

Inside: MOLLIE STEIMER; ACTIVITIES; LETTERS; REVIEW—THE KURDS

Maggie's layer cake



WHO are the most articulate single section of the British public today?

The women.

Whose arguments are most difficult to refute other than on grounds of prejudice or by physical force?

The women.

Whose votes are therefore most likely to be volatile and valuable in the next election?

The women.

What sort of women?

White women, of course.

What sort of white women?

Articulate white women.

What is the least expensive concession to make to articulate white women that will make them feel good? And, er ... vote for us?

Accept the principle that women have the same rights as men to bring foreign husbands back home to live with them.

Does this actually, personally, affect a lot of articulate white women?

No, not many, really.

So this is a principle that could be granted without any great danger of our island being swamped with foreigners?

Definitely.

But there would be some, so ... er ... what kind of foreigners would they be?

Oh, don't worry, they would mainly be Europeans or from our erstwhile colonies.

Like?

Well, Americans, obviously, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, and, now, there are bound to be quite a few Rhodesians who want to come back home. Not many South Africans — yet.

Very interesting. No ... er ... non-whites?

Not really, not from abroad. The odd African diplomat perhaps ... the occasional Arab sheikh. But basically, religious differences prevent too much miscegenation of that kind. Not a lot of 'ordinary' Arabs.

And the Europeans?

Mostly North Europeans. Not any great number of, shall we say, Mediterranean types.

That's most interesting. I am, not unnaturally, very concerned to maintain the proportion of blond, blue-eyed persons in our population — if for no other reason, in order not to lose any votes to the National Front next time. But in these times of rather over-extended internationalism we must tread warily.

Quite. That is why, if I may so presume, I would suggest a three-tier system rather than the two-tier system proposed by the Labour government.

Why?

Because the people in a top tier feel more secure if there are two

tiers underneath them and the people in a second tier feel more superior if there is another tier beneath them. If the second tier feel superior to someone — and it doesn't really matter who — they are less likely to make difficulties. And apart from feeling superior, there's always another lower tier they could be pushed down to if they misbehave.

Quite the little psychologist, aren't we?

Not really, Ma'am, but we have been in this business quite a long time.

But what about the people in your third tier?

Dispensible!

It's rather like our own dear class system, isn't it. Upper, middle, lower.

Yes, Ma'am, except that our lower class isn't exactly dispensible ... yet. But we're working on it. M'm ... yes ... and of course, if we create this three-tier system for the Not-Quite-British, that will in itself create a level of people underneath our own lower class will it not?

I had thought of that, Ma'am.

Right, well then, let's get on with it. I believe these days in August are called the dog days, are they not? Can I leave you, then, to create this new breed of dogs? I have a cake to bake....

MOLLIE STEIMER



with imprisoned comrades in Russia - in a few instances right up to 1938.

Senya and Mollie were particularly active in organising committees to aid their imprisoned comrades. Such organisations included the Joint Committee for the Defence of Revolutionists Imprisoned in Russia, the Relief Fund of the International Working Men's Association and the Alexander Berkman Aid Fund.

Some time later Mollie and Senya moved to Paris.

In 1927 she, like other Russian or Ukrainian anarchists and libertarians, became involved in the Archinov-Makhno 'Platform' controversy. Mollie felt that the 'Organisational Platform' tended to imply that the people "must be politically led" during the revolution. She said that the 'Platform' suggested the creation of an 'Anarchist Communist Workers' Party'.

Mollie and Senya (who became a professional photographer of great ability) again moved on, first to the United States and later to Mexico, where she has lived (in the land of another great revolutionary, Emiliano Zapata) for many years.

She never gave up, never 'retired'. I last saw her in Cuernavaca, the capital of Morelos, in March. She was still rushing about (at 83!), assisting comrades of the Mexican Anarchist Federation and also visiting comrades, and taking an interest in what was being done and being written. She was a ball of fire.

Of her Proudhon Carbó, a Spanish comrade who lives in Mexico City, and who visited Mollie the weekend before she died, said: "Our great Mollie's loss affects not only her many friends, but the cause of liberty. She was a tireless and exceptional fighter. Her sincerity, heroism and immense and marvellous personal charm cannot be matched".

Her death will be a terrible loss to her companion, Senya Fleshine.

PETER E. NEWELL

IT IS with sadness that I have to report the death of Mollie Steimer, of a heart attack, in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico on Wednesday, 23 July. Two days previously she had written a letter to me, and the week before she had written to me to say that she was re-reading Vernon Richards' Lessons of the Spanish Revolution, a copy of which I had recently given to her.

Her sudden death is a great shock to those of us who knew her.

MOLLIE STEIMER was born in November 1897, in Dunaovtzi in Ukraine. As a child she was taken to America. Still in her teens she became an anarchist.

She opposed the first world war and the United States involvement in that war. In 1918 Mollie was arrested for distributing leaflets which contained, among other statements, the words "The tyrants of the world fight each other until they see a common enemy - working class enlightenment. As soon as they find a common enemy they combine to crush it". The leaflet said that the Russian Revolution calls on the workers of the world for help.

Mollie was convicted and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. After serving 3 years in jail she was taken to Ellis Island and deported to Russia. Like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman she was welcomed by the Soviet authorities - at first!

Soon after, she met Senya Fleshine, who was to be her companion for the rest of her life. Fleshine was born in 1894 in Kiev. He became an anarchist in 1913. He was first arrested by the bolshevik cheka in November 1918 at the second conference of Anarcho-Syndicalists, but later released. He was arrested again together with about 40 other comrades in the Anarchist Club in Kharkov. Again he was released, but in June 1920 he was again arrested.

On 1 November 1922 he was arrested in Petrograd (now Lenin-grad) by chekist agents, at 2 a.m. He was shown an order for the arrest of Mollie Steimer and himself. He was ordered - at gunpoint - to say where Mollie was (she and Senya shared the same apartment) but he refused.

Nevertheless Mollie was arrested the same day. She was accused of being an anarchist and of 'participation in an underground organisation'. After three weeks in jail she and Senya were both sentenced to 2 years' exile in Obdorsk, Siberia. They both declared a hunger strike - but were released the following day. They were ordered not to leave Petrograd and to call at the GPU headquarters in two days. They were subsequently informed that they had a choice: to be sent to Siberia or to be deported from Russia. At the time, however, some French anarcho-syndicalists, who were delegates in Russia of the International Congress of Red Trade Unions, learned of the imprisonment of Mollie, Senya and other libertarians and got Mollie and Senya released. They were not troubled by the GPU for several months.

But on 9 July 1923 Mollie and Senya were arrested again. They were accused of being anarchists and were asked if they knew other anarchists, also detained; and their crime? Said the chekists: "You are having gatherings with workers and students where you are carrying anarchist propaganda". On 27 July Mollie declared a hunger strike. She was put in solitary confinement. On 3 August the prison doctor declared that she could hold out one more day, "then you will be forcibly fed". On 26 August she was released but she and Senya were informed that they would be expelled from the Soviet republic.

On 26 September 1923 Mollie Steimer and Senya Fleshine were given passports by the GPU; and were put on a ship for Stettin, in Germany, the following day.

IN Germany they joined up with other anarchists who had been expelled from Russia. These included Maximov, Voline, Yarchuk, Mratchny, Schapiro, Makhno, Archinov, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. (In a way they were the lucky ones - thousands of others were to die, or had already perished, in Russian jails, concentration camps like Kem or Solovatski, or in exile in Siberia).

Berlin soon became the centre of the Russian anarchist movement in exile. Leaflets, pamphlets and books were written and where possible contact was made, or continued,

Cowards' castle

FOLLOWING the article on jury vetting in FREEDOM (vol. 41, no. 15) Sir Michael Havers, the Attorney General, used his 'parliamentary privilege' to suggest that the reason for the prosecution 'standing down' one of the potential jurors in the Persons Unknown trial last year was that the juror's name appeared on a 'hit list' found amongst the possessions of one of the defendants. Ronan Bennett and Iris Mills, two of the four defendants who were acquitted, have categorically denied the existence of such a list. Ronan Bennett accused the Attorney General of using his privilege to say whatever he liked in parliament without any risk or redress, of speaking from a 'cowards' castle'.

The vetted juror, who was summoned by the Crown, was David Myddleton, a professor of finance and accounting - a self-confessed libertarian economist. At the time he was most indignant at his exclusion by the Crown and took to speculating about the sinister implications. In 1970 Mr Myddleton had written a pamphlet We're All Nazis Now, of which he is proud, about socialist and national socialist economics prevalent in all three major political parties, and the same year joined a mass demonstration with five others outside the Bank of England to demand the right to speculate on the bullion market - hardly the subject for attention by the Special Branch - or is it? After all, 3 million of the country's pop-

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ulation are already on their computer files.

The Director of Public Prosecutions refused to comment either during or after the trial about the reason for his exclusion. However, the Attorney General thought otherwise and in parliament last week stated that Myddleton, along with people like Lord Mountbatten and Malcolm Muggeridge, were listed as targets. In reply Ronan Bennett said to FREEDOM that "The Attorney General is lying. No such list existed with Myddleton's name on it and no such list ever appeared in the prosecution's evidence". Iris Mills also pointed out that "If there had been a 'hit list' you can be sure that

Worseley (the prosecuting counsel) would have had it framed in the jury room. We never heard about this list, it wasn't a document in the trial, it wasn't even one of the documents that were cut out. You wonder what they are going to bring up next".

Instead this

Indeed. This is not the first time unsubstantiated remarks have been made against the four acquitted defendants. Judge King-Hamilton also made use of his 'cowards' castle' (the bench) to force the jury to listen to an unsubstantiated statement made by Stuart Carr, who had pleaded guilty to the charges against him. Again, these remarks were widely reported and the four defendants were left unable to effectively reply to remarks made from these 'cowards' castles'.

A. F.

MANY LEAKS MAKE A FLOOD

The recent report by the inspectorate of nuclear installations on the nuclear dustbin at Windscale was the most damning yet of the British nuclear establishment. Of course they only received a severe reprimand for their carelessness and of course the leak presents no hazards to the surrounding population.

The installation at Harrisburg is still too dangerous to be entered although the other day they did let out a puff of radio active Krypton gas to relieve the pressure, perfectly safe they said. The French processing plant at Le Havre has a much worse record than its British counterpart. All over the world these plants are leaking low level radioactive waste into the sea and the atmosphere. Railway trucks go to various ports carrying drums of radioactive

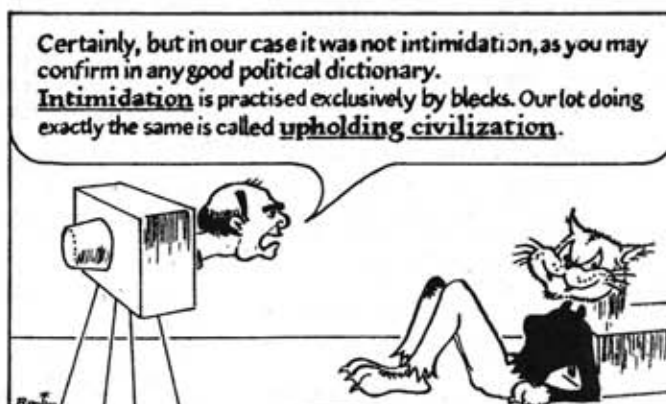
garbage which is then deposited into the sea.

People should regard the assurances of the vast nuclear establishment (closely connected as it is with the production of nuclear arms) with extreme suspicion. Like many other dubious ventures it was started in secrecy without consultation. In France the peasants of Brittany have been militantly fighting an installation on the coast and in Britain opposition is growing. The imaginative action of a group in S. Wales halted a train carrying radio active garbage that was to be dumped into the sea.

Like the industrial garbage from another era at Aberfan the cumulative growth of radioactive matter could reach a critical point.

Alan Albon.

WILDCAT



LIB ED

A. Kilmae's letter expands the point which I touched on only very briefly in the article, which is, how do anarchists justify working within the state system (I was deliberately brief on this point because I don't really know what I think about it, yet, and am still trying to work out my own position.) However, to answer the points raised in the letter.

Do I think my theories are synonymous with reformism Well, yes and no. Surely, while working toward the revolution, the realisation of our id-

ARGUMENT

Dear Ed.

I fear your memories of CND are somewhat distorted. Starting with the trivia:

1)The first two Aldermarches-organized by the Non Violent Resistance Group, alias the Operation Ghandi, alias the NV Commission of the PPU-were in 1952 & 3 and had twenty & thirty people on them respectively.

The 1958 one was the first action of the DAC-initially the Emergency Committee for DA against Nuclear War-the only time that the numbers on the march fell below a thousand was the first hour on Saturday morning, and that was because (surprised by the numbers the night before)some marchers had been sent to Richmond for the night and the buses that were to bring them back were delayed.

2)Far from the aim being to ask governments, the reason why the DAC was so called was that it went to workers with leaflets and other agitational matter designed to persuade them to refuse to work on the Bomb.

There was an unjustifiable compromise:three weeks before the March it was endorsed by Victory for Socialism & the Universities and Left Review-New Reasoner New Left, (and a fortnight later by CND) and at the insistence of these the DAC leaflet calling for blacking the site was not the official policy of the March but only of the DAC as a contingent within it. (Sundry Trot groups produced leaflets with a similar theme and the Newsletter attributed the failure to have an official leaflet so saying to the malign influence of "non-political" pacifists in the DAC. They did however publish Michael Randle's reply, though not the enclosed copy of the DAC leaflet.

That compromise notwithstanding

eals, we all try to make our lives and the lives of those about us, better, more bearable (Agreed that we don't take part in parliamentary work or wars because we know that neither of these activities is ever going to make life better for anyone. But, can we place the future of the children, all the children, in the same category At the moment, I think not. It seems to me that it is very important to reach as many people as possible, in as many ways as possible, to try to give them some kind of inkling of the fact that different ways of living and working together can be achieved. A. Kilmae states that this cannot be done by working within an oppressive and authoritarian system. I believe that it can at least be attempted.

(Children are much more aware of the nature of the system than many people give them credit for, and are often much more open to new impressions and ideas than their elders. Remember the jesuits-"Give me a child until he's seven years old and he's mine for life")Obviously, if I didn't believe that I could do some good as a teacher then I would resign yesterday. I am sorry if this seems irrational, inconsistent or even unanarchistic to some people, but I genuinely believe that it is the best way for me to make a contribution to building the kind of future we all want. I'm not trying to prop up a withered thistle and all the children are potentially sunflowers.

V.

CND

that it was the constant practise of DAC demos throughout the next three years to organise long pickets at bases at which every house within a dozen miles or more of the base was leafleted & probably canvassed. Civil Disobedience was used as an auxiliary means of propaganda.

Regrettably the Committee of 100 never shared this orientation-until just before it folded-but it too hardly asked politicians. It was founded on the somewhat bolshevist notion of a minority filling the gaols and so bringing the state to a halt, but though this appear(s/ed) ridiculously naive it is worth remembering that the editor of "Freedom" at the time was rather pleased to note that 30 of the original 100 Committee members were "Freedom" subscribers, and their numbers included most of the "fill the gaols" leadership of the Committee.

Incidentally, Bevan's "naked into the council chambers" speech was at the 1957 Labour Conference, and it was in reaction to it that the Labour Leftists;(who very genuinely felt betrayed at that conference, a delegate from VFS & the New Left-which was selling an industrial pamphlet outside the conference-had met Bevan the night before the debate;- he had given no hint that he had turned to support the Bomb and what was worrying the delegation was whether he would sit back & silent, or whether he would speak against it;he had said he didn't think he would speak, but he might, when he got up to speak the Left assumed it was for them and that they would win as it was he spoke for the other side and carried with him the mass of the constituency vote and all the leftish unions, so that

the Unilateralists only got 200,000 votes, even John Lawrence Trotskyist faction having gone over to the multilateralists.)

3)Obviously, you are right in saying that the Labour Leftists only joined the unilateralist movement late, but it was not a matter of joining CND late. CND was founded by Bevanites who were disillusioned with Bevan after that "naked into the council chamber" speech. The fact that the Priestly-King Hall founders talked of harnessing the radicalism of youth with an impossible demand in order to get a better compromise, certainly shows that many of the founding leaders wanted to beg politicians. The fact that Collins wanted a "campaign for unilateralists, but not specifically a unilateralist campaign" again testifies to the fact that the leadership wanted room for political manoeuvre.

Nevertheless, the majority of those at the founding conference were prepared to support a mass walk-out and launch a rival campaign, until Collins backtracked and agreed to including unilateralism in the policy statement. The most highly applauded speeches at the Oxford Conference were those of Hallam Tennyson & Philip Toynbee, who called for mass civil disobedience. (The record was expunged from the official tape recording, but Ken Newton had taken his own)

Very few rank and file CND activists trusted Left Labour politicians. They might have had Trot-like delusions in the potential of a revolutionary party, or like the New Left leadership talk of parallel entrism as a means to reach the rank and file of the Labour Party, but it was commonplace that we were working for something resembling a general strike.

fraternally
Laurens Otter
Wellington

This letter has been cut--and still there's no room for our reply. Perhaps next time? --Eds.

Anarchist activity

We have received a letter from Chris Hare of Inside View, in his own words 'a mis-spelt sheet of frustration' which describes his Odyssey through and disenchantment with most of the political parties of this country. He has recently 'come' to anarchism where he says he found something

AUTONOMY

THERE is a need for (yet another) magazine in which anarchist ideas and accomplishments can be discussed at some length. I have discussed this matter with a few comrades recently. Nobody should ever be able to say of us again that 'the ball is in the anarchists' court now, but they are unwilling to kick it'.

Although I shall also be asking for individual contributions and have gathered some material together, there is still time for your contribution to be included.

The first issue will have as its theme the anarchist slogan 'War is the Health of the State'.

You may write to me c/o FREEDOM with any suggestions, articles and advice on the reprinting of articles you think would be relevant to the discussion. By 15 September?

JOHN RETY

(an editor of FREEDOM 1964-1969)

A proposal

That an attempt is made to get 100's of people on to the streets of Yorkshire, (preferably dressed as soldiers) on one of the weekends of the Army's simulated exercises (11th till 25th Sept. when 10,000 troops will be 'taking over' key installations (railway and bus stations, airport, TV studios, newspaper offices, Town Halls etc.) in a nuclear alert/social unrest/civil disorder scenario, with Yorkshire as the practice area.

People to be encouraged to come to Yorkshire armed with their own propaganda, toy weapons and pick suggested sites which could include the nuclear shelters, command posts, communications

to believe. However, he is already disenchanted and says "Anarchists" in Britain take any opportunity they can to argue and disagree, to form new factions and new groups."

Where we take issue is when he says "with the Left in such a stagnant state the time should be right for anarchists to take the initiative, but it seems pretty little is actually being achieved."

In reply to his question we print a selection of some of the activities anarchists are currently involved in. M.H.

Anarchist Centre

THE next meeting is at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 27 August. £3,200 has been raised so far from the first pressing of the Crass/Poison Girls single and from subscriptions and donations. Full subscriptions are £15 (London) and £10 (the rest of the world!) for a year's membership. The more people who subscribe now (any sum will be taken in instalments) the quicker the Centre will get off the ground. Write (sae please) to Anarchist Centre, c/o FREEDOM, 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.

HQs as well as the civilian buildings.

This could be a 'street theatre' spectacular, allowing participants maximum initiative, which with imagination would involve minimum of organisation other than an effective publicity campaign. (The 'alternative' troops would not be marshalled and drilled.)

Distribution Cooperative

A new spirit of mutual aid fills the anarchist movement. Fed up with poor circulation figures for the anarchist press, a number of anarchist papers including FREEDOM, Xtra! Anarchy, Black Flag, International Times, Bread and Roses,

Outta Control, Break Out and a number of fanzines are setting up a new distribution service for anarchist papers. By pooling our lists of alternative bookshops and other outlets, it is hoped to synchronise production of the papers so that bundles can be assembled and despatched via Rail Express Parcels to shops throughout the country. (Sadly FREEDOM is unable to participate in this part of the scheme as the 6-7 day delay is too great for an anarchist fortnightly, but will continue to support the project in other ways).

Anarchists up and down the country could help the scheme by approaching their friendly alternative bookshop/wholefood shop/news-agent to see if they would stock our literature.

The first distribution goes out on 28 August from Xtra!'s new office in the basement of Rising Free bookshop.

START TRAINING!

ON 8 July an affinity group stopped a British Rail goods vehicle carrying nuclear waste to be dumped into the sea. As a result seven people spent several days in prison and were later fined £2560. Despite the widespread publicity nobody actually got it together to respond to the obvious intimidation of the state (except the South London group who blockaded the Atomic Energy Authority offices in London).

Groups should start training now to be able to supply an immediate response.

A defence fund has been set up. Unless we are able to pay £2560 in the next three months, myself and seven others will return to prison. Please support us by sending donations to:

Sharpness Defence Fund
The Gables
Butterow Hill, Stroud (3194).

Badges, posters and a film of the action are also available. Keep direct action alive by training and by keeping us out of prison.

Solidarity, KEVIN

Although there was widespread publicity about this action, we should have welcomed hearing sooner than we did directly from someone involved, and this in turn might have helped 'get it together to respond ...' EDS.

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Northern Ireland

Dear Friends,

Re your report on the Ireland workshop at the Oxford conference, are we to assume that there was a consensus of not being involved in the political status campaign and of not working for a withdrawal of British troops (unless also done for all armies, everywhere!)

If there were any arguments to the contrary, your reporter was either at the toilet, or disapproved of others hearing them.

In the event of such a retreat from reality may I reply to these justifications for inactivity.

Firstly to say that "the war in N.I. is a struggle between an established government (Britain) and an emerging proto-government (Rep. Movement)" shows a lack of awareness of the social forces at work. The non-loyalist population have been discriminated against, repressed, and murdered (depending on their passivity) and to describe all those who resist as proto-government-types misses the point. Republicanism may be the dominant ideology, but that's because it's synonymous with rebellion, with fighting back. The political parties such as Sinn Fein and IRSP are certainly statist but to regard all those who march, picket etc. as statist, and the act of resisting as an inherently authoritarian act, is tying yourself in knots.

Secondly .. "political status" is divisive. One of the reasons for the non-existence of a prisoners' group such as PROP in N.I. is because of the discrimination in favour of loyalist prisoners. When republicans and socialists are imprisoned, under circumstances which the British government would condemn in Russia, they have joined a campaign of refusing to accept the label "criminal". If other prisoners don't resist, do we ask the protestors not to be so militant and sectional. Of course there's no anarchist analysis of prison, but they are resisting a part (the worst part) of that system.

And for many people it's a question of resisting or going under. Martin Meehan is near death because of a hunger and recently thirst strike. He was fitted up and given 12 years. Do

we say no we can't support you because you want special treatment. Or do we try our best to stop another bloody memorial to Britain's rule here.

Finally the people of Scotland, Wales and England have a government (like it or not, and most of you don't) which has a system of repression operating here. This means stop and search, name taking, constant foot and armed vehicle patrols, at it daily; and 3 - 7 day detention, physical and mental torture, juryless courts, prison beatings, and assassinations at its height.

This government draws its personnel, finance, power etc. from where you live; ie. from where you can do something effective (or at least try). You have more power to affect it, than say the government and armies of S. Africa, Russia etc.

The provisional army is hierarchical, patriarchal etc. but its form is overshadowed by its reason for existence - to resist the bloody forces which benefit from and maintain this sectarian state. We don't want them to come to "power", but we can't afford the increasing saturation of our lives by the increasingly technological British Army. You have a responsibility to help us.

Best wishes
Einchal
for BAC.

Whose militia?

Dear Comrades,

We've just read "Towards a Citizens' Militia".

It seemed to us predictable that the Tory press would work themselves up into a lather and get on their favourite theme of bomb carrying anarchists.

Our prime objection to Stuart's book is that it's not original. A comrade in the publishing trade has recognised the work as that of a Swiss army major. It's an old home guard manual!

If Stuart feels that such a book is relevant to our struggles then why can't he just admit it.

Our problem as anarchists is one of CREDIBILITY and it does our cause a great disservice

when an anarchist publisher indulges in activity which could be interpreted in some quarters as questionable.

Is it really beyond our collective wit to write such a book ourselves for fellow anarchists or is our cause so barren that we require the guidance of a militarised lackey of the Zurich gnomes?

Yours in (now greater) struggle
Devon Libertarians.

FREEDOM asked Stuart Christie for his comments on this letter by Devon Libertarians. He told us that the 1st of May Group Manual, 'Towards A Citizens' Militia' was not plagiarised from a Swiss army manual as alleged in this letter. He said that the 1st May Group manual was inspired by the Swiss manual, but that there was little resemblance between them: the introduction, most of the illustrations and even the general structure were different.

Attacks in the press, distortions and hysteria have led to reports that Cienfuegos were likely to be prosecuted for publishing the manual, and Stuart Christie admitted that a prosecution was taking place.

Son of K. Ronstadt!

Dear Freedom,

Recently about fifteen outlandish youths from the 'subversive' paper Inside View went along to a meeting held by the Socialist Workers' Party, with Tony Cliff (ed. of Socialist Worker as the speaker). The meeting was so authoritarian I could hardly believe it, every time we tried to indulge in conversation we were told to 'shut up', Tony Cliff began to go red in the face, he started getting really hysterical, and totally lost control when in response to his call for support of the 'Right to Work Campaign' we shouted, 'But we don't want to work!' - he then screamed at us that two old ladies in Liverpool had slit their wrists because they had no job - I think he missed the point! Anyway the next development was that some stereotype, bespectacled Trot asked if the 'Stewards should decide to democratically throw out the anarchists'. We made our feelings known as we were escorted

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from the building. One of Inside View's more vociferous writers decided to take some direct action, and with the help of a spray paint wrote some well chosen comments on the wall of the building.

As the meeting broke up I tried to engage in conversation with these 'Socialist Workers', but the only comment I got was 'Fuck off'. I did manage to speak with one individual who seemed totally bemused when I told him that people shouldn't have to work in factories, and that a 'Right to Work March' was just a 'Right to Oppression March'. He went on to tell me that come the revolution the 'ruling class' would have to be exterminated, 'all those at Sandhurst will have to be shot', he also seemed to indicate that the same sort of fate should befall any 'Scabs'.

I suppose I was just being naive, but I never realised just how repugnant the S.W.P. was on paper their policies don't seem too bad, its only when you meet them that you realise exactly what they are!

Hope I didn't go on too long,
this scolding sent
from
Chris Hare.

P.S. As we waited outside the workers (sic) phoned for the police - how about that, S.W.P. needs state protection!

Violence against the state

I don't want to reply to John Rapp's article specifically, as I disagree with nearly everything written, but I would like to make some general comments on Anarchy and Violence.

Violence directed towards the state, whether of a so-called "criminal" or "political" nature is surely a reaction to the greatest violence in everybody's lives: the repression and coercion of the state. The state is organised, legalised violence. Why should the state have a monopoly on what is unfortunately a part of reality (even if distorted).

Every day people all over the world respond spontaneously to repressive state agencies, eg. beating up the police, etc. - in themselves these are morally

justifiable acts - any act which destabilises the state or attacks its coercive agencies is a blow for freedom, a step towards people taking control of their own lives.

We can't have a 'road to anarchy', or 'a strategy for anarchism': individuals and groups must act as they see fit. To reject violence in the struggle to change society is dogmatic and doctrinaire; surely we should accept all forms of resistance to the state, whether they be passive or violent.

In any revolutionary situation Marxist groups are going to arm themselves. If we as anarchists are not prepared to meet the challenge, we will not only lose the potential or actual support of sections of the population, but will also leave ourselves open to attack from the state, the extreme right, and perhaps most significant of all, the left.

That violent revolutions in the past have become bureaucratic, oppressive, statist regimes is irrelevant - there's no causal relationship that proves this must invariably be so. That revolutions haven't/don't succeed in a libertarian sense is not the fact that violence was used, but that the myth of the state had not been destroyed.

Violence against the state is an integral part of the revolutionary tradition of anarchism, and hopefully will remain so. If we abandon it we might as well all go and live in communes in the hills; if we embrace it seriously, for the specific purpose of abolishing the state, we might just win.

Gus.

Missing the point

Dear Comrades,
FREEDOM is a very good fortnightly..... but sometimes discussions are too boring or not relevant. For example: the discussion between people who are supporters of non-violent actions, and those 100% for violent action. That isn't the point (both groups are dogmatic thinkers), the point is that sometimes you have to use violence.

Violence does not only mean killing people, it can also be

destroying things and acts of sabotage. The first sort of violence can only be used in extreme situations. For example, when physically attacked by the police, i.e. in self-defense. The other sorts of violence are better in cases such as anti-nuclear demonstrations etc. You can also use non-violent actions such as sit-ins in buildings (see squatters movement) or as at Gorleben (Wendland).

Forms of action depend on the situation (political, economical etc.) People who are defending non-violence or violence as dogma obviously haven't thought enough about this problem.

anarchist greetings,
Revolutionary Anarchist
Collective.

Ghent, Belgium.

Just a bore ?

Freedom,

You say in your editorial 'Right Around The World' (19-7-80) that 'the anarchist movement cannot be part of the political spectrum at all, and so cannot be part of the left, any more than of the right.' (Your emphasis).

If I was to interpret this to mean that 'the anarchist movement' (anarcho-syndicalists, anarcho-communists, anarcho-individualists, anarcho-feminists, anarcho-mystics et al) is above and outside of historical processes (my emphasis), would I be an anarcho-communist bore or would I simply be dealing with life this side of the rainbow.

A. Plier.

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ABERYSTWYTH. David Fletcher, 59 Cambrian St. Aberystwyth.
BARRY. Terry Phillips, 16 Robert St., Barry, South Glamorgan.
BELFAST Anarchist Collective, Just Books, 7 Winetavern St., Belfast 1.
BIRMINGHAM anarchists/anarcha-feminists meet Sundays. Contact Alison at Peace Centre, 18 Moore St. Ringway, B'ham 4 (tel. 021 643 0996).
BRIGHTON Libertarian Socialist group, c/o Students Union, Palmer House, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton.
BRISTOL. City: 4 British Rd., Bristol BS3 3BW.
Students: Libertarian Society, Students Union, Queen's Road, Bristol.
CAMBRIDGE anarchists, Box A, 41 Fitzroy St., Cambridge.
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COVENTRY. John England, Students Union, University of Warwick, Coventry.
DERBY. New address awaited.
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EAST ANGLIAN Libertarians, Martyn Everett, 11 Gibson Gardens, Saffron Walden, Essex.
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GLASGOW anarchist group, John Cooper, 34 Raithburn Avenue, Castlemilk, Glasgow G45.
HASTINGS anarchist group, 32 Whitefriars Road, Hastings (print shop & alternative rights centre).
HULL Libertarian Collective, 16 Park Grove, Hull, N. Humberside.
KEELE anarchist group c/o Students Union, The University, Keele.
LAMPETER anarchist group, c/o Adrian James, S.D.U.C. Lampeter, Dyfed SA48 7ED, Wales.
LEAMINGTON & Warwick, c/o 42 Bath St., Leamington Spa.
LEEDS Dave Brown, 30 Park Row, Knaresborough (nr. Harrogate) N. Yorkshire.
LEICESTER. Blackthorn Books, 74 Highcross St. (tel. Leic. 21896) and Libertarian Education, 6 Beaconsfield Rd. (tel. Leic. 552085).

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Anarchist Feminists, Basement Office, Rising Free, 182 Upper St. N.1 (01-359 3785), staffed Mons. & Weds. 10 am-6 pm for visits. Or write c/o Box 33, Rising Free.
Anarchy Collective, 37a Grosvenor Ave., N.5 (01-359 4794 before 7 pm). Meets each Thurs. from 7 pm at Little A Press, 1 Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, E.1 (22a bus or Wapping tube).
Freedom Collective, 84B Whitechapel High St (Angel Alley) E1 (01-247 9249). Aldgate East tube, nr. Whitechapel Art Gallery.)
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Kingston anarchists, 13 Denmark Rd., Kingston-upon-Thames (01 549 2564).
London Workers' Group, Box W, 182 Upper St., N.1. (01-249 7042) meets Tuesdays 8pm at Metropolitan pub, 75 Farringdon Road.
West London anarchists, 7 Penard Road, W.12.
XTRA! Structureless Tyranny, 182 Upper St., Islington, N.1.
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OXFORD anarchist group, Anarchist Workers group, Anarcho-Feminists, and Solidarity, all groups c/o 34 Cowely Road Oxford.
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NATIONAL

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ANARCHIST Communist Association of class struggle anarchists (publ. 'Bread & Roses') Box 2, 136 Kingsland High St. London E8.
DIRECT ACTION Movement, Sec. c/o Box 20, 164/166 Corn Exchange Buildings, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M14 3BN.
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ANARCHA UNITED MYSTICS meet each Thursday from 8 pm at the Half-Way House pub, opposite Camden Town Tube Station, London.
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION conference in Leeds Aug. 29-31. Write to coordinating Group: FWC, Studio 441, O & N Warehouse, Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, Wapping, London E1.
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KURDS HAVE NO FRIENDS

Looking at the historical record you can see where the old proverb came from. The Kurds have always been split between several states, and more to the point, systemically mistreated within them. There are about 15 million Kurds and it is widely remarked that they are the largest nation in the world with no state of their own. Whether the possession of such a state would be an advantage in itself is debatable. However, it does make a point.

The Kurds live in the mountainous areas, spread across the borders of present day Turkey, Iraq and Iran, with smaller populations in Syria, USSR and Lebanon. These are remote, poor regions and traditionally, apart from the normal quantities of feudal repression, the central governments have been more or less content to leave them to the Kurds. However, in this century they have become touchy areas. And they have largely unexploited mineral wealth. Add to this the development of nationalist stirrings amongst the Kurds themselves and you can see why more active repression began.

The origins of the Kurds are uncertain. They are

Indo-European and speak a language related to Farsi (Persian), though the two are not mutually comprehensible. They claim to be descended from the Medes, whose empire was absorbed into Persia about 650 B.C. In the Middle Ages, Kurdistan was a recognisable unit. The most famous Kurd was Saleh-ed-din, known in the West as Saladin, who became Sultan of Egypt and Syria. He is the one in all the films about the Crusades. Many prominent writers and poets in the Islamic world were Kurds. Around this time Kurdistan was a patchwork of feudal principalities, spending much of their time squabbling with each other. It acted as a buffer zone between the Turkish and Persian empires, between which it was later carved up. The central rulers of these played typical divide and rule tactics, keeping these squabbles going. There were occasional insurrections, sternly put down. The Kurds were, in fact, treated like any other outlying subject people. This included being used to put down other malcontents. For example, it was largely Kurdish forces who were used for the Armenian massacres.

Regions Populated by the Kurds



Regions inhabited by the Kurdish Nation

Kurdish life

Kurdish life in all these countries is much the same. Until recently it was still effectively feudal. It revolved around the tribe. Land was owned by an 'agha'. For example, in Kurdish Iran, until 1962, 0.3% of the population owned 64% of the land, while 72% were peasants who owned no land at all. However, this traditional pattern has begun to change. Although some tribes are still nomadic, most Kurds are now settled. The Iranian government claims that since the 1962 Land Reform Law most peasant families now own their land. (This happy state is, of course, something of a distortion. The whole Iranian land reform was something of a public relations exercise, with much use of photographs of the Shah giving away tracts of lands to the adoring populace. In fact, most of it was land that had been stolen by his father, only a few years before. And most of it was useless without adequate irrigation. The net effect of the Land Reform, clause 1 of the Shah - People White Revolution, was for larger landowners to be confirmed in their rights, while smaller fish went off to swell the urban slums. Which, of course, means that most families who work the land now own it. There is an interesting description of rural life in Iran, including an account of one village's tentative activity against their local landowner, in MERIP Report no. 87, May 1980.) Kurdish agriculture is very productive, producing wheat, barley, rice, tobacco, fruit, cattle and sheep.

Education is scarce, illiteracy is around 80%, compared to 51% for Turkey as a whole or about 70% for Iraq. The teaching of Kurdish is generally forbidden. Anybody who wants to make any progress (educational or economic) has to go away to the major cities in the respective country. There is therefore a Kurdish intelligentsia in exile. Many have become involved in the national movement, but, not unnaturally many try to forget their ethnic origins and merge into the majority race. This has been particularly noticeable in Turkey. Medical care is also poor. In Turkish Kurdistan there is one doctor for every 10,000; one third of the national average. In Iraqi Kurdistan infant mortality is about 40%. (The Baghdad government claims infant deaths as less than 1% of total births. I don't know whether they believe it themselves). These factors have been exaggerated in the refugee camps.

Kurdish women are less restricted than many in the Middle East. They are not forced into isolation and there is less insistence on wearing chadors. Many are active in political movements and some fight with the Pesh Merga, the Kurdish guerillas. In religion most Kurds are Sunni Moslems. There are also some Shias, Christians and "Yezidis" (Zoroastrians - known as "devil worshippers").

The roots of today's problems developed in the late nineteenth century, with the rise of nationalism as a "progressive" ideology. Any 'O' level history student can tell you about the Balkans. This crumbling also affected the Eastern end of the Ottoman Empire. The Persian empire was equally shaky. After the First World War both underwent severe shocks. Northern Persia was occupied by Russian troops and a number of small republics were proclaimed. In the confusion Reza Khan, the leader of a cavalry brigade staged a coup in 1921 with British backing. The boundaries of Iran were maintained and a campaign launched against minority people. In 1926 he declared himself to be Shah. In contrast the Turkish Empire was fragmented. The Treaty of Sevres (August 1920) provided for the creation of the new states of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Armenia and Kurdistan. This was the high point of Kurdish aspirations but it didn't come true. The treaty was never ratified by Turkey. In November 1922 the Sultanate was abolished and, ironically with Kurdish help, the regime of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was installed. It obtained the more advantageous Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 which was ratified. This confirmed the existence of the three Arab states but not Armenia or Kurdistan. The Western powers have forgotten them ever since. The Kurds remained a subject people on the fringes of the new Turkey. The Armenians were simply destroyed.

The details of oppression have been different in the various countries where the Kurds live. Remember that the majority populations in these countries have little cause for optimism. For the Kurds, racial discrimination is added on top of these burdens.

Turkey

Turkey is certainly the most savage. It has the largest population of Kurds, between 3 and 8 million, depending on whether you believe Ankara or the Kurds themselves. (This problem applies to all estimates of Kurdish population. The censuses are dubious anyway, then there's some political slanting and wishful thinking) Anyway, this is something like one fifth of the total population of Turkey. These people have been systemically starved of everything, education, medicine, resources, even an existence. The word "Kurd" is not used in Turkey, only "mountain Turk". It is a crime to suggest that the Kurds exist at all, this is interpreted as undermining the Turkish State. Under Kenalism the authorities even banned the speaking of Kurdish at a time when only a tiny minority (about 4%) of Kurds spoke any Turkish at all. They were liable to a fine of five piastres per word of Kurdish uttered. At the time a sheep was worth about fifty piastres. This general discrimination is reinforced with military oppression. Every revolt has been savagely crushed. Until 1965

foreigners were not allowed in the Eastern part of the country. A couple of quotes from prominent Turkish officials illustrate the continuing attitude. "We live in a country called Turkey, the freest country in the world. As your (the Prime Minister's) deputy I feel I can express my real convictions without reserve. I believe that the Turk must be the only lord, the only master of this country. Those who are not of pure Turkish stock can have only one right in this country, the right to be servants and slaves." (Minister of Justice 1930) More recently, after a massive earthquake on 24 November 1976. "Let these people die, they are only Kurds." (Military Commander of Diyarbakir). In a country as politically chaotic and repressive as Turkey, organisation has been difficult, as indeed it is for Turks. In 1970 the then most significant left group, the Turkish Workers Party, passed a resolution acknowledging the existence of the Kurds. The party was immediately banned.

Iraq

Iraqi Kurdistan is a significant part of that country. Just how significant again depends on whose side you are on. There are about 2 million Kurds, about one fifth of the total Iraqi population. They occupy the northern part of the country, which, significantly, has much of the oil. Iraq was patched together after the First World War, from the vilayets (provinces) of Basra and Baghdad. The Kurdish vilyalet of Mosul had a referendum to decide its fate, but this was ignored by the British, the mandate power. All that oil was beckoning. Iraq is a hopeless patchwork, as a glance at its history would show. The monarchy was deposed in 1958, with Kurdish help. The Baghdad government has provided a long string of promises about the Kurdish Autonomous Region (which is, of course, much smaller than that claimed by the Kurds themselves). Even a couple of token ministers. However, the practice is forced "Arabisation", mass deportation and settlement of Arabs. There have been six wars in the recent past. The last of these is dealt with below.

Iran

In Iran there is actually a province called Kordestan, though, again, it is much smaller than the area where the Kurds are in a majority. The history is much as in the other countries, poverty, deprivation, attempted cultural assimilation and sporadic insurrections. During the Second World War, the Allies saw Shah Reza as having pro-Axis sympathies. Accordingly he was deposed and his son set up as a puppet. (This is the late lamented Mohammed Reza who is now permanently settled in Egypt). The country was again occupied by foreign troops, British in the south and Russian in the north. In the Russian area two mini-republics were set up. One was based on the Turkish population of Azerbaijan, the other was the smaller Kurdish republic of Mahabad. They both lasted a year, until the Russians pulled out, when they were immediately crushed by the Tehran government. Kurds look longingly to the Mahabad republic but it wasn't anything desirable in social terms. It preserved the old feudal order. After its demise in 1946, things settled back to "normal", until the Iranian Revolution, the other significant event discussed below.

Elsewhere

Most Kurds live in these three countries. There are also smaller populations in Lebanon, Syria and USSR. Here they are comparatively well off. That is in comparison with those above. They suffer some discrimination, but at least it is admitted that they exist and they can involve themselves in politics, almost to the same extent as the majority populations i.e. hardly at all.

The Iraqi war

In recent times there have been two major events in Kurdistan, the Iraqi war and the Iranian Revolution. The Iraqi war was only the latest in a series, triggered off by the policy of forced Arabisation and the hypocrisy of the Ba'ath regime. The Baghdad government engineered a truce, while it was armed by the Soviet Union, then a full scale attack was launched. The figurehead for the Kurds was Mustafa Barzani. The Barzan region had always been rebellious and Barzani himself had been the leader in several insurrections. In the '40s he escaped into exile and became effective military leader of the Mahabad Republic. When this fell he went into exile in USSR for eighteen years. After his return to Iraq he was leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party. Enjoying legendary fame amongst Kurds, he was an overbearing, autocratic figure. Faced with this latest threat he made a strange deal. He formed an alliance with, of all people, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, backed by guarantees from Henry Kissinger. These were supposed to protect against perfidy from Tehran. The full story has emerged from documents published in American newspapers. The Shah's motives were obvious. A civil war would destabilise Iraq, with whom there were long standing frontier disputes. The Kurds were encouraged into a civil war and provided with arms. When they were winning they were restrained. In the meantime, the Kurdish Democratic Party in Iran was prevented from any activity, for the overall good. Iraqi Kurdish militants who ignored this were handed over to Tehran for execution. A nasty, shabby deal. Iraq was enabled to present the Kurds as agents of American imperialism. After all, they, or rather their leaders, were. Then in March 1975, Iraq was sufficiently drained to give in to Iran's version of their disputes. A treaty was announced and the Kurds watched as their military equipment and even food supplies were packed up and taken back across the border. The leadership collapsed and the war was over. The Iranians gained credit for their humanitarian work in refugee camps. In the USA, the Pike Report, based on CIA memoranda concluded, "Neither the foreign Head of State (Shah) nor the President and Dr. Kissinger desired victory for our clients (the Kurds). They merely hoped to ensure that the insurgents would be capable of sustaining a level of hostility just high enough to sap the resources of the neighbouring state." "Neither Iran nor the US would like to see the situation resolved one way or the other." "Our clients, who were encouraged to fight, were not told of this policy. It was a cynical enterprise, even in the context of a clandestine aid operation." An object lesson in dealing with governments. The Kurds did not trust the Shah, but thought that American promises would protect them.

The Iranian revolution

After the collapse of the set piece war in Iraq, one which was hardly suited to the Kurds' traditional skills, guerrilla activity was beginning to pick up, when events in Iraq became overshadowed by those in Iran. The seemingly impregnable Pahlavi regime was crumbling. The attempt to produce The Great Civilisation on a flood of oil and repression cracked. As might be expected the Kurdish areas joined in eagerly. In Persian Iran the dominant strain was the ideology of Shi'a Islam, updated by Shariati and personified in Khomeini. The consequences of that are not yet fully worked out. Most Kurds are Sunni rather than Shia Moslems. Their religious leader is called Hosseini. The dominant organisation is the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) led by Qassemlou. This is Marxist-tinged and worked for



autonomy for Kurdistan within a democratic Iran. Similar demands were made in other minority areas.

The Pahlavi regime finally collapsed. The Shah took an indefinite overseas holiday from 16 January 1979. The holding operation by prime minister Bakhtiar was smashed on the weekend of 10 and 11 February. Effective central power was now in the hands of the Revolutionary Council with Khomeini as figurehead. The various minorities took full advantage of their opportunities. They were now well armed by courtesy of the looted armouries of the Imperial Army. Land was seized. Revolutionary councils were elected to manage local affairs and popular militias were set up. Local languages, many of which had been officially banned, began to be used in the open.

On 3 March the KDPI, at a conference in Mahabad, proclaimed its own legalisation. Soon afterward the Turkman, Arab and Baluchi communities also began to campaign for official recognition of their de facto autonomy. There have been many clashes with the Pasdaran (revolutionary guards), the army remaining demoralised and splintered. Most of the country has since been settled and Tehran maintains a (shaky) hold. In the south, local Arabs keep up a campaign of sabotage against oil installations. They have the advantage of help from Iraq (as people in London discovered dramatically a couple of months ago). In Kurdistan there is continuing war. Several offensives have been launched against the area. The Pesh Merga (local guerrillas) use their traditional tactics of fading away, abandoning the towns and then re-occupying them when the opportunity arises. In the referendum for an 'Islamic Republic' (blind - no details or even outlines were suggested, just a yes/no vote) was boycotted in Kurdistan, with 85-90 per cent abstention. A 'Congress of Oppressed Peoples in Iran' was called for August (79). Whilst continuing to negotiate, the Tehran government - this is the new one, the Revolutionary Islamic Republic - launched a major offensive in Kurdistan. This succeeded in taking the major towns and repression followed. Many Kurdish militants were simply lined up and shot. Photographs of this are a powerful propaganda tool for the Iranian opposition (see interviews).

Now things have settled somewhat, though nobody expects this to continue. It is obvious that the new Tehran government retains the attitudes of the old towards minorities. This may be a chauvinistic 'Persianism'. This would no doubt be reinforced by the knowledge that their Revolution is doing God's Work on Earth. In pursuit of that there can be no objection to a bit of severity towards backsliders and apostates. There are plenty of precedents for such a combination of racism, bigotry and religious fervour. Just

What we heard

These interviews were recorded in Iranian Kordestan in early 1980. They refer to events in 1979. During the revolution the Iraqi Kurds had seized land and were declaring autonomy. A large force of army and Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards) retook the area in the autumn. The Tehran government used religious differences to justify the attack, most Kurds are Sunni rather than Shia Moslems. Hence the references to "Mujahedin" (Fighters of the Holy War). In this context it has no connection with the Mujahedin-i-Khalq, the political party which has grown out of the pre-revolution guerilla group.

Translation by Davood. Brackets indicate editorial comment.

1. Seifollah Feizi

His Sister He was 12 years old. (His charge was) nothing, an innocent boy, a 12 year old baby. Who was only walking in the street.

He was in Saqqez. They bombarded Saqqez. He was wounded by two bullets. They took him to hospital and then sent him to a firing squad. They say that he was the leader of a Kurdish group. How can a 12 year old child be a leader? How can he be a political person?

There was no court business. They just arrested the boy and took him away.

When he was wounded by bullets he couldn't move and he was lying down in the street. The Pasdaran, these so-called Islamic people who call us Kafar (Unbeliever) pulled him all the way back to their headquarters. They had torn all his clothes and injured all his body as they were pulling him and they said that they had found him in a trench. They told him "You have killed three or four people, exploded a tank. I don't know how a 12 year old child could do these sort of things.

Here is not a butchers. It seems that they cut peoples' throats like cows'. They sent 22 of our best youths to the firing squad. By Khalkhali's order. Khalkhali the executioner, that blood thirsty, dirty Khalkhali, the Satan ruler.

Other Sister I swear to God I am confused. I went to Saqqez. I was told that they had arrested my brother and he was in jail. I went to the jail asking for my brother. The Pasdaran, I don't know, Mujahedin, were swearing "Your brother is not here." But he was sending messages by different people repeatedly, "I am in jail, come and visit me." At last I saw him, he was wounded by two bullets-one in his right hand and one inside his stomach-I asked "What are you doing here". He said "I went to fetch our aunt. She wasn't in. The Mujahedin shot at me. I escaped but they shot me with two bullets. They took me to the hospital, put bandages on my wounds, then they brought me to jail. They sent me to Sanandaj and sent me to Saqqez."

The day I went there Khalkhali was coming. They night they were executed I was crying. He was crying and saying, "I have done nothing. I swear to God I am innocent."

It was written in the newspapers that Seifollah Feizi, leader of the Kurds has been executed.

I went there. I took a Quran with me. They threw it away, and then one of them kicked it and said, "You dirty people, you crafty ones, you are never a Moslem. Imam Khomeini has ordered us to a Jihad (Holy War). The Imam says you are Kafars. You never know God and the Quran. We have come for Jihad. You are Israelis, you are not Moslems."

My message (to Iranian families) is: Please stop this business and don't send people to firing squad. Don't kill us. God could never accept that somebody like my brother, 12 years old, who walks in the street, is taken away, to be executed.

Somebody says that they have executed a Kurdish leader. Was Seifollah a leader? Or they make thousands of stories for the others, to be able to execute them-one was rotten, another was anti-revolutionary.

A Friend I knew this boy who has been executed. He was a work-

er. He was a handy boy in Mullah-Lor's tea house. He was a charming and kind boy. This boy was not in any gun business. He was not the leader of a group in a battle. They executed him. They shot the boy in the street and took him to jail as they took our other friends. Some were freed and came back home to Bukan. These friends were talking about Khalkhali, the executioner, with no humanity that he charged him. Even the authorities and the commanders of the army told him, "Sir, this 12 year old boy should not be executed." Khalkhali said, "If he is a good boy, he goes to heaven in the other world, so we have not done anything wrong and if he is guilty then he has been punished" Sister Why do you come from Tehran, Esfahan, Shiraz and...

I don't know where, to fight with us, to kill Kurds, to have your Jihad here?

What have we done? We want our own rights. Oppression and injustice have been nationalised in Kurdistan. That is many years now we have suffered oppression and the yoke of injustice. They did not give us our rights during the Shah's regime. Why when Mr. Khomeini was not in power, we were good people, we were revolutionary. Now that he has power and can do anything, we are anti-revolutionary.

Why when Mr. Khomeini was not in power, we were good people, we were revolutionary. Now that he has power and can do anything, we are anti-revolutionary.

Why when Mr. Khomeini was not in power, we were good people, we were revolutionary. Now that he has power and can do anything, we are anti-revolutionary.

2. Reza-Rahim Pour

His Wife

(She explains that her husband had gone to work at the local dam. He had not come home. A relative had phoned to say that she had heard a rumour that he had been arrested.)

That night I didn't sleep and I was beating my chest... It was next morning-it was 5.30. I went out then. I was running like mad to one of his friends... I asked him if he had seen my husband and if he was in prison. He confirmed it... I asked him, "What should I do now?" He said, "Fetch Reza's Identity Card and take all the family to Khalkhali." I returned home. My mother was there. I could see a helicopter in the air. I said, "Khalkhali has come." It was 6 o'clock in the morning. I went out again. I saw two of the dam employees and the neighbours were staring at me. And some of the ladies were crying. I couldn't guess anything...

Suddenly this sister of mine came in and said, "They have executed Reza." and this was the way I understood what had happened. I was pulling all my hair, I pulled it out and then I took off all my clothes in the yard and went out nude, absolutely nude. I went absolutely nude into the street and shouted, "Where is the body?" They said in the hospital in Mahabad. I was dancing "This is Reza's wedding Day." "They have executed poor Reza!"

They said, "Khalkhali has executed Reza." Tonight, Friday night at 10 o'clock, this morning rather, the Pasdaran had taken the bodies to the hospital. I went there. Four bodies were lying down on the ground.

One of them was Mr. Vegdani, he was a Baha'i. He was a good man. He was a shop owner. An innocent man. Everybody was happy with him in Mahabad. Everybody was happy with Reza as well. My brother was there and he said, This is your Reza. I asked them to cover his face, not to see him.

in Kurdistan



(At this part of the interview she starts to say some unclear sentences, in Kurdish, goes into a state of collapse.

After a few minutes she recovers and continues.)

Another one was called Jalil Gouladami, a 13 year old boy, he was alone. The Mujahedin had hand picked him from a group. He was a porter, he had a cart. The other one was a newspaperman. They had put these four bodies there. I cried a lot. I was shouting. An ambulance came and we took our body...

Wife's Brother We asked them to make it clear what the charge was. We know that he was innocent. They never told us what he was executed for. We were anxious to see his papers and his documents - to see how he had been questioned and what he had answered. It seems that the prosecutor did not sign his papers as there wasn't enough evidence. There was no reason to execute him, apparently.

Wife He was going to his office at the dam, to his duty but the papers said that they arrested him while he was carrying a grenade.

Wife's Brother It is obvious that when they want to execute somebody, they don't say he was carrying a Qoran. Why have they charged him so quickly and executed him in 10 minutes. One of the witnesses there says it didn't take more than three minutes.

Mr. Arman, the prosecutor, did not sign the papers and asked that he (Reza) should not be executed but his (Khalkhali) answer was no.

Khalkhali told him, "You pimp, it's not your business, get out of here." Then Arman was scared and said nothing. (Khalkhali) went by helicopter. So the prosecutor did not sign and said that they were not guilty. A Hadji (Someone who has been on a pilgrimage to Mecca i.e. very religious) who is said to be from Qom and was responsible for carrying out the executions, said "As Mr. Khalkhali has ordered, I will do it. It doesn't matter if the prosecutor wants to sign or not."

They say, "The Divine Law Magistrate has executed him & the job is finished. He was guilty and has been punished. If he wasn't guilty he goes to heaven. Why are you unhappy in this case?"

His family has been destroyed and are going to live in poverty. If Reza goes to heaven if he has no guilt, alright, why should his family live in hell?

His Brother Before execution they had tortured him. They had stabbed him with a knife. In the mortuary we could see that he had lots of bruises on his body. They had shot him in his foot, it had come out of his shoe. We have kept his shoe for his memory... The people who were there say that in his new will and his last request he asked to see his family, to kiss them goodbye but they didn't allow this and executed him. At 3.30 the telephone rang in the Pasdaran headquarters, "We need an ambulance." It was still dark. The ambulance man says, "It was rather dark & you couldn't see or recognise anybody. They brought the people out of a room, took them to the lawn in the yard and in a pitiful and disgraceful manner they were executed. Now come and take them, they said."

(When you heard Imam Khomeini's message about the autonomy of Kurdistan, what was your feeling?)

Of course everybody was happy, but Reza's wife was all the time crying and beating herself. They have destroyed her life. It doesn't matter to her if Iran is going to be a rose garden.

Wife I am in jail now. I am in my grave. It makes no difference to me.

Wife's Brother When everybody was happy and dancing, I called my sister to see if she feels better, she said, "If they had given this autonomy in the first place, before so much bloodshed, probably I could be happy, but now how can the people like me and in my position, be happy."

(The offer of 'autonomy' was only nominal. Fighting continues)

People without a country

THIS is the title of a new book on the Kurds. It examines the modern history of Kurdistan, in the various countries over which it is spread. The book was first published in French, in 1978. An afterword in the new translation updates it to early 1980. It is an anthology, edited by Gerard Chaliand, formerly secretary of the Minority Rights Group in Paris. The book has a preface by Maxime Rodinson, which the back cover blurb claims "challenges progressive forces and intellectuals to recognise the gravity and implications of the Kurdish question". It also seems to criticise, by implication, the implicit assumptions of many of the other writers, but more of that later. After an introduction by the editor and a chapter on the history of Kurdistan under the Ottoman Empire, the book then has chapters on the Kurdish areas in each of the countries concerned. As might be expected, this coverage is long in the case of Turkey, Iraq and Iran but much shorter for Syria and the Soviet Union. There is also a contemporary description of the 1946 Mahabad Republic, by Archie Roosevelt Jr, the US Deputy Military Attaché in Tehran at the time. All the other authors are Kurdish. Each chapter has notes and sources and the book has an overall index.

The book gives an informed, detailed account of the composition and history of the Kurds and Kurdistan. Its problems come from the position of its authors. That they are Kurds is

excellent. However, they are also Marxists and write in Marxian. For example, Qassemlou, the writer of the chapter on Iran, is secretary general of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran. This leads to three criticisms. One is that they always assume that the basic need is for the Kurds to have their own national state. Another is the assumption that the USSR is the natural friend of all struggling peoples. The last is that much of the book requires considerable tolerance for the rhetoric of Leftish National Liberation.

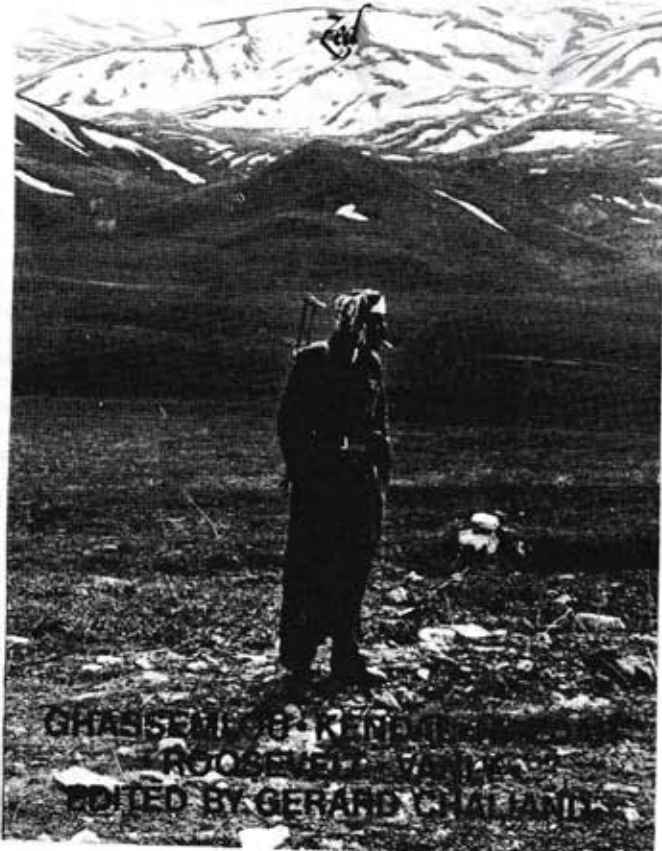
The first of these points is a constant problem for anarchists when discussing liberation movements. For liberals and Marxists this is easy. The former want the minority people in question to have a fair share in whatever government is going. The latter want to have the government for themselves. In either case 'progressive' forces can set about dispensing justice. Just updated nineteenth century nationalism really. Along the way the people's desires tend to get submerged in the need for unified action. Obviously, this is not good enough. However it is also necessary to support those who are struggling. This contradiction has caused problems in, for example, Spain, on support for regional movements, particularly the Basques. And in Britain. Do you consider that you should unconditionally support the Provisional IRA as an organisation because they are involved in an anti-imperialist struggle? At a distance things seem easier. I'm sure that most would sympathise with the Afghans; yet, if they win, they will establish a reactionary, religious regime similar to the one of which everybody disapproves, next door in Iran. Just on the other side of Iran we come back to the Kurds. The likely product of a Kurdish victory is a Marxist state, run by the KDPI. And an illustration from the book. In the section criticising the conduct of the Barzani leadership in the Iraqi war.

"Since a state had practically been established and there was no lack of money, clientelage began to emerge and bureaucratism and elitism development in the higher ranks of both the Army and the Party. Fortunately there were many exceptions to this rule, but little was done to prevent it and a new privileged group was allowed to install itself".

The above is just something to bear in mind when reading the book. And, after all, this recognition of the writer's position is something that we manage with almost everything we read. The second two points are more immediately irritating. Everywhere there is the assumption that Marxism is the natural ideology of people in struggle and that the USSR represents the peak of Marxism. In the chapter on Turkey there is a discussion of the slackening of official censorship in 1963, when it was ruled that "studying, teaching, explaining, publishing or researching into anarchism or communism cannot be counted as offences under these laws". Then there is a litany of names whose work became available - "Marx, Engels, Lenin, Hegel, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Nkrumah, Fanon, Guevara, Rosa Luxemburg, August Bebel, Nazim, Hikmet, Gorky, Cholokov, Mayakovsky, Glap, etc".

Or, in the section on Iraq, the author calmly comments that in April 1972 there was a treaty between the Ba'ath regime and the USSR, who immediately began to supply Baghdad with weapons. "From Moscow's point of view the 1972 Treaty was not a declaration of principle against the Kurdish movement. The Soviet leaders, who had until then shown considerable understanding of the Kurdish people's struggle, believed that the Treaty was justifiable not just in terms of immediate self-interest but also because of Baghdad's continuing struggle against the giant oil companies." This remarkable statement is on the same page as "Nevertheless, the Treaty was concluded with a partner who had already launched the peacetime deportations in Kurdistan, a policy which Izvestia had described as 'Hitlerian' in 1963. Once the Treaty was signed, the Soviets no longer had any leverage with which to force the Ba'ath to give up this policy, nor of course to persuade its victims to accept it' By arming the

PEOPLE WITHOUT A COUNTRY THE KURDS AND KURDISTAN



GHASEMLOU, KASSI
ROOSEVELT JR
EDITED BY GERARD CHALIAND

authors of this policy to the teeth and effectively granting them a 'certificate of progressive good conduct' in the eyes of the world, the Soviet Union left the Kurdish movement with its back to the wall. The Kurds were thus forced to accept the Shah's offer of military aid and the concomitant unnatural alliance".

All this fits in with the language used. Some sections are more readable than others. The chapter on the Mahabad Republic by Roosevelt is preceded by the disclaimer, "There is an obvious difference in tone and political orientation between this chapter and the rest of the book. Zed Press only includes it in 'the volume because of the absence of other first hand material on the Mahabad Republic which - short-lived as it was - has constituted the only successful attempt at an independent Kurdish State in the period since the First World War". Which is true, so this chapter is the most accessible to a general reader. The other section where a personal touch shows is that on Iraq. The author, Ismet Sheriff Vanly, a Kurdish lawyer, carried out a survey in Iraqi Kurdistan, accompanied by Ba'ath ministers. Afterwards, in exile in Switzerland, he was visited by three diplomats from the Baghdad government. Four days later one of the 'diplomats' returned and shot him. The style of the

rest of the book can be summed up by a quotation from the introduction. In discussing why the Kurdish movement did not do better after the First World War, Chaliand decides, "Its elites were backward".

The book remains invaluable to anybody wanting a deep treatment of the subject. For a more general reader, the Minority Rights Group report is more accessible. It is dated now, overtaken by events in Iran. Further information is also available from Kurdistan, News and Comment. This journal contains articles on the Kurdish struggle in all countries, not representing any particular trend within the movement.

People Without A Country - The Kurds And Kurdistan ed. G. Chaliand, Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1. 246 pp. Hb. £14.95, Pb. £3.95.

The Kurds Minority Rights Group Report, No. 23. M.R.G, 36 Craven Street, London WC2. 32 pp. 0.75p.

Kurdistan News and Comment from Kurdistan Solidarity Committee, c/o Students Union, Brunel University, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, Middlesex.

Iranian Revolution

continued from page 11

look at the histories of Britain, Spain or Russia (pre- and post-revolution). It is also a fear that if they allow any cranks, all the minorities and the opposition in what is left will be vastly encouraged. And, for example, all the oil is in 'Arabestan'.

There is still an Iranian governor in Mahabad. He controls, in practice, the area contained by the ring of tanks around the hill on which his residence stands. The rest of the town goes about its, Kurdish, business. The army and Pasdaran also control a few other towns and the main roads. (It's all a bit like Afghanistan). The countryside is held by the Kurds. The dominant organisation in the north is the KDPI, which is practical enough to work with religious groups. Their relationship with the USSR is ambiguous. There are few formal links with Tudeh (the Iranian CP) but probably some direct Soviet influence. The looted weapons mean that the Irani Kurds do not need such reliance on an outside power as do most liberation movements. With all the classic guerrilla advantages of almost complete popular support (90 per cent by their own estimate) and local knowledge of the difficult terrain, it is hard to see what Tehran can do. The army can't be relied on for open genocide, which leaves the Pasdaran. They certainly have enough Revolutionary Islamic Fervour, but little experience.

Things are rather different in the south, around Sanandaj. (The extent of Kurdistan is a matter of some debate. The more zealous would include the area even further south, around the major town of Kermanshah). Here the KDPI is less dominant. There is more support for the Komala (also known as Zahmet Keshan). This is the historical name for the organisation which ran the fabled Mahabad Republic of 1946. It has been taken up by a new group. It is more left than the KDPI. I have heard it described as 'Maoist' by a western journalist, but this is more a convenient label than a reality. Its policies involve more decentralisation. The countryside and even at times major towns like Sanandaj, were organised into open collectives called 'Benkehs'. These coordinated activity. Social projects were set up, for example schemes to help with opium addiction, which is widespread in all of Iran since the revolution. After all the 'land reform' schemes which had been discussed in the past, the local peasants set up their own scheme - they simply occupied. However, in such a short time and with the need for constant military activity, the economic base and distribution was somewhat patchy. There was still reliance on food bought on the open market, which had to be shipped into the area. In the uneasy truce of early 1980 this got by, although there was some harassment of transport by the government forces. There was a heartening libertarian spirit in the area. However, in late April, government forces succeeded in reoccupying Sanandaj.



Pesh Merga at the Rawanduz front in October 1974.

[Colin Smith]

Where Now?

WHAT then is the future for the Kurds? At the moment the focus is in Iran, though activity continues in other countries. As the proverb says, "The Kurds have no friends"; anything they achieve, they will have to do for themselves. Certainly none of the Great Powers wants to further more instability in the area. It's a pity that Barzani and the other Iraqi leaders did not remember this, particularly for the Iranian Kurds they turned over to Tehran. This sums up part of the problem. Barzani was, in effect, a feudal chieftain, playing off tribal differences. This sort of attitude is still widespread amongst Kurds. There are even tribes who, because of traditional enmities, help the Tehran government.

Things are changing. The last fifty years have seen most Kurds change from semi-nomadic pastoralists to settled farmers. (This hasn't been entirely voluntary). The traditional social relations are also altering. In the past a Kurd would think of him or herself first as a Moslem, then as a member of a particular tribe, then as a Kurd. The position in the social pattern of the tribe would go without saying. Now elements of nationalism have been assimilated. This is coupled with the erosion of the old feudal assumptions.

The new world view is tinged with Marxism. The avowedly Marxist parties of the various countries make little progress, though the Fedayin have some support in Iranian Kurdistan. Young Persian militants make little headway. The most successful group, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, has a mixture of nationalism, Marxism and religion. The position is similar in Iraq and Turkey. So the immediate beneficiaries of any negotiated local autonomy would be a new leadership, sorry, elite. At least they would probably instigate some land reform, but a glance around the world at

the benefits to peasants of successful Marxist national liberation movements does give some qualms. That Kurds are capable of better things is shown by the events around Sanandaj. (And the possible future of a KDPI dominated Kurdistan is hinted at by a remark to me by Chaliand, editor of the above book, when the area was reoccupied in April this year: "They should have joined KDPI. This is what happens to autonomous movements". (Support the Party for the sake of Revolution, comrades).

Success for the Kurds could tear apart Khomeini's Iran. It would provide a stimulus for all the other ethnic minorities and for the Iranian opposition. Many Persian dissidents look to them to provide a lead. Even non-political people have some sympathy. Which is, of course, why the Tehran government is so frightened. The Iranian Kurds can maintain their present position indefinitely. Only last week, after a couple of months of relative calm, a government convey was ambushed in the Gharran Pass, west of Sanandaj. The Pesh Merga claim to have killed 100 soldiers for one loss. The government's figures are, obviously, less dramatic, but there is no doubt that it is a major incident. If the Iranian Kurds would neglect their traditional inter-Kurdish rivalries and strengthen their links with the Baluchi, the Arabs and the others, they could extend their struggle. Such success would inspire and help the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq. No wonder the Superpowers have preferred to help the central governments in repression. The possible repercussions are limitless.

It is time that the Kurds had more friends.

DAVID PEERS

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