life. The bourgeoisie attempts, in a coordinated manner and with many internal contradictions, to redetermine the level of social organization and productivity in accord with their interests.

All these changes have not come about in a peaceful manner and without contestation. Rather, we have experienced in Italy the formation of a social movement which over the last 14 years has continually contradicted such tendencies in capital. This movement has created fear in the state and dread in the hearts of the bourgeoisie, and consequently a merciless repression which aspires to a level seldom before imagined. In actuality such repression is an instrument to which the bourgeoisie has recourse whenever social conflict is intensified: repression is fundamentally the organization of the state in order to suppress the expression of class antagonism, an antagonism which calls in question the very existence of capital. The fact that in Italy there are now 3,500 political pris-

oners shows a political will to strike at and destroy these antagonists.

The class character of this repression is clear: those who have struggled in the factories, in the schools, and in the metropolises are persecuted; police operations follow one another in an increasing spiral; an entire generation of revolutionaries has been criminalized; dozens of arrests on mere presumption of conspiracy have taken place; on such pretexts thousands of comrades have disappeared into state prisons, victims of a hearsay increasingly absurd. Now show trials are being staged in which every communist is accused of having been a terrorist! The specific crime of which every comrade is accused is only a technical expedient, what is important for the bourgeoisie is the liquidation of all forms of antagonism, what counts is the production of a negative image around which consensus is constructed.

The strategy of the bourgeoisie is one of criminalizing all comrades on the basis of a suspicion which derives solely from their political position: special laws provide the legal justification for actualizing this practice and the repressive apparatus of the state (police and carabinieri) is their executive instrument. The increasingly acute climate of war against the antagonist class which runs parallel with the massive restructuration in the factories introduces a degree of repression more and more heavy: from the militarization of the social sphere (il territorio) to the potentiation and barbarisation of the prison circuit, becoming characterized by the increasingly frequent use of TORTURE against communists whether arrested or just detained. That which power at the moment wants is the psycho-physical annihilation of the revolutionary subject both in prison and outside.

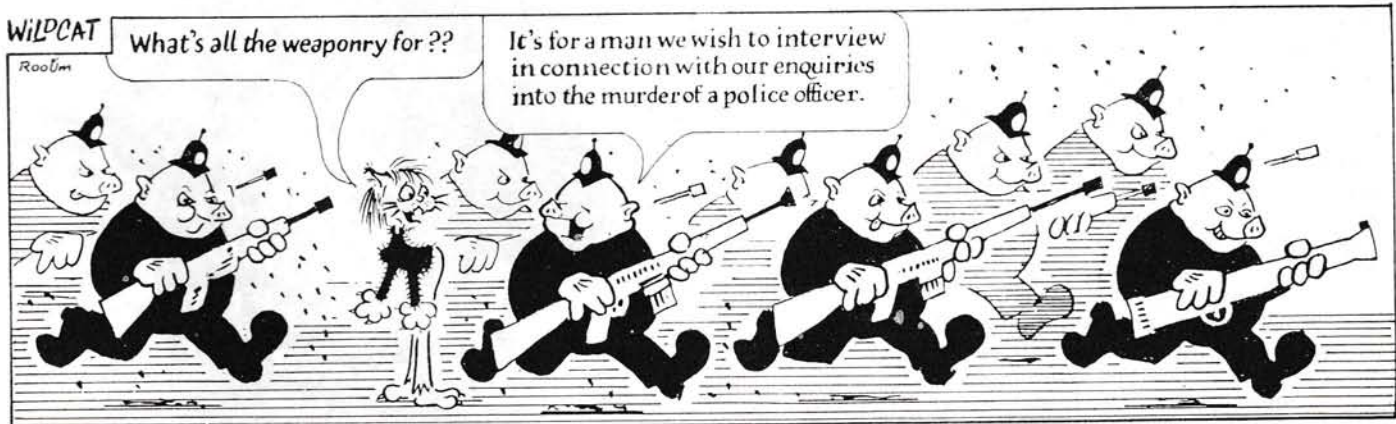
A special clause called 'Article 90' has been introduced into prison regulations in order to permit psychic destruction of those imprisoned by means of total isolation. Added to this practice of psychic

destruction, in recent months, has been the systematic use of physical torture, practised on anyone who is arrested for a political reason.

Numerous cases of torture have been denounced by lawyers, and plenty of witness evidence concerning the massacres wrought by police and carabinieri in Italian jails has been brought together by magistrates. In Parliament the Minister of the Interior has categorically denied the existence of these murderous practices, though from the written statements of magistrates emerges a picture of a well-established and determined system of torture. Indeed, there exist suitably prepared places in prisons and in the barracks of the carabinieri where persuasion is practised, and special secretly authorized squads of torturers who lend themselves to the role of butchers. One journalist has used the evidence of witnesses to reconstruct the way in which torture is practised. Reproduced below is an extract from an article published by *L'Espresso*, the only magazine which has publicly denounced this infamy:

Step one is the prisoner's total isolation in a strange locality without informing anyone of their whereabouts. Complete isolation, head totally covered by a hood, hands tied behind the back: this is the first stage of psychic violence. Afterwards comes the threat of death ('We can easily kill you because we are in an illegal situation already' said the cops to Stefano Petrella, one of the first prisoners to denounce the systematic use of torture). A pistol is held to the temple and its trigger pulled in a macabre version of Russian Roulette. Then the physical violations: all prisoners testify to having received kickings and punches immediately on being arrested. Then come the crueller tortures: the cigarettes stubbed out on arms; the forced drinking of extremely saline water, by litres, and always by the same method — having been tied to a table with the upper half of the body hanging over the edge the prisoner is force fed from above; kicking in the

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No Nations! No Nukes

ONE year ago, American activists were looking with envy at the massive resurgence of the nuclear disarmament movement in Europe and bemoaning the lack of a similar protest movement in the US. The march and rally for nuclear disarmament held in New York on June 12th has completely dispelled such gloomy outlooks. The week's activities broke all records. The rally attracted over 500,000 and was the largest rally ever witnessed in the US, larger than the Vietnam protests of the late 60s and early 70s. The civil disobedience blockades of the 'nuclear states' resulted in over 1600 protesters being arrested for 'disorderly conduct'.

Anarchists from all over the US joined in the protests under the *No Nations, No Nukes* banner. The groups's activities started with a flag ceremony outside the UN building, to coincide with the opening of the UN Special Session on Disarmament. As a call to the people of all nations to unite under the common banner of anarchy, bunches of national flags were ceremoniously dyed black and, in opposition to the existence of nation states and national governments, handfuls of flags were ignited and held aloft, while passersby received leaflets explaining our ideas.

During the week, *No Nations, No Nukes* attended the international Action Confer-

ence for Nuclear and General Disarmament. Delegates from our group had the opportunity of explaining in the workshops the need for the abolition of all governments as the only realistic way that global nuclear and general disarmament can be achieved. Judging by sales of books and pamphlets at our literature table, there was a great deal of interest in anarchist ideas.

The rally on Saturday June 12 was so large that three separate contingents of anarchists assembled in different parts of the city, in order to maximise our presence. The largest of 150 assembled at Tompkins Square on the Lower East Side of New York, and, taking up the tradition of anarchists at CND rallies in London, took its own route up to the UN, where perplexed rally 'officials' tried unsuccessfully to prevent our joining near the front of the march.

With banners, flags and placards held aloft, we danced and chanted our way past the UN building and along the route to Central Park. Hundreds of purple balloons marked *No Nations, No Nukes* were given out to children along the way. Thousands of leaflets produced by NNNN and the Libertarian Workers' Group, and hundreds of copies of the free anarchist newspaper *EMANCIPATION* were distributed.

The sight of an American flag led to the chant 'One, Two, Three, Four! Patriotism leads to war!'; the bourgeoisie peering from the all glass dining rooms of the many swanky hotels 'Eat the rich!'; a red flag 'No bosses' bombs, no workers' bombs!'. Without a doubt, the anarchists were the most imaginative, colourful and vocal of the myriad of groups present. Yet, to the surprise of the media, there was not one arrest made during the whole day. 'Gentle anarchy prevailed', according to the *New York Times*.

On the following Monday, the police got their chance to make up for their dismal showing at the march, when civil disobedience groups attempted to disrupt the normal work routine at the missions of the 'nuclear superpowers'. By 5am 5,000 police were ready with barricades, stretchers (to remove the sit-down protesters) and a fleet of buses (to ship the arrested to the police station). A record 1,600 were arrested, taken away and charged with disorderly conduct and, on submission of name, address and age, promptly released. Many enterprising people returned to be arrested a second time. Several more enterprising anarchists gave false names and addresses and then burnt their summonses under the noses of the police! Such ritualised civil disobedience achieves little in the short term, but hopefully the experience and personal empowerment gained by the protesters can be used to better effect in the future.

AF

TORTURE IN ITALY

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groin (Fornoni talks of 'special pincers which accomplish different degrees of pressure on the testicles, with a risk of castration.'); attempted strangulation using various methods; mysterious injections; after day after day of such treatment those arrested are taken before the magistrate and many written evidences taken by the judiciary are rich in descriptions of the terrible physical state of those detained.

The servile Italian press has sold out to power and maintains a blackout on these facts while the Communist Party paper *Unita* simply speaks of 'dramatic interrogations'. To slam the practice of torture and to denounce the Leftist parties who support the murders is an imperative for the whole movement, outside Italy as well. It is necessary to smash the wall of silence and complicity (omerta) and to denounce this cynical and barbaric spiral. To remain in the dark means to maintain one's complicity with the torturers.

AN ITINERANT ITALIAN



CND Rally

ON Sunday 6th June we took part in the 'green' section of the CND March & Rally, beginning in Ladbrooke Grove. The enclosed leaflet was distributed to accompany our coordinated scheme of anti-militarist banners. We spent some time displaying the banner beside the march — both in Ladbrooke Grove and in Hyde Park and some time walking in the march but found the former scheme much the most effective. During the march our banners tended to get 'lost' and muddled, negating the effect that they had when seen together.

On Monday we carried out our intentions to picket the Soviet Embassy, the US Embassy and the Defence Sales Organisation in Soho Square. At the first two of these we met some Police obstruction including peremptory threats of arrest — preceded by efforts to get us to name 'our leaders'! Probably the most effective action was the poster parade at the N end of Kensington Palace Gardens. Our slow compliance with the Police's order to us to parade on the opposite side of the road led to a brief traffic hold-up and a bigger viewing public for the banners.

At Grosvenor Square we got round two sides before meeting police intervention — though here they were somewhat more genial than in Bayswater Road. We also had an unexpected encounter with two representatives of the Chigascki Council Against A & H Bombs — received 'Peace Bills' and exchanged leaflets — theirs included the important acknowledgement that the Japanese 'are not only victims of atomic bombs, but also perpetrators of massacres in Korea and China (Nanking) and the murderers in biological warfare experiments of over 3,000 Soviet, Chinese, Korean and American prisoners of war in Manchuria in World War II.' They might also have pointed out that the results of these disgusting 'experiments' which included the deliberate inducement of bubonic plague — were bartered to the US govt of the day in return for not making public this use of 'human guinea pigs' by the Japanese. Anyway, on we went to Soho Square and the Defence Sales Organisation, coinciding with lots of DSO staff comings and goings. Here the Police reaction was at its most velvety — maybe to do with midday sun and high humidity etc. We picketed and leafleted for about an hour before taking our own lunch on the grass of the Square. I should have said that en route from the American Embassy we made a detour to Saville Row Police Station — trying to locate colleagues from other Peace Camps who had been arrested earlier in the morning at 'die-ins' on the steps of the Stock Exchange. Bank of

England, US and Soviet Embassies. Actually, they were not there but at Bow Street.

Random thoughts in conclusion — why were there so few Anarchist initiatives and banners on the March and Rally? I met one group from Cambridge and one person selling 'Direct Action' — no FREEDOM sellers anywhere. Perhaps they were there but we missed them....maybe ideas for action and coordination have to be put around much earlier. I'm glad we had banners drawing attention to Soviet Arms dealing and militarism. This helped to counter the response of onlookers who quickly dismiss Anti-Nuclear actions as essentially anti-American. We got a lot of favourable reaction — including many observed nudges from Police beside the march, disconcerted to see side by side, two banners, one condemning US militarism for killing people in C America, M East, Indonesia, Namibia, S Atlantic etc, and the other condemning Soviet militarism for killing people in the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, M East, Kampuchea etc.

PETER FORD

AWRE Fairford Peace Camp

MEN'S CLUBS

THE landlord of the Trinity Arms, which is immediately behind Southwark Police Station, has been found guilty of causing actual bodily harm to a female student from South Bank Polytechnic. The incident has its interesting aspects. Three people were passing the pub late one night. A small pane of glass was accidentally smashed. The landlord, Len Smith, an ex-policeman chased them and knocked one to the ground and hit her several times with what four witnesses described as a 2 foot long club, with a round top with spikes or studs on it. The police at Southwark refused to have anything to do with the incident, except to arrest the injured student some time later when she was found wandering around, dazed and hysterical. She was kept in a cell for a couple of hours without access to a doctor. One of her friends was later charged with criminal damage for the broken window. He was acquitted.

It may be of interest to compare this with the experience of a member of the FREEDOM Collective, who got three months imprisonment, after being found guilty of throwing a brick at a line of police in Brixton. He still limps. The crucial factor seems to be that, unlike Len Smith he did not resign 'honourably' from the porn squad at West End Central in 1971. (Readers will remember that 1971 was the year that West End Central was investigated for corruption.) Similar carelessness was shown by Winstone Miller, who received a 2 year sentence for throwing a brick which hit a policeman's helmet.

IN BRIEF

THE federal Shariat court in Islamabad, the highest religious court in the country, has changed its mind about whether stoning to death is an acceptable punishment for rape, adultery and fornication. Early last year, they ruled that it would not be Islamic practice. The composition of the court was then changed by the martial law authorities and they were invited to reconsider. The new ruling says that stoning would be an acceptable Islamic punishment. The new court says that it will give its reasons later.

A 122 year old man from Oakland, California is reported to be looking for a new job as he plans to remarry. He lost his last job at the age of 116.

A sentence of 100 lashes imposed on a woman in Abu Dhabi for alleged sexual relations with a man has been carried out in a 'gentle manner'. It is reported that the woman was not injured. Her lover was ordered to be stoned to death. There is no information about his fate.

VILLAGERS in Kera, Crete, intend to restore the family home of Antonousa Kastanopoulou who was a guerilla leader in the 19th century. The home will become a museum in honour of an early feminist'.

THE southern part of Vietnam is the most plague ridden area in the world, accounting for 94% of reported cases. The World Health Organisation, in its bimonthly bulletin, blames defoliants used in the war.

A US student, Benjamin Sasway, aged 21, has become the first person to be charged with refusing to register for compulsory military service since such registration was resumed in 1980. Another 160 cases are being considered for prosecution.

ART instruction books on painting the nude human figure are harmful to successful resistance against 'bourgeois spiritual pollution'. Liu Yung-Fa, a member of the propaganda department of Fu County Communist Party Committee, in north east China, wants such books to be restricted to artists and art students.

POLICE in Greater Manchester are to drop their policy of using plain clothes officers to police public lavatories to search for homosexuals committing indecent acts. This policy has caused controversy. There have been allegations of police climbing walls to look into cubicles and drilling spy holes in walls. A spokesman said that there was no fundamental change in policy, merely a review of activities.

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTER

DECENTRALISE!

Dear Friends,

In my last letter I advocated a 'simply anarchist' march. It seems that to some extent my wish came true on the 6th June (I left the rally unfortunately before any platform was set up) and resulted in 48 arrests. In the last issue, 'an imaginative solution' was called for, and this is what I propose.

Who has seen the old man who parades up and down Oxford St during peak shopping hours with a banner recommending the eating of less protein to end lust and violence. He doesn't get arrested! I think the answer is one which also applies to the world decentralisation. If small groups of anarchists paraded around central London in shopping hours, each group under one large banner it would achieve a more rewarding effect than the stereotype demonstration. Can you imagine the SPG being able to arrest us in a mass of housewives? Anyhow there are the big stores for cover. This more personal approach is bound to spark off serious discussion with the public and convert more and more to libertarian ideals.

Please inform me of anything I can do to help the Defence Campaign.

Yours Fraternally,
BENVENUTO BALDELLI

BEYOND THE
ROLE PLAY

Hello FREEDOM!

Just like to add my comments on the recent Beyond the Bullshit Conference.

I had hoped I was to take part in a creative and inspiring event that would spark off new ideas and new enthusiasm. The sick reality of it all was a bit different. I found I was in the presence of some of the most depressed, bored, apathetic, deflating and totally negative people I had ever come across. Rather than the conference being a forum for action and imagination it was used as chance to moan about how awful, cretinous and abismal everything was and how everyone that was actually trying to do anything was wasting their time and how nothing was ever going to change. People seemed more intent on watching video after video of various riots/street battles and assorted other carnage than on discussing anything worthwhile.

But I think the most revealing aspect of the whole weekend was the total lack of self-awareness of most of the people present — one guy who suggested we should go and attack Macdonalds, presumably in protest to their mass trade in dead animal, was wearing: a leather jacket, covered in nice macho studs, a leather belt with more studs and leather DMs complete with further studs! What can

you say? The hypocrisy is so glaringly obvious. Similarly, many of the girls present, who had supposedly rejected society's right to control them had masses of make up on, preened hair and the 'latest' chic clothing — PURE ROLE PLAY. It's no good going out to change/smash the system if you can't even change yourself. We've got to face up to this — at an anarchist conference the workshops were dominated by the largest, loudest males who shoved their ideas to the exclusion of all else.

It is painfully obvious that within the anarchist/libertarian movement people continue to be unaware of themselves and the way they relate to others. The survival of the war machine depends on BIG MAN BIG M.A.N. with subservient wo-man in tow — change that IT'S IN THE MIRROR THAT THE REAL WAR STARTS.
Anarchy + liberty,
RICHARD CROSS

FALKLANDS FARCE
CONTINUED

Dear FREEDOM,

Before they sent the armada any 'realistic' person knew that lives would be lost and the operation would cost millions and millions of pounds.

Thatcher says the fleet was sent to free the Islanders but the people of the Falklands are merely employees of a company which is part of a multi-national, they were not imprisoned by the Argentinians just put under new management.

With negotiations at this point the Argentinians would willingly have agreed to let the Islanders resettle in Britain, and more than likely paid a considerable sum in compensation to each person for their 'involuntary' removal from their homes.

As we have seen the Falklanders are so patriotic — surely they would rather live in the homeland — so they can wave little flags outside the palace gates, when the next little king or queen rolls off the production line. (sorry I'm sidetracking)

Argentina clearly wants the Islands, not the Islanders, to call their own. This is what our government was thinking as well — the whole issue is based on pride, god save the queen's empire, fly the flag etc...not the freedom of the 1800 people on the Islands.

I will not argue over who is wrong and more wrong over the history of the Islands. that bunch of Generals are one of the first on my list that I would like to see topple, but Argentina have been negotiating for years over the issue to no avail. So they invade the Islands, and no British were killed, so this was the time to negotiate — even though the Argentine held all the cards — and it would have meant Thatcher's downfall. But at least no more lives would have been lost and on her conscience. (Politician and a conscience, what am I on about?)

But no, it's back to the poor misguided soldier fighting and dying to save the government's credibility and the queen's empire. In 40 to 50 years time the old soldier will be proudly wearing his medals, a hero, who fought for the freedom of his queen and country, and so on it goes... until the day the people see.

love Anarchy
PERCY CUTE
Cambridge

GREEK
REPRESSION

Dear Comrades,
Presently, just few lines to let you know that 3rd June I was released from Greek prison after a long time spending 'inside'. About five years.

Also since long time ago we didn't wrote each other because the difficult conditions I was.

You know well that Greek administration of prison's keeping any message-paper's you sent to me.

My release coming after a struggle of 30 days on hunger strike and further I can say the conditions in prison still are most worst even under socialist? government.

My brother Nick still have 21 years of sentence and soon we will begin new struggle on the road till to push down his sentence.

In near future I can send you essential details about the human rights because we must save them — Any comrade that want correspondence with me should write to below address:

THEODORE TSOVALAKIS
Maragaki 16-10ZP
5th Floor, Drapetsong
Piraeus, Greece.

THEODORE @

PS: Please I will be very glad to have some issue of FREEDOM.

HE BOTHERED
TO READ IT!

Dear FREEDOM,

I am writing to say that I thought FREEDOM No 11 was excellent. I actually bothered to read ALL of it, for the first time. I think it had articles and reviews that were relevant and interesting and struck a good balance between contemporary anarchist action and thought, and that of the past.

All of my anarchist friends agree.

Yours,
ZOCKBAGG IV

The editors reserve the right to cut letters unless you say 'All or nothing!'. (In which case it might be nothing!).

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTER

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE

Dear Friends,

It's time for **DIRECT ACTION** here in London! A group of us, spurred by a letter in **FREEDOM**, have decided to stage an unofficial march on Saturday 17th July from Speakers' Corner Hyde Park to Parliament Square at 2pm. This will of course mean that the march passes by Downing Street and if the numbers are great enough some form of direct action is planned.

Unlike on 6th June the police will not be out in force and the only obstacle should be the one bit of filth outside No 10.

Sorry about the short notice.

Be there in Solidarity all you who keep appealing for Direct Action.

Yours

BPBH

For @

DAM CONFERENCE

THE Direct Action Movement held its second conference of the year in Leeds over the weekend of 26/27 June. Comrades from Newcastle, Hull, Leeds, Huddersfield, Manchester, Burnley, East Anglia and Doncaster were present. Reports were given on the OVB (Dutch syndicalist union) and the 'Beyond the Bullshit' conference which was held in London on the previous weekend. A general discussion was held into industrial organisation and syndicalism, it was agreed that there was a need for pamphlets to explain the DAM position on a number of particular issues, the conference agreed to the publication of a pamphlet before the next meeting in the Autumn. Notice was given of the AIT/IWA conference in Spain and the conference of the Northern AIT/IWA in Sweden, delegates for both conferences were called for and a delegate was appointed to go to Sweden. The second day of the conference was given over to more discussion on future pamphlets and the organisation of day schools, a long discussion also took place on the role DAM should have with Resistance (formerly Anarchist Action) and whether there was a need for such an organisation, it was agreed that there was a great need for an umbrella organisation to bring together all anti-militarists and that DAM should help as much as possible in bringing this about.

Have you noticed how **FREEDOM** reports activity - if there is any and you tell us about it?

LEADING NOWHERE

Dear **FREEDOM**,

Recently, I have been considering the role which a group like **CND** plays within Capitalist society. I have come to the conclusion that role is one of control. Peace groups have a stabilising effect. I will elucidate.

As we all know, due to, perhaps, a breakthrough in the technology of mass destruction, capitalist governments find it most urgent that they should 'upgrade' their weapon systems. More powerful and more accurate missiles are produced. Quite understandably very many well meaning and seriously concerned people express feelings of indignation, anger and fear about what is happening around them. 'Peace movements' begin to proliferate. Playing upon these natural fears these groups swell in size. But this fear and anger felt, I contend, is incorporated into a vague structure. It takes an a-political stance; organises futile marches; and formulates empty slogans for the 'followers' to mouth. These after time produce demoralization. They lead—(as they are meant to)—nowhere. After a time they disintegrate and the protest which at one time looked so menacing is nullified. The war-machine continues giving birth to more horrendous offspring. Nothing is changed.

This analysis is borne out by the events of the early sixties. After the dissolution of **CND** and **Bertrand** (Bomb Moscow Now!) **Russell's Committee of 100 Nuclear** stockpiling continued unabated. All protest was sucked into the sterile vacuum of reform, or the cynical manipulations of self-seeking labourites. Unable to admit that war is rooted in the way society is organised, **CND** steadfastly follows a course which leads protest into the slough of despondancy. After the failures of the sixties the advocacy of the futile course must be a conscious decision and the inevitable results forseen. **CND** is not, therefore, a threat to militarism but a help.

Fraternally,
M A LYNNG

SPANISH ORGANISATIONS

PARALLELS can be drawn between the **CND**/disarmament campaign in Britain and the **OTAN**/American bases campaign here, both in type and extent of support.

Support is from a large variety of marxist organisations — prepared in general only to do what is ordained but extremely efficient at fly posting. Next largest participants are the anarchists who are prepared to exploit opportunities as

they occur and what I've called ecologists. There's a sort of post-hippy revival with inner growth and self much emphasized (elimination of ego is emphasized too!)

The wholefood movement is developing — in Barcelona for instance there is a very lush guide to Mystical activities covering 200 pages or more which goes so far as to give space to the Catholic church. The lessons learned of such developments in other countries are not known here. **ETA** & **Catalan** & **Basque** nationalists — very similar to **Scottish Nationalists** in support and organisation. The **Basque** region is one of the richest in Spain and what radicalism there was has now been subverted by the support given by industry in **Bilbao** which has much to gain by independence. Token measures such as the **Basque** language television service presently being set up are further minimalised by an emphasis on 'correct' **Basque** pronunciation and a trivial programme content indistinguishable from normal **Spanish** television.

Marches in general are non violent but following police confrontation and violence the erection of barricades and throwing of missiles occurs naturally.

Such marches will receive part of a column in the press, with 3-5 lines devoted to the diversion to the port. The main effect is to register a strong objection, achieved as much by the fly posting as by the event itself but aided by the fact that demonstrations occur in the affected areas rather than just **Madrid** and are therefore apparent to the population at large.

How much those educated *not* to see by **Franco** is dubious, at present the 'silent majority' are said to bemoan the 'new liberalism' as being responsible for the massive influx of pornography. This is linked with the political activities of those taking advantage of the greater freedom of expression — no distinction being made between 'spectacular capitalism' and 'anti-capitalist spectacularism.'

IAN
Madrid

MUNICIPAL police in **Tropes**, **Calabria**, have been instructed to enforce an ordinance which prohibits nudity on beaches, 'excepting the nudity of a beautiful woman, young if possible, and capable of exalting the beauty and femininity of her body.' The order has caused so much ridicule that some amendment may be made.

ACCORDING to the memoirs of **Georges Pompidou**, once prime minister of France, **de Gaulle** was on his way into exile when he left France during May 1968. He had written a letter handing over his powers to **Pompidou**. The official story has been that he went to seek the loyalty of the army to impose law and order. The memoirs say that **de Gaulle** only changed his mind after starting negotiations with the **West German** government for a permanent refuge.



B. TRAVEN UNMASKED

B. TRAVEN UNMASKED?

To the Honourable Miss S...and other stories by Ret Marut also known as B Traven, Lawrence Hill & Co/Cienfuegos Press 1981 ISBN 0-88208-130-6/0-88208-131-4 (PBK) £4.00

B Traven was once described as a writer's writer. That is one who exhibits such skill of craftsmanship in the construction of their work that other writers go to them in order to understand their technique. Examples might be James Joyce, Thomas Hardy, Thomas Mann or Jorge Luis Borges. They defy time and fashion and stand up on their own merit.

A factor of importance in good writing is economy. Saying what you wish directly, concisely and yet in a totally unambiguous way and not merely by simply hitting you over the head with 'the facts'—a parable might be used, an analogy of reality, yet it all comes through to the reader, it does not require any apparent subtlety of an intellectual mind if such exists. Very few writers tend to possess this capacity and it does not come easily. A possible example contemporaneous with Traven is Howard Fast, an American with a strong political dedication coupled with a high degree of personal morality and rejection of injustice. It is not a matter of talent merely, of education, of varied experiences but of thoughtfulness and a highly developed technique of getting into the soul of the character; of seeing with their eyes, of reading their thoughts and being aware of their narrowness of perception. A story in this book: 'The Silk Scarf', two farm workers marry, he dies in war, her only treasured possession is the wedding present, which is trampled on brutally by the farmer searching for a missing ring, her world is desecrated so she burns down the barn. The story is a cry of protest from the oppressed. The story does betray an early lack of technique; there is no subtlety there. On the other hand even if Traven uses a sledge hammer the tale has merit in that it indicates the bourgeois world's lack of perception of feelings.

Traven is not in step with his time. No-one could call him a bourgeois novelist. On the other hand, in much of his later work the sledge hammer is forgotten. He learns to put craftsmanship before his political application. Of course to the political activist this is anathema. The writer who sees himself as an individualist and rejects the notion of a literary political immediacy is seen as an iconoclast. He might be even said to betray the revolutionary vanguard; if a Maoist he could be an ideal candidate for self-criticism. On the other hand, in bourgeois society, with its attendant pressures to conform, this very iconoclasm enables the writer to stand aside from the fashionable stream, from the popular notion of literary merit. Traven is that kind of writer. This endears him not only to the thinking reader but it is what makes Traven a writer's writer too. He is not simply a novelist but a teacher.

Be yourself, before you become a political activist, avoid the development of the political personality, he appears to say. Be your own man (and woman) and from this developed standpoint mingle freely with the crowd and in this free participation develop moral policies based upon experience: aversions from, attitudes to, needs of living, oppositions, notions of what could be; a kind of politics from the heart. Traven is such a writer.

But who is B Traven you may be asking? There lies a problem. Traven was the ultimate iconoclast. He detested publicity. Not only did he reject the cult of authorship and its attendant biographical culture, he simply refused to play the game. I gather it used to be a game in literary circles in Mexico claiming to know who Traven was. There is no known picture as Traven. His was probably the best kept secret ever. He even used post office numbers. Until a recent biography by Will Wyatt nobody had anything but conjectures and why not? Unless someone slanders you unjustly or harms you in some way why the insistence of visibility?

Some dislike to have any spotlight on their lives. It interferes with their integrity. Some of us, perhaps Traven too, have a psychological need for anonymity. He used to ask his readers to judge him from his stories not what people thought of an apparent personality. Anyway Wyatt has unmasked him, or he claims to have. Assume this to be true, what then?

The ugly duckling has turned out to be...yet another ugly duck. B Traven although he lived and worked for most of his life in Mexico was not a Mexican. He claimed to be an American of Scandinavian extraction, hence the name Traven. The reality? There does appear to be a similarity in writing with a German writer Ret Marut but who is he? Again a pseudonym. His real name was probably Otto Feige, the son of a potter born in eastern Germany, now part of Poland. He led an isolated childhood which had elements of the classical broken home situation and became rather withdrawn and psychologically uncertain of his identity or in other words the identity presented to him was not seen as believable. After his military service he left home and re-created his identity and kept on re-creating it throughout his life. He worked as an actor usually taking small parts, became active in Socialist movements and the actors' union and also began to publish short stories, editing a magazine and came very close to being shot as a revolutionary in 1919. He travelled widely around Germany then to Holland then Canada where he was refused entry. In 1923 he reached England and did time in Brixton prison as an unregistered alien and then moved to Mexico. In Mexico he ceased to be Ret Marut, became Traven Torsvan and began writing as B Traven. He published most of his books from 1925 onwards and in the 1940. began to use the name Hal Croves and it was under this name he acted as technical advisor to John Huston in the filming of Traven's novel 'The Treasure of the Sierra Madre'. He died in 1969. He always denied he was Ret Marut. One begins almost to conjecture that B Traven was easily as interesting as any of his books.

ALLISON & BUSBY

THE WHITE ROSE

A NOVEL BY

B. TRAVEN

AUTHOR OF
"THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE"



His literary output, whilst not large, tends to reflect the need of a writer who had something to say and wanted to say it well. Perhaps this was part of his rejection of Ret Marut. Many writers would like to withdraw their early work. Sibelius had an early symphony withdrawn. Compare these Ret Marut stories. Much of the later Traven is there. It is however a younger, brasher, young man in a hurry type of work. There are however some stories any author would be proud to own. On the other hand, these had been written, that part of life (that life—the Ret Marut life) was over. It is like some of the earlier novels of John Cowper Powys. Many were not published until after the bulk of his work. When advised how to tighten them up to make them more publicly acceptable, Powys is said to have refused. They stand at a stage of his development; the later writing was what now mattered. Traven went one better: Ret Marut? Never heard of him. Me, you are joking.

The sheer craftsmanship shines through in his book 'The Treasure of the Sierra Madre'. The racial insularity of differing peoples. American poverty in a Mexican town. One begs from Americans not from Mexicans. The shame of poverty averts the eyes of the beggar. Although unemployed one seeks man's work, not native work. The notion of being European or Anglo-Saxon appears to imply a complete lack of perception of others' qualities and failings as if both operate in different universes—on a completely different plane. The Western world is the bourgeois world where even the poor fail to grasp their poverty and see the contradictions inherent in their life.

The description of men working their gold mine, from the same work, is probably the best description of men working I have ever read. Reduced by the backbreaking toil to talking in grunts and monosyllables. This would be unperceived by the film-maker unless making a day's film second by second, a kind of cinema verite style, quite impossible in a feature film. Huston's film although a masterpiece of

ALLISON & BUSBY

GOVERNMENT

A NOVEL BY

B. TRAVEN

AUTHOR OF

"THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE"



economy and style transfers the novel into a different media, producing a work quite different to the book. When I first read this, in the light of experiences working in factories and in gangs 'It all fits, it is real, this is how it happens' I exclaimed to myself. Work is alienative—as Marx says 'it alienates one from one's species being.' And this is the real poetry of Traven's writing. Some of it can, if one is in the wrong mood, often appear rather dull, because Traven writes of things as they really are and what they really are is dull, monotonous, repetitive, boring. There is no escapism in Traven's writing and no happy endings. Endings often appear senseless cut-off points, because that is how life is.

What is this collection just published? Well it contains a summary of his biography by Will Wyatt, worth buying for that alone. The book is a collection of much of his earlier Ret Marut work, although not all. They do show a variety of styles and some are clearly experimental. They do reflect very clearly the Otto Feige life and many clearly have autobiographical borrowings. As said earlier some use a sledge hammer to make an obvious point. Some of the war stories as Wyatt points out might make Erich Maie Remarque green with envy. What appears is the writing of a talented young writer who possesses a restless, moving mind which already betrays an acute perception of others' suffering, an awareness of the class system and its attendant inequalities with a quick grasp of the lack of perception of feelings between differing social strata. One can imagine him writing with the thought in mind 'Do the working class have souls?' and if this sounds too ingenious, the Roman Catholic Church once debated this in the form 'Do slaves have souls'. This was one reason for the differences in attitudes to slavery between Anglo-Saxons and Spanish & Portugese (ie, North and South /Central America) and seeds of Anglo-Saxon racialism. Traven believed that working people had feelings too.

To carry this debate further. Many writers often display a curious sense of detachment about ordinary people. Hermann Hesse, for example, expresses a feeling that the important fight was between the artist and the bourgeois world. One might conjecture that Hermann Hesse was writing from a world where workers and peasants had little place. Nothing clearly indicates this more when we realise he started his working life as a bookseller. John Cowper Powys, another of my literary loves, was an academic, an English Literature teacher. He talks of townsmen and villagers in this century long after industrialisation had taken place yet his books, like so much of Western writing have a rural image. Ayn Rand when talking about the power of industry gives the impression of some hammer-wielding Prometheus but never mentions the ghetto. She is attacking the suburban world as mediocrity but never indicates its feelings matter seeing it as susceptible only to populist leadership. The fact that in both these and many other contemporary writers the workers continue to trudge to work, that the trains come on time and water comes out of the tap indicates they operate in a literary universe which ignores, but takes for granted, the world of work, big cities, smoke and grime and real poverty, but see these as totally unimportant. Their actors are on a different stage.

Traven looks directly at the fabric of the social structure and questions its meaningfulness. In a sense then he is a kind of existentialist but at heart he is also the moralist. 'Is it right?' he keeps asking us and also *not* 'judge not lest you be judged' but 'You are being judged anyway, dismissed and ignored. You judge yourselves, it is your life.' Important too is his sense of the real. His characters are not romanticised. His peasants, workers and soldiers are real persons acting realistically. They have been produced in an as stunted and alienated way as Traven's own childhood. Injustice however is injustice. As Gramsci says, everyone is an intellectual, has the power of reasoning. Traven says, everyone has feelings, but do not expect a sanitised saintly lovable conduct from the oppressed and uneducated. They can only be themselves but they can feel injustice too.

This book is an excellent introduction to Traven because it shows him as a writer moving towards perfection in crafts-

manship. The book, like his other writing, points out the worth of each individual irrespective of the current code of morality aristocratic or bourgeois operated in class society. When people in the West, particularly politicians, demand people stand up and be counted they tend to forget that the step from nought to one is the biggest step anyone has to make. All else is merely attitude.

The collection may not, of itself, satisfy some people entirely. It has a curious sense of being off-balance. It could serve as an excellent introduction to Traven but one wishes it had been expanded to include extracts from later work in anthology form. The person who has not read Traven before will want more of that one is sure. For the acknowledged reader of Traven and there are some who appear to be almost cultist here, the book sets the Traven mystique into some sort of perspective. The biographical note also deflates the notion that because Traven wrote some Mexican revolutionary tales he was a contemporary of say John Reed. In fact, Traven (like Charles Dickens) was writing historical novels.

The revolution was over before he arrived unless you believe a notion of permanent revolution. As a non-Mexican too he cannot claim to be like say Fanon a third world writer. Clearly he is just another European interpreter. He differs from say Laurence Durrell, E M Forster and, dare one say it, Rudyard Kipling, in that they were bourgeois interpreters of the third world. Traven was a politicised working class interpreter. The only other writer who has done this at all well is Ursula LeGuin in some of her later imaginative novels.

At £4.00 this book is a very good buy and on many levels it is cheap at the price because as one reads it one is forced to read other Traven works and as one reads these one will continue to return to it. The collection is not all great literature, but for one who buys books infrequently this is a book which will both widen your tastes and force you to reread an author's excellent output. Will it change your life? Perhaps; on the other hand can you afford to miss the chance.

PETER NEVILLE



THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE (1948). Above, Walter Huston and Humphrey Bogart in a scene.

WILLIAM MORRIS'S SOCIALIST DIARY

History Workshop Journal. Issue 13, Spring 1982. Annual subscription (2 copies) £10, single copy £5.95 plus 50p postage. 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL.

THE History Workshop movement began 16 years ago at Ruskin College, the trade union college at Oxford. Its first public manifestation was a series of so-called 'History Workshops', which were held there from 1966 and are now held in all sorts of places all over the country. Arising out of these came a series of History Workshop Pamphlets, which appeared from 1970 to 1973. Then came a series of History Workshop Books, which have appeared since 1975, and the *History Workshop Journal*, which has appeared twice a year since 1976.

The main figure in the movement has been Raphael Samuel, who was brought up as a Communist, left the Party over Hungary in 1956 while he was at university, helped to found the old New Left in 1957, and became one of the most strongly populist and libertarian of that curious collection of unorthodox Marxist intellectuals. As a history tutor at Ruskin in the 1960s, he began working with a growing group of mature students in producing original contributions to social history. The methodological principle was that research should be done on primary material – whether written documents or oral testimony – about ordinary life and work. The practical procedure was collective rather than individual, with contributions being first based on personal experience and then discussed by several comrades. The political ideology was socialist, with strong elements of Marxism, populism and feminism.

The movement was at its best in the early years, when research done as part of a quasi-university course was first presented as a paper at an open History Workshop and was then published as a History Workshop Pamphlet. A genuinely exciting atmosphere prevailed in which leading socialist historians with professorial chairs spoke on equal terms with students who had never seriously put pen to paper before, and from which many fascinating results emerged. In later years the movement has become at the same time wider, spreading over the English-speaking world, and narrower, seeming to belong to a small and sectarian clique. Both developments have been reflected in the journal, which has inevitably become more sophisticated and prestigious, and is now almost part of the academic as well as the political establishment.

HISTORY WORKSHOP

a journal of socialist and feminist historians

Issue 13

Spring 1982



William Morris's Socialist Diary

The *History Workshop Journal* was originally described as 'a journal of socialist historians', but has now been renamed 'a journal of socialist and feminist historians'. It has always tried to cover sexual as well as class politics, and feminism has always been a strong component of its socialism, so the change of subtitle only confirms an existing situation. It tries to maintain other kinds of balance as well – between various periods of history, between various parts of Britain and of the world, between professional and amateur historians, between abstract and personal material, and so on. An unfortunate balance is that between interesting and boring material, which makes the journal seem rather expensive for most outsiders.

The first dozen issues have included some material of libertarian interest, especially an intriguing though ignorant article by Logie Barrow about Joseph Lane and the Homerton Social Democratic Club a century ago, which appeared in the fifth issue. The latest issue is worth particular attention for two very different items. One is an excellent obituary by Bob Jones of William C. McDougall, the veteran Glasgow anarchist who died on 21 June 1981, which first appeared in *FREEDOM* on 1 August 1981. The other is the first full publication of William Morris's *Socialist Diary*.

Morris's *Socialist Diary* was kept from January to April 1887. It is a manuscript notebook containing about 10,000 words, which has been used by many scholars since his death in 1896. A large proportion was included in J. W. Mackail's official *Life of William Morris* (1899). Various portions were included by May Morris in her edition of Morris's *Collected Works* (1910-1915) and in her supplementary volumes, *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist* (1936). The manuscript was included in the Morris Papers she left to the British

Museum in 1929 (BM Add. MSS. 45,335), and has therefore been easily available for more than half a century. Further portions were included in E.P. Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955, 1977). A complete transcript was offered to the journal back in 1978 by Florence Boos, an American teacher of Victorian literature, and this is the main item of the thirteenth issue.

The diary has obvious biographical interest, in showing what a leading socialist was doing from day to day for three months 95 years ago. It also has broader historical interest, in showing what the growing socialist movement was actually like at that time. It is good to have in a more accessible form than before, and it will be better to have as a separate pamphlet, as is being planned by the History Workshop movement. But it really is rather a mess in this edition.

The whole feature fills 75 pages – a third of the entire magazine. The transcript of the diary takes only 33 pages, of which half are occupied by footnotes on every event and place and person and publication mentioned. There are 18 pages of introduction, 19 pages of biographical notes, and 5 pages of illustrations. An enormous amount of work has gone into all this, and the result is skilfully designed, but the effect is that the document is almost submerged in all the subsidiary material, and Morris almost disappears behind his editor.

The trouble is that the diary has been taken at the same time too seriously and not seriously enough. Boos says that it 'is one of the most interesting writings from this period of his work, which is surely absurd in the context of *News from Nowhere*, *A Dream of John Ball*, *The Pilgrims of Hope*, and dozens of marvellous essays and lectures. And however interesting it may be, it is introduced and interrupted and interpreted so obsessively that it is almost impossible to appreciate on its own account.

Moreover the editorial material falls below acceptable standards of accuracy. Boos says in the second line of the introduction that 'in 1883 William Morris joined the Social Democratic Federation'; what he joined was the Democratic Federation, which changed its name and its policy a year later. Two pages later, she says that 'Morris seems to have thought of publishing his diary' and quotes him as writing to his daughter Jenny that it was 'a sort of Jonah's eye view of the whale, you know'; what he wrote was: 'I am writing a diary which may one day be published as a kind of view of the Socialist movement seen from the inside, Jonah's view of the whale, you know, my dear.' In the biographical notes she says that Bradlaugh 'refused to take a religious oath' in Parliament; he tried to do so nine times, and did so three times. She refers to the 'International' Workers of the World, instead of the *Industrial Workers of the World*. And so on.

None of this might matter very much, if only the transcript of the diary were reliable; but it isn't. Boos says that she has retained the original capitalisation and punctuation, though she has made some minor changes. Other usages have been altered for no good reason at all. The names of people and places have been corrected. The titles of publications have been italicised. Numbers and abbreviations have been spelt out to absurdity ('13s' becomes 'thirteen s[hillings]') and '12½%' becomes 'twelve and a half per cent', and we are offered 'Feb[ruary]' and 's[tree]t'). It is claimed that misspellings have been 'regularised according to nineteenth-century British usage', but the alterations are sometimes twentieth-century ('artisans' for 'artizans' or 'mediaeval' for 'mediaeval') or American (well-practiced' for 'well-practised' or 'defense' for 'defence'). Sometimes a misspelling is not corrected ('Woful'), and Morris's misspelling of the name Schnaebell is misspelt ('Snabele' instead of 'Snebele'). There are errors in transcription ('remitted' for 'reunited' and 'out-o-doors' for 'out-a-doors') and in typesetting ('presnet' and 'drunked'). There are also errors in annotation (Morris's correct use of 'Anglice' is incorrectly corrected to 'Anglic[is]e', and the phrase 'drag that straw' is linked with smoking a pipe rather than drawing a lot).

The silly thing about this is that the previous transcripts, though far from complete, are much better, which rather spoils the impact of publishing the full diary for the first time. But if this edition were edited a bit more before being reprinted, it would be well worth having. Some of these points were made at a Readers' Meeting on 26th June, so they may be taken.

From the specifically anarchist point of view, Morris gives a fascinating glimpse of the libertarian groups in this country nearly a century ago. What he calls the 'orthodox' anarchists were still dominated by Continental exiles in London clubs. There were also what he calls 'the Krapotkin-Wilson people' the Freedom Group, which had been formed only the year before and which had begun publishing *FREEDOM* in October 1886. And there was the anti-parliamentarist fraction in the Socialist League, which he said was 'pretty much commensurate' with anarchists, but which Boos wrongly calls anarchists without sufficient qualification; it is significant that Joseph Lane, their leader who was at this time drafting his *Anti-Statist, Communist Manifesto*, did not call himself an anarchist, and that Morris himself noted that most of the others 'are not really Anarchists'. It is odd that Boos, who is especially sympathetic to Morris's libertarian and anti-parliamentarist tendencies and who recognises the subtlety of his relationship with real anarchism, doesn't extend the same treatment to his closest political associates. The tragedy, which is foreshadowed several times in the diary, is that the eventual split in the Socialist League only confused matters further, as well as helping to destroy the organisation and damage the movement in general.

Despite all the reservations about the presentation of the diary, the *History Workshop Journal* deserves gratitude for publishing this primary document on a crucial stage in our past, and also for reprinting (without acknowledgement) the obituary of Willie McDougall.

NW

THE DIARY

[I begin what may be called my diary from this point, January 25th 1887.]
I went down to lecture at Merton Abbey last Sunday: the little room was pretty full of men mostly of the labourer class: anything attacking the upper classes directly aroused their enthusiasm, & their discontent there could be no doubt or the sincerity of their disapproval: they have been very badly off these ~~the~~ this winter, and there is little to wonder at in their discontent; but with a few exceptions they have not yet learned what socialism means; they and Frank Kitz were much excited about the Norwich affair; and ~~the~~ he made a very hot speech: he was much exercised about the police being all about the place, detectives inside and so on: I fancy their game is to try to catch the club-going members with beer or in some way breaking the law. But there is no doubt that there is a good deal of ~~the~~ amongst the labourers about there; the place is wretchedly poor.
I slept at Merton, and in the morning got the *Standard* paper with a full account of the trial of Howland & Hindson; the judges summing up of the case was annoying & instructive, as showing a sort of division of the old sort of things, bullying of the last days. Jim's mixed with a good proteque attempt

I begin what may be called my diary from this point January 25th, 1887.

I went down to lecture at Merton Abbey last Sunday: the little room was pretty full of men mostly of the labourer class: anything attacking the upper classes directly

THE GOD THAT FAILED

Iain Hamilton, *Koestler: A Biography*. Secker and Warburg, 1982. 398pp. £12

MOST on the left today are too young to know of Arthur Koestler's life and work. Those who do—this is especially true of Marxists—tend to dismiss the 76 year old Hungarian as an ex-Communist supporter of capitalism who abandoned politics for speculative-mystical philosophy and psychology when his God-Stalinist Communism—failed. Koestler is, after all, the leading contributor to the 'God That Failed' essay-collection by ex-Communists edited by Richard Crossman and published in the early 1950s.

This is wrong on a number of counts. In the first place, while Koestler's political activism largely ceased after the War, his concern with and writings about politics certainly didn't. Second, perhaps the chief motivation for Koestler's subsequent efforts to reach a deeper understanding of human mind and nature was his almost unique first-hand experience of Stalinism and Nazism. As Orwell in 1944 wrote of *Darkness At Noon* and other books by Koestler, his 'main theme is the decadence of revolutions owing to the corrupting effects of power'. Far from being mystical, much of Koestler's post-War work has been an attempt to use the methods of natural science to try and explain these effects in terms of the workings and structure of the human brain. It's unnecessary to accept his views (summed up in *Janus*, 1978) to appreciate their suggestive relevance for those interested to understand and oppose human domination and violence.

Last but not least there are, I suggest, important lessons to be learned from a study of Koestler's life and work as a non-specialist, anti-academic would-be 'revolutionary' in art, science and politics. Though not as good as it could and should have been, Iain Hamilton's biography provides valuable raw material for such a study. A Fleet Street journalist, Hamilton lacks the intellectual and political equipment to do critical justice to Koestler's efforts to understand and change the world.

The first lesson concerns the importance of not throwing out the baby with the bathwater: in Koestler's case, the baby is the revolutionary project; in the case of his left critics, it's Koestler's true insights into the project's warping dangers. It took Koestler almost the entire thirties as a leading agent of the Comintern in the USSR, Germany, France and Spain to realize that Marxian theory (the dictatorship of the proletariat) and Stalinist practice (the one-Party police state) meant lies, repression and unfreedom, rather than revolutionary liberation, democracy and justice. Correctly abandoning Marxian communism as part of the counter-revolutionary problem, Koestler's mistake was to abandon the struggle for revolutionary change. All that follows from the failure of the revolutionary Marxist project is the ever-greater necessity for revolutionary libertarian socialism.

But Koestler's 'pessimistic Conservatism' (Orwell) in no way invalidates his valuable first-hand account and critique of the psychology or psychopathology of the Communist's loyalty to the Party, come what may. In *The Invisible Writing*, *Darkness at Noon* and other works, Koestler has given us as good an account as exists of the 'Orwellian' mechanisms whereby Party members convince themselves that black is white, 2+2=5, the earth is flat, Hitler is a friend of peace... you name it, if the Party says so. Rather than use Koestler's insights into the pathology of power in the revolutionary (communist) world, left critics dismiss him simply as yet another ex-Communist 'god that failed'. Even so sophisticated a Marxist as Isaac Deutscher in *Heretics and Renegades* can do no better than dismiss Koestler and offer in reply a not-so-subtle apology for Stalinism. Merleau-Ponty did the same in *Humanism And Terror*.



The second important lesson libertarians can learn from Koestler's life and work is the extent to which most people, whatever their origins, background, status, nationality and religious or political beliefs, remain impervious to unpleasant facts. Consider in addition to Koestler's critique of revolutionary Marxism, his continuous efforts from 1933 and throughout the War to alert people in the capitalist democracies to the terrible consequences of the Nazis' rise to power. Consider in particular the persecution of the Jews. As Koestler shows in essay after essay, for example his classic 'On Disbelieving Atrocities' (1943), people just didn't want to know—just as people now don't want to know about Indonesia's mass murder campaigns in its two annexed 'provinces', West Papua New Guinea, and East Timor, for example. Once again, it isn't necessary to accept Koestler's speculations about evolution and the brain to recognise the truth of this basic fact—a fact with profound consequences for libertarians concerned to persuade others to participate in a popular democratic movement to oppose the technological totalitarian trends of our age. 'Already the name Hiroshima has become a historical cliché like the Boston Tea Party' Koestler writes in the chapter on Hiroshima in his excellent series of selected writings, *Bricks to Babel* (1980). 'We have returned to a state of pseudo-normality. Only a small minority is conscious of the fact that ever since it unlocked the nuclear Pandora's Box, our species has been living on borrowed time.'

The final lesson we can learn from Koestler's life (he is still going strong at 76) is the value and importance of the effort to range freely and without compartmentalised blinkers over every area of human endeavour, from art to natural science, sexuality to humour, the sources of creativity to politics, law and ethics. I remember more than ten years ago writing a critique of the warping, tendencies in our culture which repress and stifle our free-ranging powers and turn us into moral, mental, emotional and physical cripples. The only respect in which things have changed since, is that they're much worse. We become ever-more repressed, fragmented myopic specialists in self-alienation. For all his faults, Koestler and his work are a valuable reminder and stimulus to do more and better.

PAT FLANAGAN

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