

ME TO MY FOLLOWERS..."

ANARCHY 2010

BLF



" GIVE ME THOSE ANARCHISTS ANYTIME,
THESE DOCTORS NEARLY KILLED ME ! "

ANARCHY

14

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THE BUILDERS LABOURERS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

I'm a bricklayer, a member of UCATT, and an anarchist syndicalist. Before I took a course in bricklaying at a training centre about eight years ago I worked at other jobs, and I've been a member of various unions. I want to tell people who may not have heard of it about the BLF of Australia, not because I think it's ideal, but simply because the contrast with most British unions is so striking. (No, that wasn't meant to be a joke.) All my information on this union comes from official union publications of the New South Wales section of the union, and I have no doubt there is another side to the story. But the contrast between the journal BUILDERS LABOURER and any British union publication has to be seen to be believed.

The official name of the union is the Australian Building & Construction Employees and Builders Labourers Federation. It was formerly just the BLF, and this is the name by which it is generally known. The union has a federal management committee, but because of the sheer size of Australia it tends to be more or less an autonomous union in each state, with the New South Wales Branch (this doesn't mean a local branch in the British sense) taking a particularly independent line. This article is about the NSW branch.

STYLE OF ORGANISATION

There was an argument on a site in Sydney about toilets, washing facilities, and canteen conditions. At a confrontation between the assembled workers and the site boss, one worker said something. The boss said "I'll talk about that with your secretary." The NSW union secretary, Jack Mundey, who was present, replied "You'll talk about it to all of them here; I'm just

one of their employees." Can you imagine any British union bureaucrat saying that?

Jack Mundey has since become an ordinary worker again under the rule in the NSW union, which he himself proposed at an executive meeting, on limited tenure of office. No person may hold a full time union job for more than six years. After that, he must return to work on the sites for at least one year. While he is an "employee of the members" he receives the same wage as the average member, so the official has the best possible reason for fighting for increases for the union members.

This falls a long way short of the syndicalist ideal of how a union should be run but compared to UCATT, for instance, it sounds like a dream.

Apart from the secretary, NSW has four union organisers appointed for three years, and "in the 1970-73 period some 40 different members served for varying periods as temporary organisers... who have returned to the sites with added experience and maturity to enhance their work in the rank and file."

FEUDS WITH OTHER UNIONS

Organisation of workers in the Australian building industry is more fragmented than in this country. The fact that, despite (or possibly because of) this, the unions are a damn sight more lively than anything in this country, should make us wary of thinking "industrial unions" are a cure-all. I certainly wouldn't want UCATT to have control over all building workers in Britain.

The BLF has had demarcation disputes with the Australian Workers Union as well as an outfit called the Building Workers Industrial Union, and it doesn't get along too well with the numerous craft unions. All this despite strenuous efforts by the union leadership to appease or come to terms with these outfits. One of the BLF's declared aims is "establishment of one union for the building industry without takeovers or poaching".

YES TO WORKING-CLASS UNITY -
NO TO AMALGAMATION!

The Builders Labourers Federation has three grades of members on three different rates of pay. It used to be four, but they got the lowest up-graded. Of course, some jobs are more skilled than others, but the whole emphasis of any working-class organisation should be to move away from grading, as it only helps to divide the workers and strengthen the bosses.

The BLF doesn't include tradesmen such as brickies, carpenters, and so on. Of course, a brickie likes to feel that he is better than a common labourer, but this is a very narrow and short-term way of looking at things. Looking down on your fellow workers keeps the boss where he is - on your back. A genuinely free society could maintain much higher building standards than exist at present without all these arbitrary divisions.

All unions in Australia, including the BLF, are state registered, and have been for a very long time. But there is a move afoot by opponents of the BLF to get it struck off the register, on the theory that this will drive it out of business.

When a union like the BLF has such difficulties, despite efforts by its leaders to get along with more orthodox unions and with the state, it is clear that a working class organisation in which all power was in the hands of the rank and file would be faced with open conflict from the word go.

THE MEMBERS

There are about eleven or twelve thousand members of the BLF in New South Wales. This is five times what it was a few years ago, before "progressives" won control of the union from a bunch of gangsters who did not hesitate to beat up members who disliked their way of running things. About 70 per cent of the members in NSW are immigrants to Australia.

It should be realised, however, that the yearly turnover of members is high. It used to be 90 per cent - in other words, out of every 10 members at the beginning of a year, only one was still a member at the end of it, though the other 9 might have been replaced by new members. Many workers are members on a particular site and allow their membership to lapse when they leave it. Turnover in the BLF is now

down to 50 or 60 per cent, which is still high.

I'm not sure what the turnover percentage is in Britain, but I know it is high in building compared to all other British industries. This is mainly due to the unstable nature of employment in the building industry, with work on some projects reaching completion and new sites starting up. In addition, because of the constantly changing nature of the industry, it tends to attract a much higher proportion, compared with other industries, of people who don't like working at the same place all the time.

WOMEN IN THE BUILDERS LABOURERS FEDERATION

Quote from a union publication "Taming the Concrete Jungle": "Wives of NSW builders labourers have been encouraged to take part in union activity - and not in pouring the tea or buttering the scones. Wives were invited to attend and speak at the first NSW branch general meeting after the 1970 strike, to say what they thought about the strike or anything else. About a fifth of the attendance at that meeting were wives. Some brought the kids too." Furthermore, "30 wives of building labourers invaded the Master Builders' Association Sydney offices."

The same publication adds that "not only may members be invited to bring their wives to meetings; in some cases, they will be invited to bring their husbands. That is because the NSW branch has been recruiting women as members - the first building union in Australia to do so". Most of these women members, who are few in number I must add, are working as "nippers", an Aussie term for a sort of glorified teaboy and cleaner-up.

But one of them, Denise Bishop, said "We might be nippers now. But don't think this is all we're ever going to be on jobs. We're going to graduate." Denise Bishop was one of a group of women who subsequently became hoist drivers, and she has since been a temporary union organiser. There is, on the front of the Autumn 1973 issue of BUILDERS LABOURER, a photo of her, during a union demonstration, being carried off by two large policemen - and fighting them every inch of the way. They don't make union organisers like that in this country!

There have been cases of men stopping work when employers refused to take on women, and even a one-woman work-in (backed by the men on the site) which forced a site boss to employ the woman concerned. The union's program includes "recognition of women's right to work in any part of the industry they wish, and assistance to them to develop new skills". All this amounts to quite a small step towards involving the other half of the working class; but it is a step which has yet to be taken in this country.

IMMIGRANTS, ABORIGINES, AND GAYS

About 70 per cent of the NSW membership of the BLF are "new" Australians from Mediterranean countries - Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, the Lebanon. Most of them speak little English, so they have difficulty communicating with the "old" Australians and with each other. For some reason, these immigrants are referred to in Australia as "migrants".

The union publishes pamphlets in the migrants' languages, and is pressing for establishment of a migrant education centre at which they could learn about various aspects of Australian society as well as learn English in working hours without loss of pay. The union has one migrant organiser, who speaks Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, French, and English.

The union encourages Aborigines to enter the industry and acquire skills in it. It has one part-Aboriginal organiser.

A male homosexual student was expelled from a residential college at MacQuarie University. The union placed a ban on any of its members working on the university campus until the college authorities had accepted the principle of no sexual discrimination.

These may appear to some as inadequate measures of solidarity with immigrants, aborigines, and gays. But the contrast with UCATT, for instance, is that something is done.

FIGHTING THE BOSSES

Members of the BLF have used some interesting tactics in their struggle with the building industry employers. In one case, workers on a site in Newcastle NSW used nudity as a weapon, much to the embarrassment of the boss and the authorities. These workers had been using jackhammers in an excavation, getting covered with dust in dry weather and mud in the wet. They demanded showers. When they didn't get them, they rigged up a hose on the steps of City Hall and took a shower there. The spectacle of these laughing, boisterous, naked building workers in such hallowed precincts was enough. They got their showers.

But humour isn't always enough, and the BLF has officially encouraged a tactic which makes British union leaders throw their hands up in horror - sabotage. During industry-wide strikes, teams of vigilantes would go round sites ensuring that no scab work was done. If after a warning they returned to a site and found a newly built wall, for instance, they dealt with it in the most direct way possible - by knocking it down!

This led to a sustained campaign against union "violence" by journalists of the capitalist press who wouldn't know a day's work if it sat up and bit them, but in fact violence is more often used by those on the

employers' side. What made the paid propagandists of the established order squeal was not violence against people, but sabotage against property.

SABOTAGE

As well as helping to make strikes for higher wages effective, sabotage has been used to great effect as a means of improving amenities on sites. In one instance, fed up with complaining about the shabby shed which was supposed to be their changing room, workers up-ended the thing and tipped it down the foundations excavation.

Following the success of this operation, a vigilante group was formed to check on amenities on sites. One employer of immigrant labour was warned that he would have to improve conditions on his site. He failed to do so, and a compressor landed upside down at the bottom of the excavations.

One of the BLF's officials, a member of the Aussie Communist Party (which is not quite as bad as the British one, otherwise known as the League of Russian Empire Loyalists) appeared on TV advocating new tactics for workers in other industries; for instance, public transport workers keeping trains and buses running but not collecting fares; or workers in food and clothing factories keeping on working but distributing the goods they produce to pensioners and others in need.

MAKING THE BOSS REDUNDANT

The BLF has maintained continual pressure for more "stopwork meetings" (on full pay) to discuss union business on the sites. Not strike meetings to discuss some particular dispute with the bosses, but normal, regular, everyday meetings. This, if you think about it, is the thin end of a very big wedge indeed. It is a step towards the union's official aim of workers' control.

As well as refusing to recognise the employers' right to fire, BLF members have forced bosses to hire people they didn't want (by means of a work-in by unemployed workers with the threat of action by the other workers in support). Quote from the union journal BUILDERS LABOURER "The workers decided that extra hands were needed..."

On one Sydney site employers called the police to deal with "industrial sabotage" in an attempt to scare militants into leaving. It didn't work. Instead, the workers decided that for the next month they would work only on measures to make the site safe to work at - in other words, no production! Furthermore, they elected their own foreman, safety officer and leading hands. The management were told that each morning they should give the workers a list of the things they wanted done, but that the final decision on what actually got done would be taken by the workers.

After the first month production was actually greater than it would have been with management in command - not that that was the object! "What we were doing was proving that workers could run industry and do it better without a boss telling us what to do."

UNION DEMANDS

The Builders Labourers Federation has won real increases in wages for its members - that is, they are better off despite rising prices. It has won full pay for workers when off through injury. It is demanding long service leave after ten years in the industry - not ten years with a particular employer, of course! It is demanding a reduced working week without loss of pay. But it is also making some demands which seem incompatible with its declared aim of workers' control.

One of these is for a building investigations committee to control development. Now, I haven't the slightest doubt that the Australian building industry, like the British one, badly needs investigating. And, of course, uncontrolled development is a recipe for disaster. But this demand raises two questions. First, who should do the investigating? And secondly, who should control development?

The answer of anybody who is really serious about workers' control to both these questions has to be "the workers should". But the BLF appears to be demanding a body set up by the state and including union "leaders", "businessmen", and (un)civil "servants". This is the path of class collaboration and state control.

Another BLF demand is "permanency". This means 52 weeks pay per year for all workers in the building industry, even if they are unemployed for, say, 20 of those 52 weeks. This sounds a good demand, but again the way the union is suggesting to do it contains the seeds of a bureaucracy controlling the workers. They want employment centres for the building industry, which would tell unemployed workers about available jobs and ensure that those who couldn't find work received full pay. They would prefer these centres to be run by the unions, but would accept joint union/boss/state control.

THE ENVIRONMENT

I now come to the subject of the "green bans", the thing for which the BLF is most famous (or notorious) in Australia itself. There have been whole pamphlets written about this subject, so anybody who is really interested can find out more for themselves. I'm just going to explain what the green bans are.

Briefly, a "green ban" is a decision by the BLF

that union members should not work on a project which is felt to threaten the quality of people's lives in some way. This applies to both demolition and construction work. These green bans have in some cases been reinforced by other unions deciding on similar action, though the BLF has forced the pace.

A green ban begins with a group of residents in some locality approaching the BLF. The initiative always has to come from local people. No request for a green ban is refused - the BLF say they are not against development as such, but the ban makes sure that "developers" cannot send the builders in without having taken the time to discuss their plans with local people. If, after full discussion, the local people make it quite clear they don't want the "development", then of course the green ban becomes permanent!

When houses are to be knocked down to make way for an office block or a motorway, a green ban is imposed. When the natural beauty of a piece of countryside is threatened, a green ban is slapped on. Historic buildings are preserved - including a church which the Church authorities wanted knocked down because they would make more money out of an office block....

Middle-class conservationists have found themselves in the embarrassing position of having to seek the aid of militant building workers, the most active conservationists of all! In one case where a whole residential area was threatened the "developers" tried to use non-union labour, backed by hundreds of policemen. A series of pitched battles took place. Three houses were eventually demolished, but it became clear to the "developers" that they would never be able to build on this land. Where the houses had stood, to quote the BUILDERS LABOURER, "the workers had decided that there would be a park - forever".

It is estimated that three thousand million dollars worth of "development" is being held up by green bans.

CONCLUSION

The BLF is not, as I said earlier, my ideal of a union which is completely under the control of the workers, and which is seeking complete workers' control of industry for the benefit of society as a whole. But it is a union which British workers might learn some things from. That is why I have written this, and that is why we in the ASA are distributing it.

Dave Coull

(reprint of Anarchist Syndicalist Alliance leaflet)

WHOSE REVOLUTION BETRAYED, TROTSKY?

Anarchists, complained Trotsky, 'do not have the slightest understanding of the criteria and methods of scientific research',¹ that is, of the dialectics of Marxism. 'Anarchist thought is the prisoner of liberal rationalism. Real revolutionary thinking is not possible without dialectics.'² Anarchism 'founds its teaching not upon the actual development of society, but upon the reduction to absurdity of one of its features..³

Consequently anarchists who argued that Trotsky should take into consideration the documents produced by the Kronstadt Soviet simply did not understand that 'the characteristics of a party are determined considerably more by its social composition, its past, its relation to different classes and strata, than by its oral and written declarations', that 'the Kronstadt uprising was only an episode in the relations between the proletarian city and the petty bourgeois village' and that therefore 'social revolutionary/anarchist soviets could serve only as a bridge from the proletarian dictatorship to capitalist restoration. They could play no other role, regardless of the ideas of their participants. The Kronstadt uprising thus had a counter revolutionary character.'⁴

Consequently too anarchists who argued that Stalinism was the product of Bolshevism applied the logic of liberal rationalism whereas Trotsky, understanding the contradictions by which history progresses and applying Marxist dialectics, demonstrated that Stalinism was the antithesis of Bolshevism.. Reading Trotsky's strictures on anarchist thought and his analysis of historical events reminds me forcibly of Bakunin's warning against 'scientific socialism': 'the people's State will be nothing else but despotic rule



1. Hue and Cry over Kronstadt
2. Stalinism and Bolshevism

3. History of the Russian Revolution
4. Hue and Cry over Kronstadt

over the toiling masses by a new, numerically small aristocracy of genuine or sham scientists'. I am also reminded of Trotsky's statement in 'Culture and Socialism' that priests were not necessarily conscious of the deceit which they practised over against the people since 'an objectively false ideology, woven out of superstition, does not in itself mean subjective mendacity'. The priests of 'scientific socialism' might similarly be excused their mendacity.

However, Trotsky's work deserves study. It is not sufficient to dismiss him simply as the butcher of Kronstadt.

Trotsky played a major part, as the Bolshevik leader second only to Lenin, in the effecting and subsequent consolidation of the Bolshevik revolution. As perhaps its most important theoretician/apologist Trotsky's interpretation of those events and his ideas must be countered effectively by anarchists. Trotskyism, and there is some justice in its claim to be regarded as the true heir to Marxism-Leninism, has considerable appeal to many people on the Left. When Trotskyists use slogans such as workers' control it is important that libertarian socialists, who might approve them, should understand the reasons why Trotskyists adopt such slogans and their particular interpretation and use of them.

Trotsky in his analysis of the nature of Stalinism, even though his explanations of the causes of bureaucratisation may be false, provides a well-documented indictment.

This article concentrates on a critical analysis of Trotsky's theoretical formulations and necessarily refers to historical events since it was in these (or perhaps after these) that Trotsky sought to vindicate his ideas. In particular the article considers Trotsky's criticisms of anarchism. I must confess that my approach to Trotsky's documentation is not Trotskyist but, on the contrary, I hope, rational.

The anarchists, for their part, try to see in Stalinism the organic product not only of Bolshevism and Marxism but of State Socialism in general. They are against centralised State power. In fact, one branch of State Socialism, social democracy, after coming to power became an open agent of capitalism. The other gave birth to a new privileged caste. It is obvious that the source of the evil lies in the State. From a wide historical viewpoint, there is a grain

of truth in this reasoning. The State as an apparatus of constraint is undoubtedly a source of political and moral infection. This also applies, as experience has shown, to the workers' State. Consequently it can be said that Stalinism is a product of a condition of society. But this situation, containing nothing for the evaluation of Bolshevism or Marxism, characterises only the general cultural level of mankind. Having agreed with the anarchists that the State, even the workers' State, is the offspring of class barbarism and that real human history will begin with the abolition of the State we have still before us in full force the question: what ways and methods will lead, ultimately, to the abolition of the State?¹⁵

Trotsky was prepared to agree with anarchists that 'the source of the evil lies in the State' but anarchists would disagree with the 'ways and methods' he proposed and suspect that the word 'ultimately' allows for an almost indefinite postponement of the 'abolition of the State'. The Marxist tenet to which, as in the above passage, Trotsky continually refers is that 'Law can never be higher than the economic structure and the cultural development of society conditioned by that structure.'

Trotsky was therefore obliged in his theoretical formulations and interpretations of history to explain -

- why the Revolution occurred in an economically backward Russia;
- why the proletariat there had to seize the State power and itself carry through the bourgeois stage of economic development;
- what methods the proletariat had to use to seize the State power;
- how the Bolsheviks conceived of the workers' State or dictatorship of the proletariat;
- why it was impossible to construct 'a dying state, that is, a state in such a way that it immediately begins to die away and cannot help dying away' but a state which degenerated into Stalinism.

The Bolshevik seizure of State power in Russia

Trotsky argued consistently, against the orthodox Mensheviks, that Russia, although a backward country, might skip over the intermediate step of bourgeois capitalism in that the proletariat could itself seize the state power and itself carry through that economic development normally associated with capitalism. 'The laws of history have nothing in

common with a pedantic schematism. Unevenness, the most general law of the historical process, reveals itself most sharply and complexly in the destiny of the backward countries. Under the whip of external necessity their backward culture is compelled to make leaps. From the universal law of unevenness thus derives another law which we may call the law of combined development - by which we mean a drawing together of the different stages of the journey, a combining of separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms.¹⁶ An anarchist might applaud Trotsky's initial statement while doubtful whether the Marxist construct of 'laws of history' has any validity anyway. It is undoubtedly true however that 'a backward country assimilates the material and intellectual conquests of the advanced countries' and that in Russia there did exist an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms. (I personally dislike the assumption of superiority attached to the contemporary, rather than archaic forms where the value judgement is based on historical time/progress or an economic measure like the growth of production.) But it is equally true that the forms of protest and insurrection, as in any society and at very different 'stages', soviets/councils, factory committees, land seizures and co-operatives, developed by the workers and peasants themselves, were the natural responses to their real felt conditions and needs - how far any assimilation of international experience into the consciousness of the workers and peasants who after all made the revolution determined the shape and content of that revolution is arguable. (This is not to deny that international events such as the first world war were significant as causes of the revolution. Nor to deny the importance of internationalism.) Certainly too it was the workers and peasants themselves who breached the 'pedantic schematism' of the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks following the masses' lead. However Trotsky stopped halfway - the law of combined development may permit the revolution to occur in Russia but since it remained nonetheless backward economically there had to be catches. The success of the Bolshevik's regime in progressing towards socialism would be dependent on the international socialist revolution. This theme recurred - Trotsky used his law of combined development to justify the Bolshevik 'revolution' then later to explain the degeneration of the Bolshevik state. The law of uneven development allowed him theoretically to have it all ways - the Mensheviks were wrong because they did not take into account the forward stage elements, the Anarchists were wrong because they did not allow for the

backward stage elements and so on. Trotsky's historical science reads like historical opportunism.

The February revolution in 1917 was a spontaneous insurrection i.e. an insurrection without a political leadership. This Trotsky conceded - 'Arising "spontaneously" out of the universal indignation, the scattered protests, demonstrations, strikes, street fights, an insurrection can draw in a part of the army, paralyse the forces of the enemy, and overthrow the old power. To a certain degree this is what happened in February 1917 in Russia.' However he had still to insist for his history was an apologia, 'To the question, Who led the February revolution? we can then answer definitely enough: Conscious and tempered workers educated for the most part by the party of Lenin.'¹⁷ The fact remains that, Bolshevik or not, the workers were their own leaders. The workers - social revolutionary, menshevik, bolshevik, anarchist but for the most part non-aligned in any narrow sense - all had experience of 1905, of the war and of economic conditions and it was out of their own experience that the insurrection arose.. spontaneously.

The February revolution inaugurated the period of the provisional government and of what Trotsky called 'dual power' wherein the government was bourgeois but power below, in the factories, the streets, the land, was increasingly in the hands of workers, peasants and soldiers. The seizure of land and the establishment of cooperatives, the growth of the factory committees and the demand for workers' control, the expropriation of housing, the slogan of 'all power to the soviets' all occurred with increasing frequency during 1917. These were not an outgrowth from a political programme or inspired by the directives of a political party leadership. They were social forms developed by working people themselves and an indication of their impatience. (It is probably true that these social forms were most developed by those workers who were most militant and socially aware i.e. the vanguard, but later Trotsky and the Bolshevik party as the self appointed vanguard were to consciously put a brake on those social forms on the grounds of tactics but primarily because the success of those forms would not have permitted the exclusive political role of the Bolshevik party.) Paul Avrich in his 'The Russian Anarchists' documents this process. Maximoff too conceded that the growth of syndicalism in 1917 was not the consequence of anarcho-syndicalist 'leadership'.

Trotsky described the Kronstadt of May 1917 which by his own admission the Bolshe-

viks did not dominate, though he called Kronstadt a synonym for Bolshevism. 'In the political sphere the Kronstadt sailors were not inclined either toward manoeuvring or toward diplomacy. They had their own rule; no sooner said than done. It is no wonder that in relation to the phantom government they tended toward an extremely simplified method of government action. On May 13th the Soviet resolved: "The sole power in Kronstadt is the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies." The removal of the government commissar, the Kadet Pepelyaev.. passed off in the fortress almost unnoticed. Model order was maintained..'⁷

The anarchists called consistently for a second revolution and played a significant part in the abortive insurrection of the July days. The Bolsheviks came out in support of that insurrection, reluctantly, clearly in response to pressure from below, but primarily to restrain it. 'Only in July did the Bolshevik party, feeling the pressure of the masses come out into the street against all other parties' but '... if the party had renounced its own appraisal of the situation as a whole, and glided down the road to a decisive fight.. The workers and soldiers under the leadership of the Bolsheviks would have conquered the power - but only to prepare the subsequent shipwreck of the revolution.'⁷ The Bolsheviks were not yet ready for a revolution which as yet they were unsure of controlling. It is in this sense that Trotsky's statement that anarchists were incapable of distinguishing between the second and ninth month of pregnancy - should be appreciated for what it really meant.

Throughout the period, February to September, the Bolshevik leadership was led from below and was increasingly aware of its need to ride the tide of the people's demands if it was to assert its control over the second revolution. Lenin's 'April theses' set final approval on Trotsky's construct of permanent revolution. His 'State and Revolution', produced August-September, was almost libertarian. The Bolsheviks espoused the slogans of 'all power to the Soviets' and 'workers' control' so much so that some anarchists believed that the Bolsheviks were sloughing off their doctrinaire State socialism. Trotsky would write patronisingly - 'in the heroic epoch of the revolution the Bolsheviks went hand in hand with the genuinely revolutionary anarchists. Many of them were drawn into the ranks of the party.'⁸

By October the Bolsheviks were ready and

the second revolution occurred - four anarchists were members of the Military Revolutionary Committee led by Trotsky. But already many anarchists were uneasy for by September the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets were under Bolshevik domination. Nor was the Bolshevik espousal of workers' control to last long.

Trotsky wrote, 'The history of a revolution is for us first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny.'⁹ But while he recognised that the spontaneous insurrection of February constituted a revolution 'victorious even without a conspiracy' nevertheless "'spontaneous" revolution cannot transcend the framework of the bourgeois regime.'¹⁰ For him a revolution required a combination of conspiracy and insurrection. He wrote: 'The proletariat can take power only through its vanguard.. In the revolutionary vanguard, organised in a party, is crystallised the aspiration of the masses to obtain their freedom. Without the confidence of the class in the vanguard, without support of the vanguard by the class there can be no talk of the conquest of power. In this sense the proletarian revolution and dictatorship are the work of the whole class, but only under the leadership of the vanguard. The Soviets are only the organised form of the tie between the vanguard and the class.'¹¹ There is here the dangerous and mystical identification of the vanguard and the class and the Bolshevik assumption of grace. Since the vanguard 'crystallised the aspiration of the masses to obtain their freedom' the submission of the class to the vanguard's demands meant an acceptance of their own freedom. It becomes possible then to understand Trotsky's rejection of the idea of free soviets. Trotsky's statements make it abundantly clear that for him the Soviet form was in no way sacrosanct since Soviets were tolerated in form but not in substance. 'The problem of conquering the power can be solved only by a definite combination of party with soviets or with other mass organisations more or less equivalent to soviets.'¹² But the Soviets, used by the Bolsheviks to conquer the State power and in turn conquered by the party and subjected to its apparatus, were for the workers in 1917 the substance of their own actual or potential self-government. The programme with which the Bolsheviks seized power it took from the masses but the slogan 'All power to the Soviets' was for the masses an end in itself, a substance, whereas for the Bolsheviks it was a means to an end, a form to be given content by the party. It is important to remember that with all Marxist parties mass organisa-

- 7. History
- 8. Stalinism and Bolshevism

- 9. History (Preface)
- 10. History (Art of Insurrection)
- 11. Stalinism and Bolshevism
- 12. History (Art of Insurrection)

tions are essentially vehicles for the exercise of leadership, read 'manipulation', by a self-appointed vanguard.

Similarly with the factory committees or trade unions. For example on the subject of workers' control as a slogan in Germany he wrote 'workers' control is a sort of economic dual power'; 'the working class may be prepared to fight for the abolition of business secrecy and for control over banks, commerce and production before they have reached an understanding of the need for the revolutionary conquest of power'; 'the control is a transitional measure... and conceivable only as a bridge to the revolutionary nationalisation of production' for 'workers' management of industry, even in its initial steps, proceeds from above, for it is inseparable from state power and the general economic plan.¹³ This is the position which the varieties of Trotskyism still hold. Workers' control might continue into a socialist state but subject to the state power.

The chapter on the 'Art of Insurrection' is worth reading in his 'History of the Russian Revolution'. The role of the vanguard in Marxist-Leninist theory was well stated. Conspiracy was and is undoubtedly essential to a Bolshevik revolution. But, Trotsky protested, 'No one has either shown in practice or tried to explain articulately on paper how the proletariat can seize power without the political leadership of a party that knows what it wants.' The people however did not want to seize political power; they wanted to replace it. Further, the nature of the



Red Guards during the fighting for the Crimea,

Jan. 1918.

Bolshevik seizure and consolidation of the State power in Russia itself precluded the possible developments which might have answered Trotsky's challenge.

Trotsky's 'construction' of a Worker's State¹⁴

In 'Socialism and the State' Trotsky assumed the truth of Lenin's construction of a dying state based on (1) election subject to recall at any time (2) equal wages for bureaucrats and workers and (3) all to fulfil functions of control or supervision so that no one may become a permanent bureaucrat. Trotsky rightly exposed the myth of the bourgeois state as a regulating or adjusting mechanism between interest groups by insisting rightly that the bourgeois state necessarily adjusts in favour of the possessing class. A revolution must therefore be bourgeois if it creates and reinforces a new bureaucracy which, even if it does not own, so effectively controls without reference to persons outside its own ranks that it becomes a possessing class. The dictatorship of the proletariat as a State necessarily 'adjusts', this Trotsky conceded, but Lenin's principles if implemented would prevent a bourgeois reaction. However the construction of this dying state was 'necessarily' postponed because of the exigencies of civil war, the exhaustion of the economy etc..

The State, according to Trotsky, would be necessary so long as economic development was below that at which work ceased to be a burden and at which everyone could be provided with as much in material terms as he needed. He did not however define effectively what constituted 'burden' in work or analyse the increasingly important question of what constitutes 'needs'. Therefore the essential question, at what level of production will the State 'cease', must remain unanswered or be recognised for the nonsense it is. Trotsky's postulate was therefore an act of faith and in effect a means of postponing indefinitely the State's demise. So long then as economic development was below the hypothesised level necessary for the State's death the Worker's State must act as a stimulator to that development and in the transitional phase to socialism/communism utilise a bourgeois system of labour payment. The Worker's State in Russia therefore had to have a dual character, socialistic in property ownership; bourgeois in goods distribution. But the Bolshevik state was not socialistic in property ownership since the State was its main defender and acted as a stimulator of production, therefore necessarily coercing those supposed to own. The State could not have dual character since it controlled both production and distribution. If production were genuinely

13. Workers Control of Production

14. Revolution Betrayed (Socialism and State)

socialised in soviets or factory councils then they must also control distribution in association with others.. any administrative apparatus would then co-ordinate or adjust between groups, not over groups. The idea of external stimulation of production implies a management/bureaucratic function outside the Soviet or factory council. However Trotsky recognised the danger.. 'If the State does not die away.. the bureaucracy rises above the new society.. a result of the iron necessity to give birth to and support a privileged minority so long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality' and 'Bureaucracy and social harmony are inversely proportional to each other.'¹⁵ Trotsky's arguments as to why this iron necessity need not have led to Stalinism are reviewed below in the section on the degeneration of the Bolshevik state. But these seem again like special pleading after the event.. he had to argue that the Stalinist reaction was not the consequence of Bolshevism otherwise he would be implicated in Stalinism. Trotsky's own construction of a Worker's State admitted the need for a bureaucracy and his role in the consolidation of Bolshevik power strengthened the party apparatus.. the subordination of Soviets and trade unions, the ending of the factory committees in the name of labour discipline, the prohibition on all other parties. All of these Trotsky approved even if on occasion regretfully and all of these consolidated the nascent bureaucracy. Further the disharmony which grew inversely to the young bureaucracy was resolved by terror both by Lenin/Trotsky as by Stalin later.

By virtue of his own insistence on 'iron necessity.. so long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality' he could not criticise the existence of a bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.. all he could legitimately criticise was the nature of the particular bureaucracy which developed. Further if the bureaucracy was to be significantly different i.e. one preparing its own dissolution rather than a bureaucracy reinforcing itself, he had necessarily to allow consciousness a major role in the determination of forms and events in which case again a legitimate question is why this advanced consciousness required a bureaucracy in the first place.

The Consolidation of Bolshevik Power

The period 1918 to 1922 is extremely complex and I have chosen to select certain incidents particularly important for anarchists, incidents on which Trotsky wrote and in which he was involved.

a. labour discipline. Workers' control and

in many cases workers' management existed in many factories throughout Russia in 1917 and 1918. Such anarcho-syndicalism was incompatible with centralised economic planning and it must be admitted that some factories were inevitably indisciplined. By mid-1918 the Bolsheviks, and Trotsky, pronounced: 'The Soviets, the Trade Unions, the peasant organisations.. these are at the present moment the masters in the country. Formerly, comrades, we were living under the whip, the whip of bureaucracy; but that whip is no more. There are only organisations of workers and the poorest peasants.. When the railwaymen surreptitiously carry a load; when depots or, in general state property is plundered by individuals, we must denounce it as the greatest crime against our people.. against the revolution.. This new labour discipline, comrades, we must create at all costs. Anarchy will destroy us, labour order will save us. In the factories we must create elected tribunals to punish the shirkers. Every worker, once he has become the master of his country, must distinctly remember his labour duty and his labour honour.'¹⁶ The whip of bureaucracy was replaced by the whip of labour discipline.

b. the proscription of anarchists. The same speech to a workers audience contains references to the imprisonment of anarchists. 'Comrades, during the period of the revolution, under the flag of anarchism - as everybody knows and the honest idealist anarchist better than anyone else - a host of all sorts of hooligans, jail birds, thieves and night bandits have crowded in... Lots of plunder, heaps of gold have been discovered in their nests. They are simply raiders and burglars who compromise the anarchists..'

Trotsky regretted that a few honest anarchists may have been imprisoned, but sternly warned that it was up to the anarchists themselves to draw a clear hard line between themselves and the hooligan 'pseudo anarchists'. The tenor of Trotsky's speech contrasted markedly with his vision of a paradise in this world quoted in the final section below. However the proscription of anarchists was inevitable given that many of them had begun to call already for the third revolution. Trotsky's technique, of smear by association, is still common.

c. the prohibition on parties. Trotsky justified the prohibition of parties other than the Bolshevik with 'As far as the prohibition of the other Soviet parties is concerned, it did not flow from any theory of Bolshevism but was a measure of defence of the dictatorship in a backward and devastated country,

15. Revolution Betrayed (Socialism and State)

16. A Paradise in This World

surrounded by enemies on all sides.' Trotsky admitted that this signalled 'a tremendous danger' but only with the hindsight of the prohibition of factions which led logically from this. His clear admission: 'It is absolutely indisputable that the domination of a single party served as the judicial point of departure for the Stalinist totalitarian system'¹⁷ stands as a warning to all those who seek to limit freedom on the grounds of exigency or of a belief in their exclusive possession of the truth. However, inevitably, Trotsky called on his shibboleths to bail him out... the cultural level of Russia and the international situation etc... Further he was not consistently aware of the 'tremendous danger' because he often did identify the dictatorship of the proletariat with domination by a single party. Equally in the same pamphlet he identified the Bolshevik party with the 'aspiration of the masses' and this by exclusion permitted the suppression of other parties.

d. the Kronstadt episode has been well documented and I would refer the reader to Anarchy.* However Trotsky's 'Hue and Cry over Kronstadt' which is quoted in the first section of this article is worth reading for its particular mixture of sham science and invective. Trotsky was not on occasion averse from the falsification of history of which he was so eager to accuse Stalin. The pamphlet also illustrates the Marxist's capacity to write off whole sections of the people e.g. 'The petty bourgeoisie does not know concretely what it wants and by virtue of its position, cannot know.'¹⁸

e. the suppression of the Makhnovites. Again the episode is well documented and I would refer the reader to Voline's 'The Unknown Revolution'. Trotsky dismissed Makhno as a 'peasant bandit' and his movement as inherently reactionary, because petty bourgeois and peasant. Those who know of Trotsky's role in the suppression of the Makhnovites will appreciate his statement that 'he discussed with Lenin more than once the possibility of allotting to the anarchists certain territories where, with the consent of the local population, they would carry out their stateless experiment. But war, blockade, and hunger left no room for such plans.'¹⁹

The Degeneration of the Bolshevik State

According to Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution the international situation enabled the revolution to occur in Russia but then constrained its development. The importance given to the international revolution by both

Lenin and Trotsky cannot be doubted, even if one disagrees with their thesis, and was well documented by Trotsky e.g. in his 'The Draft Programme of the Communist International A Criticism of Fundamentals' 1928 and 'Socialism in a Separate Country' both of which abound with quotations from Lenin. Both were agreed that the revolution occurring as it had in an economically backward country could not progress unless followed by socialist revolution in Western Europe.

The triumph of Stalin, argued Trotsky, followed from the failure of the international revolution. The party degenerated into bureaucracy - Stalinism out of Bolshevism. Then however 'The Soviet bureaucracy became more confident the heavier the blows dealt to the working class. Between these two facts there was not only a chronological, but a causal connection, and one which worked in two directions. The leaders of the bureaucracy promoted the proletarian defeats; the defeats promoted the rise of the bureaucracy.'²⁰ This last point is certainly true and Trotsky's analysis of Stalin's 'international' policies and tactics, whether in Germany, France or Spain, all essentially based on the defence of 'socialism in one country', namely the Soviet Union, are instructive. International defeats could only serve Stalin's fortress socialism.

Trotsky maintained that if the Bolshevik party had at least preserved the correct internationalist orientation the degeneration may not have occurred. However, even if this were true, the question is not one of de-



Red Army soldiers reading newspapers.

17. Stalinism and Bolshevism

18. Hue and Cry

19. Stalinism and Bolshevism

generation but of the extent of that degeneration for Trotsky cannot escape the implications of his own insistence that law cannot be higher than economic development. Trotsky's theories on the seizure of state power and the role of the vanguard contain the seeds of totalitarianism and the state terror which were to find their consummation in Stalinism. Further the evidence (Leonard Schapiro 'History of the CPSU') suggests that Trotsky is incorrect in setting Stalin's party as an antithesis to the earlier party since there was a continuity between the administrators of the party apparatus i.e. at the operative though not the policy making level, before and for many years after October 1917 - the degeneration of the Party was therefore inherent in the nature of a party apparatus which Trotsky himself helped to consolidate in power.

Finally, however attractive and persuasive Trotsky's internationalist perspective may seem, that very perspective, as much as Stalin's, in reality presupposed the almost indefinite existence of the State. When the working classes have successfully revolted 'we shall turn the whole globe into one World Republic of Labour. All the earthly riches, all the lands and all the seas - all this shall be one common property of the whole of humanity, whatever the name of its parts... We shall create one brotherly State; the land which nature gave us. This land we shall

plough and cultivate on associative principles, turn into one blossoming garden, where our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will live as in a paradise.¹²¹ The destruction of the State was postponed until the apocalypse and even then one suspects the World Republic of Labour would be a Bolshevik-only paradise.

This article, inevitably not exhaustive but I believe substantially accurate, has criticised Trotskyism and by extension other varieties of Marxism-Leninism from a theoretical and historical viewpoint. The relevance of such an approach lies simply in that 'scientific' socialists use their theories and analyses of history to guide if not to determine their tactics and strategies in contemporary situations. It is therefore incumbent on those who believe in the capacity of people to organise and create their own self government, whether in the school, the factory or the council estate and who believe in the substance of such actual or potential organisations not as a means for the seizure of state power, whether by the ballot box or by some imagined revolution led by elitist cadres, but as developing ends in themselves, to learn and actively counteract the lessons of this sham science. Trotsky chose to call his indictment of Stalinism 'The Revolution Betrayed' - anarchists will appreciate the irony of his special pleading.

21. A Paradise in This World

Bill Shaw

BLACKBURN ANARCHS AWAKE!

Any anarchists living in the Blackburn, Darwen and Accrington area may like to know there is an Anarchist group (unaffiliated to A.S.A., ORA. etc) in Blackburn.

For more information write to :-

Keith SOWERBY at 150 SHORROCK LANE,
BLACKBURN LANCs. ok?

VOLINE AND TROTSKY

VOLINE (1882-1945) was a Russian anarchist who took part in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. After many adventures he was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1921 and spent the rest of his life in France. In his later years, Voline wrote The Unknown Revolution, a classic anarchist account of the Russian revolution, a work which has only recently received the attention it deserves. The following autobiographical extract was first published in Daniel Guérin's anthology Ni Dieu Ni Maître (1970).

In April 1917 I met Trotsky again. (We had known each other in Russia and, later, in France from which we were both expelled in 1916.) We met in a print shop which specialized in printing the various publications of the Russian left. He was then editor of a daily Marxist paper Novy Mir (New World). As for me, I had been entrusted with editing the last numbers of Golos Truda (Voice of Labour), the weekly organ of the anarcho-syndicalist Union of Russian Workers, shortly before it was moved to Russia. I used to spend one night a week at the print shop while the paper was being prepared. That is how I happened to meet Trotsky on my first night there.

Naturally we spoke about the Revolution. Both of us were preparing to leave America in the near future in order to return home.

In the course of our conversation I said to Trotsky: "Truly I am absolutely sure that you, the Marxists of the left, will end up by seizing power in Russia. That is inevitable, because the soviets, having been restored, will surely enter into conflict with the bourgeois government. The government will not be able to destroy them because all the workers of the country, both industrial workers and peasants, and also most of the army, will naturally put themselves on the side of the soviets against the bourgeoisie and its government. And once the soviets have the support of the people and the army, they will triumph in the struggle. And once they have won, it will be you, the Marxists, who will inevitably be carried into power. Because the workers are seeking the revolution in its most advanced form. The syndicalists and anarchists are too weak in Russia to attract the attention of the workers rapidly by their ideas. So the masses will put their confidence in you and you will

become the 'masters of the country'. And then, look out anarchists! The conflict between you and us is unavoidable. You will begin to persecute us as soon as your power is consolidated. And you will finish by shooting us like partridges...."

"Come, come, comrade," replied Trotsky, "You have a stubborn and incorrigible imagination. Do you think that we are really divided? A mere question of method, which is quite secondary. Like us you are revolutionaries. Like you, we are anarchists in the final analysis. The only difference is that you would like to establish your anarchism immediately without a preparatory transition, while we, the Marxists, do not believe it possible to 'leap' in one bound into the libertarian millenium. We anticipate a transitory epoch in the course of which the ground for an anarchist society will be cleared and ploughed with the help of anti-bourgeois political power: the dictatorship of the proletariat exercised by the proletarian party in power. In the end, it involves only a 'shade' of difference, nothing more. On the whole we are very close to one another. We are friends in arms. Remember now: we have a common enemy to fight. How can we think of fighting among ourselves? Moreover I have no doubt that you will be quickly convinced of the necessity of a temporary proletarian socialist dictatorship. I don't see any real reason for a war between you and us. We will surely march hand in hand. And then, even if we don't agree, you are all wrong in supposing that we, the socialists, will use brutal force against the anarchists! Life itself and the judgement of the masses will resolve the problem and will put us in agreement. No! Can you really admit for a single instant such an absurdity: socialists in power shooting anarchists? Come, come, what do you take us for? Anyhow we are socialists, comrade Voline! We are not your enemies...."

In December 1919, seriously ill, I was arrested by the Bolshevik military authorities in the Makhnovist region of the Ukraine. Considering me an important militant, the authorities advised Trotsky of my arrest by a special telegram and asked for his instructions concerning me. The reply, also by telegram, arrived quickly, clearly, laconically: "SHOOT HIM IMMEDIATELY - TROTSKY". I was not shot, thanks to a set of circumstances particularly fortunate and entirely fortuitous.

PROSPECTS OF ANARCHY



There is one point on which politicians across the entire political spectrum are agreed and which makes unlikely bedfellows of marxists and monarchists, democrats and diehard reactionaries: it is their vigorous and total condemnation of anarchy. Anarchy is universally used to denote disorder and confusion. "The anarchy of capitalist production" bleats one politician, "the international anarchy" chimes another, "Parliament is the sole barrier against anarchy" brays a third. This totally vituperative use of the word raises the need for an examination of what anarchists have in fact done and recommended through the ages.

I would maintain that there is a relation between the classical anarchists and certain trends in our society today. The basic tenets of anarchism can be seen as an essential factor in the prospects for anarchy in the modern age, the fundamental principles of anarchism have adapted to a changed environment. A severe handicap for anarchism has been its seeming lack of theory in the present world, but this situation is gradually being set to rights around us today.

It is clear that when authoritarians inveigh against "anarchy" they are not referring to the beliefs of those who call themselves anarchists. To be honest, there are anarchists who exploit the abuse of the word anarchy as evidence of the power and influence of anarchy in society. This is mistaken. No good can come from furthering an untruth; we have, it seems, to preserve even anarchists from "anarchy".

Those who accept the stereotype of the anarchist as the conspiratorial bomb thrower eschewing all organised action are simply blinding themselves about the real world of anarchism. What I want to examine is the growth and influence of anarchism in Britain today and, although it bears no resemblance to the image of anarchy widely created in the public mind, it is, ironically, a growth far more dangerous to the status quo than the false picture of "anarchy" referred to above.

It is not the violent and heedless creation of chaos or the sadistic destruction of life which interests anarchists; these are the province of government after all! Rather it is the natural development of unconnected social direct action, such as can be seen emerging in so many spheres of British life today. The major

theme of direct action methods of social struggle can be clearly linked to specific and identifiable historical roots; and furthermore the strength and importance of these various actions lies in their gradual formation into an interlocking network of co-operative if unco-ordinated endeavour.

The groups and movements described are often seen in isolation but it is only by viewing them as part of a framework of action that their power and significance can be recognised. It is this realisation that leads me to optimism as regards the prospects for anarchy: to the eye which sees this network of links and connections, the prospects for anarchy are good.

What, then, are these areas of anarchic practical action? I recognise that many who work in the areas I describe may not see themselves as I see them. But it is my contention that the tendencies I note are all part of an emerging pattern which is a vital movement for radical change in Britain.

First, there is the area of children and, in particular, the psychologically oriented world of child-rearing, and the progress of the child from birth through infancy to nursery, school and further education. Basic, here, is the question of children's rights and a recognition of the need for a respect for the child's own knowledge of its requirements; the importance of play as part of the learning process, and the movement for constructing adventure playgrounds; the healthy declarations of pupil and student power bodies, such as the Schools Action Union, and their wars against school uniforms, the cane and the examination system; the vociferous campaign for more student control of educational institutions and the curricula, backed by student action in the form of sit-ins and demonstrations. Relevant to this struggle is the experiment within schools by such as A.S. Neill of Summerhill and the modern free school movements and the possibly even more significant example set within the state school system by Michael Duane as headmaster of Risinghill school.

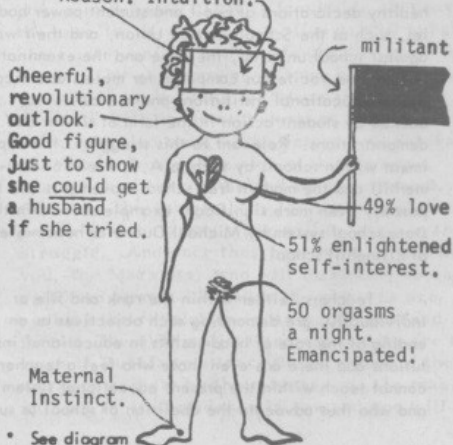
Teachers, either within the rank and file or individually, are demanding such objectives as an ending of the role of headmasters in educational institutions and there are even those who feel a teacher cannot teach within the present educational system and who thus advocate the abolition of school as such.

Secondly, there are the sexual liberation movements: the diverse groups in the women's liberation movement, the advocates of gay liberation or of bisexuality. I would suggest that a really new type of female is emerging in British society: they are, perhaps, forbears of an age of equality in which we shall witness the flowering of the true female personality.* The courage of the Gay Liberation Front and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality has a sure antecedent in the example of the anarchist Paul Goodman; most surprising, perhaps, in a society scandalised in turn by Oscar Wilde and Lord Montagu is the rapid rise of Gay Lib to its current social acceptance amongst many sections of the community.

Relevant to this is the current interest in the works of Wilhelm Reich, and the trend towards bisexuality and an honest admiration and acceptance of beauty and pleasure wherever they are to be found. From Havelock Ellis to Alex Comfort and from him to trendy sexologists like Dr Martin Cole can be traced the development of what the graffiti man calls Everybody's Liberation Front (ELF); here, a critical comparison must be made with the exploitation of sex as manifested by porn and its reflection in Lord Longford and the Festival of Light.

Thirdly, the civil liberties movement, which only approaches the central issue of this article. Libertarians tend to be anarchists with jockets and ties, yet they represent an area of action which is both radical and reasonably safe as regards security of employment. The spread of the climate favouring civil liberty has much to do with the National Council for Civil Liberties and the tireless energy of those who have built up the influence of this organisation. The popularity of the Civil Liberties and the new Women's Rights handbooks from NCCL reflects the value of concentrating on liberty. This can be seen as a vital concern for the quality of the individual's life. On the other hand the argument must be considered that

TRUE FEMALE PERSONALITY. MODEL A. Reason. Intuition.



the civil liberties movement is bourgeois and reformist. The attitude of the police towards dissent, the role of the Special Branch in British life and the position of Brig. Kitson in his counter-insurgency manual are all manifestations of threats to the civil liberty movement I describe.

Fourthly, the role of the Underground, its advocated escape routes, whether through pot, acid or other more way-out drugs. Timothy Leary's psychedelic experience and its source in Aldous Huxley's experiments with mescaline are factors here; the standard bearers from America were, perhaps, Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, their transatlantic counterparts, such as Richard Neville are also relevant. The part played by the mystical experience, visions, dreams, telepathy and the occult; forms of communion and communication are part of this scene which has its historical roots developing from Lao Tse to theosophy and psychological perspectives of those, such as Jung, who examine this area of thought. We find the theory of the poetic seer as the individual truly at terms with the natural vibrations and the source of enlightenment and guidance. This is the basis of "the age of Aquarius" and peripheral to it are such influences as Henry Miller's devotion to astrology and J.B. Priestley's fiction in regard to time and "Saturn Over the Water".

Fifthly, we come down to earth with the development of the community action movement. Whether it is with the various squatter movements of direct action for the homeless, the claimants unions and the rights of those on supplementary benefit or the communes with their collective ideology, the thing that interests the anarchist is people sticking up for themselves and insisting on their natural rights. As in so many of the examples covered, the significant factor is people acting for themselves without waiting for some politico to jump on their backs and claim all the credit. Of particular relevance here is the increasing sympathy shown by community workers and even some radical social workers for community action groupings. This sympathy needs to be watched.

Sixthly, action by prisoners. Prisoners' rights organisations such as PROP have been demanding - with the support of direct action - an improvement of prison conditions and rehabilitation. There have been movements at individual prisons and borstals. The Radical Alternatives to Prison (RAP) and the more reformist National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) play their part, also, but most encouraging is the recent emergence of groups of Prisoners' Wives who are getting organised in the community. The valuable work of the Anarchist Block Cross in the field of prisoners' rights and the contribution of Amnesty International are also worthy of note.

Kropotkin observes that prisons are the universities of crime, but some modern revolutionaries have made the point that prisons can also become the uni-

versities of revolutionary criminality; that is the consequence of imprisoning both "straight criminals" and "political prisoners" which the state is already beginning to do. This is the moment for considering the question of crime and property. Proudhon's famous dictum that property is theft could form the basis of the analysis. Is it feasible to look to the breaking down of all institutions so that people are "treated" in the community? So that community care and service replace custodial sentences? * Problems of creating a society without prisons need to be viewed in relation to a radical transformation of the society in question.

Next, an area of the social struggle which needs to be more effectively linked with the other examples of direct action: the industrial struggle at the place of work, carried forward by the use of various forms of strike, the work-to-rule, sit-ins, work-ins and other methods of demonstrating workers' power. Whereas these industrial struggles are often involved with wage claims and the defence of workers' jobs, an historical line can be drawn from the strong pre-1917 syndicalist movement in Britain to the present mood of shop stewards. A study of the question of workers' control reveals the shop stewards movement as possibly the major basis for fundamental and radical change in Britain today. The Industrial Relations Act has played a major role in making industrial action more militant and political: a strike nowadays has been recognised as a challenge to government rather than employers.

The general situation must be viewed as developing from the lessons of the Russian and Spanish revolutions. Anarcho-syndicalism is the most tenable theoretical base for trade unionists in Britain today, with increasing use of social and sympathetic strikes; these culminate in a series of general strikes, ushering in the free society based on workers' control of the means of production and exchange.

Eightily, urban guerrillas. The Angry Brigade and the Stoke Newington Defence Group, with the influences of Baader-Meinhoff in Germany and others, the questionable tactics of the Irish republicans and the myth of the Free Wales Army. This relates, in the international sphere, to Che Guevara, Franz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral and organisations like El Fatah, Frelimo and the Tupamaros; the guerrilla struggles in Africa and Latin America are of particular interest

because of the social policies of Frelimo and the Tupamaros. The American Weathermen are possibly a reflection of the Vietnam war. The need to turn nationalist movements into revolutionary movements requires emphasis, with special reference to Africa. The question of violence is essentially tactical - the pacifist analysis of social change is woolly and blunted and easily becomes emotional.

A massacre by Black September needs to be set into perspective by the "legitimate and sanctioned violence of the State" as shown by the inhuman debilitation of Vietnam and its people by 852s. The dangers of violence leading to a loss of political vision and growth of hatred destructive to the ends of the social struggle need to be continually weighed against the requirements of self-defence.

Next, the emergence of black liberation movements seeking to combine *négritude* and black pride with a complete, all-embracing humanity. The role of Britain's race relations industry is part of an international hypocrisy by which capitalism benefits from apartheid in South Africa but simultaneously maintains pretensions towards non-racism. It is the process whereby capitalism uses racial discrimination in Britain to divide the working class and benefits from poverty wages in South Africa that needs to be grasped by libertarians.

The white negro position of Norman Mailer can be compared with Eldridge Cleaver's "Soul on Ice", both influenced by Bakunin.

Direct action with relation to sporting events, such as the various demonstrations resulting in the cancellation of the South African cricket tour of England, and the exclusion of Rhodesian athletes from the 1972 Olympic Games, link in with the struggle against racial discrimination. Of particular interest is the libertarian organisation of the anti-Springbok campaign as related by the Young Liberals ex-chairman Peter Hain in his book "Don't Play with Apartheid". The Young Liberals policy in general, as expressed in "Scarborough Perspectives" is of especial interest to anarchists.

Finally, the relationship of art to anarchic trends in society. In a sense one could argue that the community is catching up with the artist's appreciation of life, yet there are very few specific examples of artistic catalysts in the libertarian field. We have the Living Theatre, a number of fringe activities, also an undoubted increase in freedom both on stage and with television to a lesser extent. In music, jazz, reggae and rock are all social forces for change, yet the artist does not seem to be quite so involved as he or she might be from an anarchic point of view. The creative nature in all people benefits from freedom of expression and more artistic alignment with anarchism and direct action politics is constantly needed. The stress on individual creativity may be reason for the

* Still "offenders" and Good People deciding what to do with them? In a free society, if someone offends me a lot (it would have to be a lot to be worth starting trouble) I and any allies will kick them in the teeth or put salt in their coffee, but this will be a matter of people-to-people conflict not "justice" with goodies and baddies, and there'll be none of the hypocrisy of punishment masquerading as rehabilitation or care. The horror of prisons consists of (1) their cruelty and (2) their legitimized status, their licence to hurt. The latter seems worse to me; at least I hope anarchy will spare us righteousness. - Typist.

lack of explicit artistic commitment to social change. It is in regions at a certain distance from Art with a capital 'A' that we find some of the most exciting activities: the influence of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, the work of Adrian Mitchell, the music of Mike Westbrook and the outstanding George Melly. Since the theatre of anger only Joan Littlewood has pioneered libertarian concepts.

This survey of radical examples of linking anarchist forces in society does not claim to have revealed an organised movement with an identifiable headquarters and chain of command. Indeed if it had the argument would have been self-destructive and the elimination of such headquarters by the anarchists themselves would be a first priority!

Anarchism is the only viable philosophy that recommends that people should control their own destinies directly in every sphere of life. The author's own experiences associate themselves with the theme of this narrative: that these areas of action are anarchic in spirit and derive their philosophical background largely from anarchist classics and their influence. This thesis is based on three fundamental

assumptions. Anarchists work for a society without capitalism, without the state, and by means of non-parliamentary direct action. Historically the tenets of the anarchist credo serve the social struggle and the examples we enumerate adopt, to a greater or lesser extent, methods which are best described as anarchist.

Anarchy stands for the people liberating themselves, whether it is at work, at play, on the stage, in the sporting arena, at the social security office or in the prison. The development of a movement engaged in such unco-ordinated endeavours may seem desirable; but it may, too, be dangerous, since such a movement could develop an elite of its own with questionable motives. The anarchist's attempt to create a life-centred (as opposed to a death-centred) society demands that the bases of power be numerous, thus avoiding too much influence emerging in any one sector.

Libertarians today must work towards a knowledge of and sympathy with the entire spectrum of activities described in this survey and a strengthening of the combined effort they comprise. It is only by this means that the optimism expressed above for the prospects for anarchy can be fulfilled.

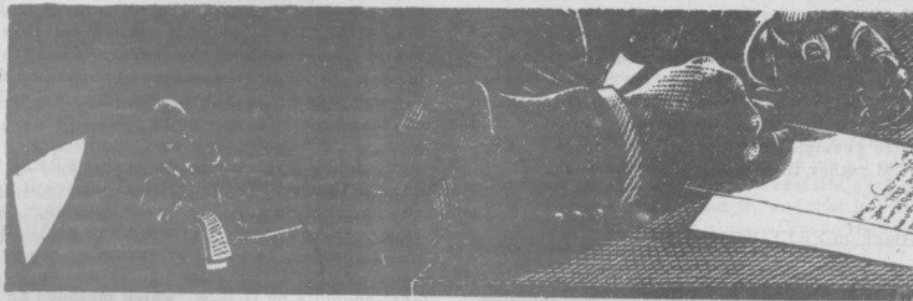
SPECIAL BURKE

Burke Special, BBC-1's jazzed-up social "science" programme recently spent two episodes on urban guerrilla warfare. In the second episode a panel of the public were provided with a fanciful and escalating vision of a breakdown in "law and order" in Britain. They were asked for their opinions on a number of obscene objects which the State has at its disposal for "dealing with" insurgents. A euphoric atmosphere was engendered by the Burke; it was excitement that he wanted and quick, nonsense answers from the panel on how to cope with the situation. The panel became very repressive, mostly near to straight fascism and were helped along their decision-making way by that ace idiot Richard Clutterbuck, the academic partner of Mosley's hero Frank Kitson. Clutterbuck had the text of an urban guerrilla tactical handbook, which he treated as some sort of Bible for all other guerrillas. In the background was the sole liberal voice of Dr. Falley who weakly murmured things about the law at intervals.

Rubber bullets, CS and CR gas were used, sound machines and disorienting lights were discussed. All these and worse in the State armoury. The fact that members of the population felt strongly enough to risk their lives in such guerrilla action was not men-

tioned. In short, it was a despicable programme which had the most sinister overtones of preparing the public at large for the type of action described. On ringing the BBC the next day I got eventually to a secretary of the producer Michael Black. I wanted to know the basis of selection for the panel which was making judgements. It was just members of the public who wrote in. None seemed to be working-class. No, the programme has an invariably middle-class audience made up of middle-aged housewives and little schoolboys. You wouldn't get some poor soul who would shudder at a TV camera writing in, would you? (Note the new definition of the working class!)

So, our little schoolboys have been given their war game, Burke has given them their comic fun. Yet it was all about people, this thrilling battle was involved with what Clutterbuck & Co. are preparing for. "The riots have been quelled," laughed Burke. "Less than a dozen people have been seriously injured by rubber bullets in Northern Ireland." At the end we were told the panel had made the type of decisions the guerrilla would want; the truth was they made the decisions that Burke wanted in order to make his sordid, sensationalist, dangerous programme more exciting.



OBSERVATION ON ANARCHY 12

"What's wrong with FREEDOM?" asks Jerry Westall. I ask what's wrong with ANARCHY. Why did you waste six pages - 20 per cent of the issue - on attacking another anarchist paper? Why did Jerry Westall write such an ill-informed, ill-tempered and ill-expressed article? The whole enterprise raises much more serious doubts about you and him than about FREEDOM. The Freedom Press Group do not wish to reply, but I do, if only to put the record straight.

I was not at all surprised that Jerry Westall should abuse me - he has done so many times during the fifteen years he has known me - but I was a little surprised that he should do so immediately after inviting me to join the Anarchy Collective. It seems odd, to say the least, for members of a group producing a paper to abuse each other in their own paper. Jerry Westall describes me as "a very confused individual"; I am unable to find a more suitable description for him. He also alleges that my "powers of memory after imbibing alcohol leave something to be desired" (that is presumably the kind of thing he thinks an anarchist paper should print); his own powers of memory are not in question because he has so little to remember in the first place.*

Those who are familiar with the British anarchist movement will know how to take Jerry Westall's article. Those who are not should know that it is a clumsy mixture of ig-

norance, inaccuracy and irrelevance. I wish to take up three aspects of it - the history of FREEDOM, the attack on FREEDOM, and the attack on myself.

History of FREEDOM

It is not true that "FREEDOM claims a continuous publication from 1886"; what is claimed is the continuous existence of the Freedom Press from 1886. It is not true that "between the 1920s and 1936 there was little anarchist propagandist activity"; FREEDOM was published monthly (with occasional gaps) from October 1886 to November 1927, and fifteen issues of a FREEDOM BULLETIN were published between April 1928 and December 1932, while a rival FREEDOM was published monthly from May 1930 to July 1936, before merging with the FIGHTING CALL in December 1936, when there appeared the first issue of SPAIN AND THE WORLD, published (like the old FREEDOM) by Thomas Keell (not "Keele"); so the gap in the publishing activity of the Freedom Press lasted barely four years and there was no gap in anarchist propaganda activity at all.

"Personal reminiscence is one way to enter the subject", says Jerry Westall. The only way for him, it seems, since when he attempts to venture beyond what he remembers, he makes a fool of himself. What he says of the 1944 split in the anarchist move-

ment is true of all his historical material: "Suffice it to say I don't know for sure really what happened or why, but I'm under the impression...". There is room for a critical history of FREEDOM since the Second World War: Jerry Westall's article, however, is not history but material for history. Most of it is mere gossip, but its point is to attack FREEDOM rather than to tell the truth about the paper.

Attack on FREEDOM

I do not wish to defend the policy of the Freedom Press Group, since I have long-standing and far-reaching disagreements with it myself, but I do wish to establish some facts which should be taken into account. "I've taken to mistaking the writing on a postage stamp for the weekly dose from Whitechapel High Street", sneers Jerry Westall - in a paper which has managed to produce only twelve issues in three years. Any critic of the Freedom Press Group should at least remember that they have been producing their paper every week for more than twenty years, and have produced a total of more than 1,300 issues over a period of nearly forty years. When Jerry Westall has achieved a comparable record he will have the right to sneer at FREEDOM.

"What's wrong" with FREEDOM, according to Jerry Westall, is "concentrated" in the fact that during his fifteen years of association with it "I've never been asked if I'd like to help edit the paper". Since he "would have refused such an offer in any case" and does not "want to be an editor of FREEDOM", it is hard to see why he is so upset - though he claims not to have a "personal grudge" about it. He suggests that the point is important because the same thing has happened "to quite a number of other comrades"; on the other hand, he seems to object to the number of people who have been invited to help edit FREEDOM: "I've seen editors come and go - one or two recently very rapidly...". On the evidence of Jerry Westall's article, in fact, the Freedom Press Group has shown considerable wisdom in not inviting him to join them.

Jerry Westall suggests that "FREEDOM is run by an elite of 'special people' who are rather above the average throng of rank and file anarchists...an elite who are out of touch and steadily grinding to a halt". The Freedom Press Group may be called many things, but it is absurd for anyone who knows them as well as Jerry Westall does to call them an elite. They are of course a self-perpetuating group,

but that is true of virtually every group which has ever produced an anarchist paper - including ANARCHY. Indeed if Jerry Westall is really concerned with the conduct of anarchist papers, he might like to turn his attention to the way ANARCHY left the Freedom Press in 1971 and has been run since then.

Jerry Westall complains that FREEDOM does not publish all the critical letters it receives. But no paper has ever done so - except perhaps INSIDE STORY - and ANARCHY itself does not do so. For example, two years ago ANARCHY 7 contained an article on workers' councils by D.R.R. which included an attack on the references - or lack of references - to the subject in various writings of mine. I wrote a letter replying to the attack, which was rejected; I wrote a shorter letter, which was ignored. I am not complaining about this, but mentioning it to illustrate the point that even the most scrupulous anarchist editors draw the line somewhere. Of course FREEDOM refuses to print some letters - I have often had the same experience as Jerry Westall - but I would suggest that it probably prints more of the critical letters it receives than any other anarchist paper.

Jerry Westall then tails off into vague accusations that "recently FREEDOM has completely alienated a fair section of active anarchists in Britain", is "failing the anarchist movement", "has been discredited within the anarchist movement", and is losing "the initiative of anarchism in Britain". Virtually no evidence is offered, and what there is concerns me.

Attack on myself

I have already mentioned Jerry Westall's personal remarks. Apart from that, he lists me among those who ("it is interesting to note") "contributed articles to the SWF publications"; in fact I contributed no articles to SWF publications, only several letters of which one was printed and the rest (it may be interesting to note) were not. He then lists me as ("I suppose") "part of the same crowd" as Arthur Ulloth and Peter Turner around FREEDOM, and promises "more of Nick Walter later"; all he actually offers later is some references to my articles on the Angry Brigade case. Since Jerry Westall's article is followed by another page on the dispute over my FREEDOM articles in the American anarchist paper THE MATCH!, since they have also been the object of attack by Albert Meltzer in this country and by Marcus Graham in the United States, and since this is the only issue which Jerry Wes-

tall actually raises in his attack on FREEDOM, I think it is necessary to emphasise what I said on this subject.

Altogether I wrote a score of articles on the Angry Brigade case in FREEDOM during 1971 and 1972 (not counting four in TRIBUNE and one in INSIDE STORY, as well as many letters to the press). Most of these articles were straightforward factual reports of recent events and publications. Only six of those in FREEDOM contained serious criticism - one of the policy of terrorism (23 January 1971), two of the practice of the Angry Brigade (11 and 25 December 1971), two of material published in the underground press (22 January and 12 February 1972), and one of a Defence Group publication (22 April 1972). Nothing I ever wrote on the case was critical of violence as such or of anyone on trial.

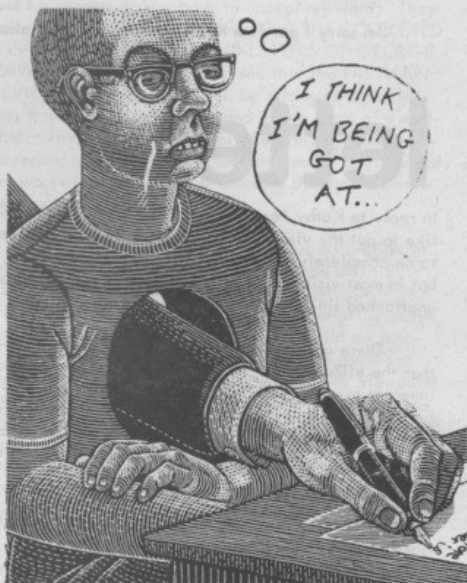
The only specific point which Jerry Westall raises is that "trialists at the Stoke Newington trial expressed sympathy with the AB, in the public mind (rightly or wrongly) they were seen as the Angry Brigade and the position of N.W. and FREEDOM subverted the spirit of those who were supporting people faced with 15 or 20 years in prison if convicted". This is sheer nonsense. In the Angry Brigade's Communique number 7 (March 1971) there was an appeal for "honest dialogue" about their activities; in the Defence Group's CONSPIRACY NOTES number 3 (April 1972) there was an assertion - repeated in A POLITICAL STATEMENT (April 1972) - that the Angry Brigade represented "the movement" as a whole. My critical articles were an attempt to continue this dialogue and question this assertion; but I never hinted in any way that those on trial could be identified either with the Angry Brigade or the Defence Group. Moreover, those "trialists" who gave evidence in court denied not only membership of the Angry Brigade but also agreement with its policies, and implicitly rejected the Defence Group's line.

Anyway, at the same time that FREEDOM printed my critical articles, it printed not only letters attacking them but also uncritical articles on the case - such as Jerry Westall's account of the Defence Group's pamphlet IF YOU WANT PEACE PREPARE FOR WAR (10 June 1972), singling out for praise sections which were included in the article on the Angry Brigade in ANARCHY 9. So FREEDOM's "appalling record on the Angry Brigade", as Jerry Westall describes it, consists in fact of an attempt to give a hearing to all anarchist views of the case and

at the same time to apply an anarchist attitude to a very difficult situation - much as it had done ten years earlier with the Committee of 100, much as it has tried to do for near a century, and much as any anarchist paper surely ought to do.

Of course FREEDOM is open to criticism; of course I am; of course we all are. But I am certain that Jerry Westall's article is not the way to go about it, and that it will do no good and may do some harm to the anarchist movement. He asks, "Should the energies and finances of anarchists be now devoted to building the influence of the libertarian journals other than FREEDOM?" Of course - but not to indulging in silly, petty, malicious attacks of this kind. "Oh dear! What has become of us?" he asks. What indeed, if that is the best he can write and you can print on the subject!

Nicolas Walter



Comrades. Anarchy Collective. I'd be grateful if this brief response to Walter's letter could be added at the end of his piece.

What is wrong with Mr. Walter? Is he unable to take criticism without descending to the level of describing my article as "silly, petty, malicious... a clumsy mixture of ignorance, inaccuracy and irrelevance"? Such a wild response indicates that my piece was bang on target* and I am more than content to leave readers to refer to my article "The Trouble

With Freedom" so that my approach can be compared with Walter's.

As regards the Anarchy collective: I asked Mr. Walter to join the Anarchy collective as he sometimes writes well on matters of interest to libertarians. I do not find it difficult to work with people if there are some areas of disagreement, in fact it is often stimulating.

On alcohol: after Mr. Walter's review of FLOODGATES OF ANARCHY in INSIDE STORY No. 10 (remarkably similar in approach to the spleen he vents above) I wrote a letter to that journal published in their next issue. It contained the observation: "I remember drinking at a bar between Nicolas Walter and Albert Meltzer and being appalled at the bullets, arrows and darts which passed between them". Walter's reply was: "Jeremy Westall's impression of our conversation is totally false, as I told him at the time." Which leaves me with the only charitable conclusion possible: Walter's "powers of memory after imbibing alcohol leave something to be desired."

I'm sorry I got Tom Keell's name wrong. I also

letters

In reply to Kathy Perlo's article in ANARCHY 13 I'd like to put the viewpoint of those whose interests seem to be completely ignored not only in present society but in most visions of a future society as well; I mean unattached single people.

There are quite a few of us who because of either the effects of our social environment or maybe an inherent psychological trait do not form sexual relationships at all during our entire lives. There may be many reasons for this, I am not going to give mine as it would not necessarily be typical of everybody in this category.

What I want to talk about is the economic relationship between this group and society in general.

In capitalist society, such a person is expected not only to support himself or herself, which is fair enough, but also to provide by way of taxation family allowances for those who have children. This of course is only the start of it. All the largely parasitical expenditure of the state falls on us more heavily than the rest of society, if we are stupid enough to work for an employer and don't either set up our own businesses where we can use all sorts of tax fiddles, or else turn to crime.

Of course everybody suffers in this society but most of the solutions offered for the alleviation of

regret that Freedom Press have no reply to my article and have to rely on a fence-sitter to respond on their behalf. They were quick enough to respond to an American paper over an unpublished letter, but when challenged in Britain they simply sulk and send along Walter as their messenger boy telling us, like an irate schoolmaster, that we can only joke about FREEDOM when we are older and wiser!

In general, I'd accept that "The Trouble With Freedom" was material for history rather than history itself. That is the tendency of a personal account as any historian knows. The expression of a mood and a feeling uses arguments that are self-evident or can be augmented by the reader. Such a non-didactic approach is not liked by Walter, which is hardly surprising.

Finally, I'm sure ANARCHY will publish better articles than my effort about Freedom Press. My piece was just a friendly shot across their bows.

J.W.

families' problems only increase the burden on single people.

Kathy Perlo's "solution" is a typical example. It is plainly based on self-interest. Apparently according to her people who are that way inclined should be allowed to breed and raise children at the expense of the rest of the community. Child-care apparently should be classified as work even though it produces nothing of value to anybody except the children themselves and their parents. Such a society we are told would operate by "voluntary work and free distribution". Well for a start I'm not volunteering! Why the hell should those who are unable to form proper sexual partnerships or have children work to provide for those who can because I can't see how else the system would work. No-one is ever forced to fuck or have children just as no-one is forced to drink. Why should not beer-drinking be classified as work? Why not free brothels for everybody with the prostitutes male or female classified as workers and so entitled to "free access to necessary goods"?

All this goes to show that one person's Utopia is not another's and that an imagination that considers only its own personal interests is not capable of creating a viable vision of a good society.

J.R. Wood
46A Regent Square
London WC1

more letters....

A REPLY TO ALBERT MELTZER

I have long been aware that Albert Meltzer disapproved of whatever I have written about anarchism; indeed, I have accepted the fact as an inevitable consequence of our differing viewpoints. Yet when I read his scurrilous article on me in a recent issue of ANARCHY I could not help feeling like Bakunin who, when a long-expected attack by Marx had been delivered, remarked to Herzen: "At last the sword of Damocles has fallen - and it has turned out to be a pile of garbage!"

I will come round at the end to the ritual accusation of "neo-fascism" which Meltzer brings against me in the peroration of his tirade. He bases his main attack (a) on the allegation that I utter certain falsehoods regarding anarchist history, and (b) that I have climbed to whatever scanty eminence and prosperity I may hold by exploiting my knowledge of anarchism. In fact, he really brings out only one specific accusation of falsehood, relating to my statements in ANARCHISM regarding the killing of pimps and homosexuals by Barcelona anarchists. The remaining accusations are entirely untrue, but I suppose they are interesting as examples of the kind of smear and argumentum ad hominem by which instead of trying to answer what a man says one presents him as what he is not.

Let us begin with Meltzer's statements against me personally. He begins by revealing a strange class bias when he remarks that I have risen "from a railway clerk to a professor" - as if professorships must be reserved for a special elite! Here, in any case, he is much out of date, since I taught in universities for a mere nine years, abandoned teaching in 1963, and since then have been not the "Professor Woodcock" to whom Albert refers, but a mere writer and editor earning probably about the same income as a London bookseller. Meltzer goes on to suggest that I was "accepted by the Establishment" (which is news to me), with "no other qualification to offer but his 'academic knowledge' of anarchism". In fact, anarchism never entered whatever academic career I pursued. I taught English because I am a poet and a critic, and I taught Asian Studies because I have lived and travelled long in Asia; I never taught a single class in any university relating to anarchism. My long-terminated "academic career" had no relation to my present political views or my political past.

Meltzer goes on to remark that out of the explanation of anarchism I have made "a pretty penny". He presents no evidence to support the statement, because he has none. Has he been given access to my publishers' accounts? To my own bank book? Is he in fact an

an anarchist Watergate? Obviously not, and in fact he talks out of total ignorance, unaware even that of the forty books I have published only six have in any way been connected with anarchism.

Next we come to other equally strange accusations. Meltzer states that Orwell's criticisms of "pacifists and anarchists" were "all based on the Woodcock circle". I am not quite sure whom Meltzer means by "the Woodcock circle", since at the time Orwell made the PARTISAN REVIEW attacks of which Albert is presumably thinking, my closest associates were in fact Marie Louise Berneri, Vernon Richards, John Hewetson, Ken Hawkes and Tom Brown. In any case, so far as Orwell's views of me are concerned, Meltzer and his readers do not have to accept my word. They have merely to look at Volume IV of THE COLLECTED ESSAYS, JOURNALISM AND LETTERS OF GEORGE ORWELL, in which they will see that the PARTISAN REVIEW dispute was followed by a long series of letters from Orwell to me couched in the terms of friendship. These show that Orwell did not long continue to regard me as politically unacceptable, and, indeed, we worked together on the Freedom Defence Committee, not long before his death.

There is a particularly malicious accusation in Meltzer's article, when he represents me as "hid[ing] his pacifism to the anarchists long enough to get on the press and build up his literary reputation by printing his mag at their expense". I never hid my pacifism from anyone, because it was through pacifism that I had become an anarchist; I stated my viewpoint quite publicly in FREEDOM, which in one issue contains a statement in which I dissociate myself from the non-pacifism of the other editors. I believed - as I still believe - that anarchism must be pacifist because the supreme act of domination over another man is to kill him.

Apart from the question of pacifism, I assume Meltzer by "his mag" means NOW. Since Vernon Richards has made a similar accusation, it seems time to settle the matter. A total of 16 issues of NOW were published. The first series of 7 were published by me personally before I became associated with Freedom Press. The eighth, No. 1 of a new series, was published by Freedom Press with me as editor. This was the only number that the Press published at its expense, and, since it sold out, a profit was actually made. There was disagreement in the Editorial Board of the Press, initiated by Tom Brown, over the content of that issue, and it was agreed that further numbers should be published by me, and merely distributed by Freedom Press, with me taking both the edi-

torial and financial responsibility; this arrangement is clearly shown on the contents pages of all issues after No. 1, since my name appears as publisher. Issues 2 to 5 paid their way, since it was the wartime period and books were in short supply; the last four issues lost money steadily, and I paid the deficit, assisted by a few friends among whom was George Orwell; Orwell liked NOW well enough to contribute to it one of his best essays, "How the Poor Die".

There are a number of lesser falsehoods in Meltzer's article, but I think I have shown his lack of credibility sufficiently well to ignore them and proceed to his real complaint. Curiously enough, though he begins by attacking me for my remarks on Makhno, he does not pursue that line very energetically, obviously because - since I was quoting the evidence of people who were in the Ukraine at the time of Makhno's activities and who were neither Communists nor Tsarists - he has not much ground to stand on. What intrigues him, and leads him into the fascinated speculations which innately puritans devote to such matters, is my statement in ANARCHISM regarding certain "executions" of "men and prostitutes by self-styled anarchists in Barcelona early in the Civil War. I made it clear - though Meltzer seeks to obscure this by some neat pedantic footwork about the difference between "gangs" and "hustlers" and by a sly dig at my acquaintance with Paul Goodman - that the acts were not committed by "the ordinary working class men of the C.N.T. or even by the more responsible F.A.I. militants", but by "professional pistoleros" working with the anarchists and by a few "fanatics". In other words, I never suggested that these acts were committed by the movement as an act of policy. But I based my statement that they did take place on the evidence of a reputable anarchist who was in Barcelona as representative of the French movement and who was troubled by what happened and by the way the propagandists of the movement covered it up. He was André Prudhommeaux, who wrote as André Prunier; Prudhommeaux told me this in Berne in 1946, and later in Versailles in the presence of the Spanish artist Lobo in 1950; he subsequently published the statement, but most anarchists in England at the time were as anxious as the representatives of any other political movement

to keep silence over embarrassing facts. As for Meltzer's arguments that neither Marie Louise Berneri nor Emma Goldman mentioned such events, (a) they did not visit Spain until after the events had taken place, and (b) as anyone who has been anywhere in the world in a complex crisis situation (like that of Spain in mid-1936) will know, it is impossible for any single person to know everything that is going on in every corner of the stage. So their failure to speak proves nothing either way. What is certain is that Prudhommeaux's statements were not welcome in Red Lion Street, and Meltzer is continuing the old whitewash.

Of course, if you whitewash the past, you have to smear those who see it differently in order to show up the contrast. I remember where that old accusation of "neo-fascism" - or "objective fascism" as it was also called - originated. It was first applied by the Stalinists to smear the Trotskyists, and later was applied to the POUMists and the Spanish anarchists. Of course, it was never more than a term of abuse with no objective basis in fact.

Fascism is a very specific and circumscribed political phenomenon. It is a cult of leader-worship (the Führer-prinzip) built around a mass movement with a pseudo-radical ideology and a technique based on terror. Marxists have claimed that Bakunin, one of Meltzer's heroes, was a proto-fascist; they said the same about Proudhon, and if they knew about Meltzer they would say the same about him. Of course, we all know the Marxists are talking rot, and so is Meltzer. He cannot answer my assessment of outdated historic anarchism - an assessment that is also a call to a new anarchism - so he makes his smears with the same zest as Joe Stalin or Joe McCarthy: it's merely a question of the colour of the paint you use. For anarchists to abuse each other is doubtless healthy, but at least let us invent our own vocabulary of political abuse, not borrow from our enemies!

So I don't call Meltzer a fascist; he isn't one. But he is in his own way a censorious, self-righteous bigot, and his eye for the truth is myopic.

George Woodcock

LILIAN WOLFE

Lilian Wolfe, we learn, has just died. She was 98 years of age and characteristically she was in the middle of writing to a friend when she had a stroke. Lilian was active in the women's movement in the suffragette days and had an involvement with anarchist activity in Britain over the majority of her life. Her closest contact was with Freedom Press and she worked behind the scenes for "Freedom" for many years. She never retired and until very shortly before her death she was still working for the War Resisters International and the NCCL. Anarchy Collective send our solidarity to her son Tom and to all those who will miss her quiet, methodical contribution towards the free society.

This is an open letter for publication.

It is very oppressive to experience on the television, radio, in newspapers and at work, a complete negation of our own existence (and millions alongside of us).

But it's even worse to have to take that in conversation and our daily lives with comrades.

This experience is a daily ritual in any woman's life - when general topics are being discussed we don't exist. We are not "workers", we are not "mankind", we are not "the electorate", we are not "the government", we aren't even "the fighters", "the oppressed", "the movement".

How many can stand back and see or hear a comrade or a group of comrades being attacked and do or say nothing? Of course we all fight or argue against this happening...EXCEPT when women are being attacked.

We all supported our comrade Salvador Puig, who was executed at the hands of Franco's government, but what of the hundreds of Spanish women who die EVERY YEAR from illegal abortions, at the hands of a government that will not allow us to choose whether or not we bear children every year of our fertile lives?

What of the women who work with us, demonstrate with us, the women who typeset the revolutionary articles we read, the women who print the papers, who cook the food, who bear the kids, who hold us together - have you forgotten us? The secretaries of the revolution?

Are we never to be seen? Do we have to remain in revolutionary purdah for all our days?

Can't you see that being a secretary or a

OFF OUR BACKS. WE MIGHT FIGHT
ALONGSIDE OF YOU BUT WE WILL NOT
CARRY YOU INTO BATTLE.

Charlotte Baggins
(a member of the Women's
Anarchist Group)

housemaid for a revolutionary male is just as oppressive as the same role for a boss. In some ways we are better off working for the REAL oppressor - for he has to pay us for our services; you expect us to slave for love, and revolutionary reward!

There is a joke I have heard from a woman, that she would rather be the wife of a middle-class straight man and wash his socks in a Hoovermatic, than live with a comrade and wash his socks in the sink.

In that statement is part of the problem; you free us from our "wifely appliances" but we are still chained to our "wifely work".

Probably we all know the cartoon of the revolutionary man striding out of the house, with political tomes under one arm and a placard under the other, saying to his wife, who is looking after their kids, "I'll be back for supper."

But if you've all seen it, if you've all heard this argument a hundred times before, why don't I see it? Why can't I feel I am with comrades when I am with you? Why can't I take part in a discussion, read a paper, see an anarchist entertainment WITHOUT being THREATENED, PUT DOWN, DRIVEN UNDER THE CARPET, HAVING MY EXISTENCE IGNORED? And by that I don't mean "present company excepted" when I hear anti-woman talk. I don't mean "of course it's important but it can wait".

IT CANNOT WAIT. WE CANNOT WAIT. WE WILL NOT WAIT. We have waited all our lives, our mothers' lives, our grandmothers' lives, and all time before. We carry the blame of original sin, we carry men babies, bosses, WE CARRY THE WORLD ON OUR BACKS.

WHY WORKERS CONTROL DOESN'T WORK IN YUGOSLAVIA



After years of ignoring or suppressing critics who pointed out that their system of "workers' control" left far too much power in the hands of managers, and encouraged bureaucracy and corruption on the grand scale, the League of Communists, Yugoslavia's ruling (and only) political party, has had the cheek to take over some of these criticisms as its own, adopting a pose of righteous anger just as if it, the ruling party, bore no responsibility for the state of affairs it now finds unacceptable.

That state of affairs was outlined by a series of statistics quoted in the party mouthpiece *POLITIKA*, showing how the influence of workers has declined and that of "administrators" increased. According to *POLITIKA*, studies were made of the composition of the "workers' councils", the bodies which are supposed to be the main expression of "workers' control". In all, 156,000 individual members of councils were involved in the studies. The results showed that in 1960 76% were skilled or unskilled manual workers. By 1970, although the composition of the work force as a whole had not changed, the proportion of manual workers on the councils was down to about half.

Worse, on the "management boards" (bodies set up by the "workers' councils" for the day-to-day running of the affairs of an enterprise) only a third of the members could be described as workers.

And even worse still was the composition of the Congress of Self-Managers. This was supposed to be a forum on workers' control by people actively involved in it. At the first congress in 1957, 61 per cent of the delegates were described as workers. At the second congress in 1971, only 24 per cent said they were workers - and as *POLITIKA* pointed out, many of these had long since left the shop floor for more comfortable and prestigious desk jobs.

THE INSOLUBLE DILEMMA

Now that the Party has decided to reform the

system of "workers' control" - they had to, in order to allow an illusion of participation to the Yugoslav working class and so keep themselves in power - they find themselves faced with a new problem. They have not, of course gone as far as to abolish managers. They have just taken legal proceedings against some of the most corrupt of the managerial class. But this has been enough to discourage some ambitious people from wanting to become managers. And so, in a system which assumes that management is necessary, and which consequently leaves decisions up to management, there is now a shortage of managers.

The Yugoslav ruling class is facing the insoluble dilemma of "participation". Enough "participation" to give the workers an illusion of "workers' control" will be too much "participation" for the "managers" who are an essential part of any system except... workers' control (the genuine article). Workers' control doesn't work in Yugoslavia for the same reason as it doesn't work in Britain or anywhere else - because it has never been tried!

THE GENUINE ARTICLE

Workers' control - the genuine article, not just a power elite allowing some workers to participate in the bureaucracy - involves as a first step abolishing "workers". That may sound like a paradox, but it isn't. Any system which accepts the existence of a class of "workers" and a class of "administrators" will tend to favour the latter at the expense of the former. That, according to *POLITIKA*, is what happened in Yugoslavia, though the mouthpiece of the ruling party could hardly draw the obvious conclusion!

So, everybody must be both "worker" and "administrator". Not only that, but workers' control must mean the abolition of all "trades" and "professions". I who am writing this am a bricklayer. So I have more status than a building labourer, but a lot less than the general foreman of a building site, who in turn has less

status than the architect who designs a block of flats without consulting either the people who will have to live in them or the people who will build them. Any attempt by a labourer to learn my job, any attempt by me to learn the general foreman's job, any attempt by the general foreman to learn the architect's job, even an incident as small as a bricklayer picking up a carpenter's saw, can bring down the wrath of management and trade union and all bodies with a vested interest in maintaining the present divisions.

But for us workers' control must mean that any worker can learn any job at any age. Indeed the whole concept of "jobs" - these roles which we are expected to play day in, day out, year in, year out - will have to go. There is no reason why a worker should not do what at present would be regarded as half a dozen different jobs in a week.

BUGGINS' TURN

Under workers' control we will all be "workers" - and I realise that some people in desk jobs will find the adjustment to doing a share of the manual work very hard at first, just as some men whatever their "jobs" will find it hard doing a share of the "women's work" - and since we will all be involved in administering the affairs of the enterprises with which we are concerned, there will be no need for a special class of "administrators". If people should nevertheless feel that there ought to be separate administrative tasks - and I personally do not accept that this is necessarily so - then the system of deciding which people should carry out those tasks should be, not by election, but by everybody doing them in strict rotation - "Buggins' Turn".

A system of election of people to carry

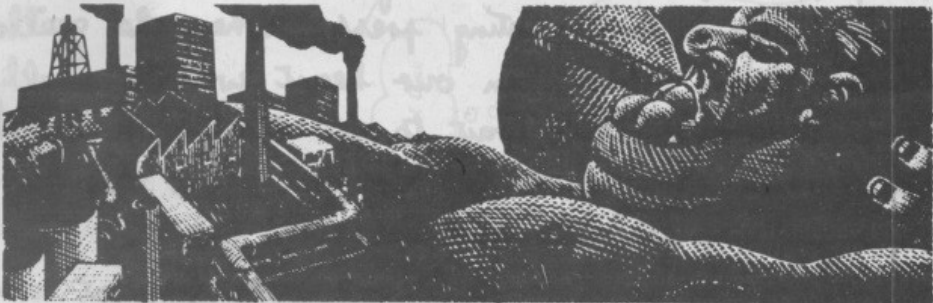
out administrative tasks would imply special status for the people carrying out those tasks - there are no elections for the job of dustman, for instance. In any case, a system of election favours people with a smooth tongue. It also favours people who want power, and people who are sure they can do administrative tasks. People who are unsure of themselves, or people who don't want power, are automatically discriminated against.

So the only way to be absolutely sure that a new class of "administrators" could not arise would be to organise the carrying out of tasks in a particular enterprise on a strict rotational basis (either alphabetical or some other kind) while at the same time making provision for, and indeed welcoming individual freedom of movement from one enterprise to another. As for how long an administrative task should be carried out by one individual, well this would be up to the workers concerned, but I think one day would be quite long enough.

ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTE

The abolition of special classes of "administrators" and "workers", the abolition of all trades, professions, and other role-playing, the downgrading of administrative tasks (if any) by having them done by everybody in turn - that is workers' control - and it is just the first step into the free society, a society which could not co-exist with the old society as "communism" co-exists with "capitalism", a society so different from anything which has ever existed, in Yugoslavia or anywhere else, that it requires a considerable effort for us to imagine it at all. And yet - once it begins to dawn on you that such a society really is possible, you'll never be satisfied with anything less!

Dave Coull





IF THE SHOE FITS



...Too many of us revolutionaries have accepted bourgeois standards and become careerists, professional revolutionaries, guarding our preserves and imagined standing.

...Today the anarchist groups and issue groups, within which many work, only mirror the problems of today's society. As a comrade put it to me, "I live in a manipulative, careerist society, and the so-called alternatives are as manipulative and careerist if less structured." I get put down all day by the daily compromises with necessity and I can't manage the same fight with the so-called alternative. There are many comrades who find that there is no room for them to participate. Their views are the same but most of their effort is put into surviving; they have no desire to be manipulated, mistrusted and judged by people who call themselves comrades.

To solve our problems we have to start from the bottom up. To use a quote from Jo Freeman, "In-fighting and personal power games rule the day. When a group is involved in a task, people learn to get along with others as they are and to subsume personal dislikes for the sake of the larger goal. There are lim-

its placed on the compulsion to remold every person in our image of what they should be."

For comrades seem to give each other no room - they judge them. Manipulation seems the main problem. If it were all conscious manipulation the problem would be easier, but manipulation is something we all learn from an early age. In the last analysis it does not matter if the techniques are conscious or subconscious: the result is the same. The only answer is for people to become aware of the methods of manipulation. Being aware at least gives one the choice. It is also possible to expose it, if it is recognised: so the only way to counter our own manipulative ways is for others to expose them.

To sum up the problem, the movement today is in contradiction to the words. The groups only mirror our reactions to today's society. Our behaviour mirrors our upbringing and the desires given to us by our parents. When you think about it, this is exactly the situation you would expect....

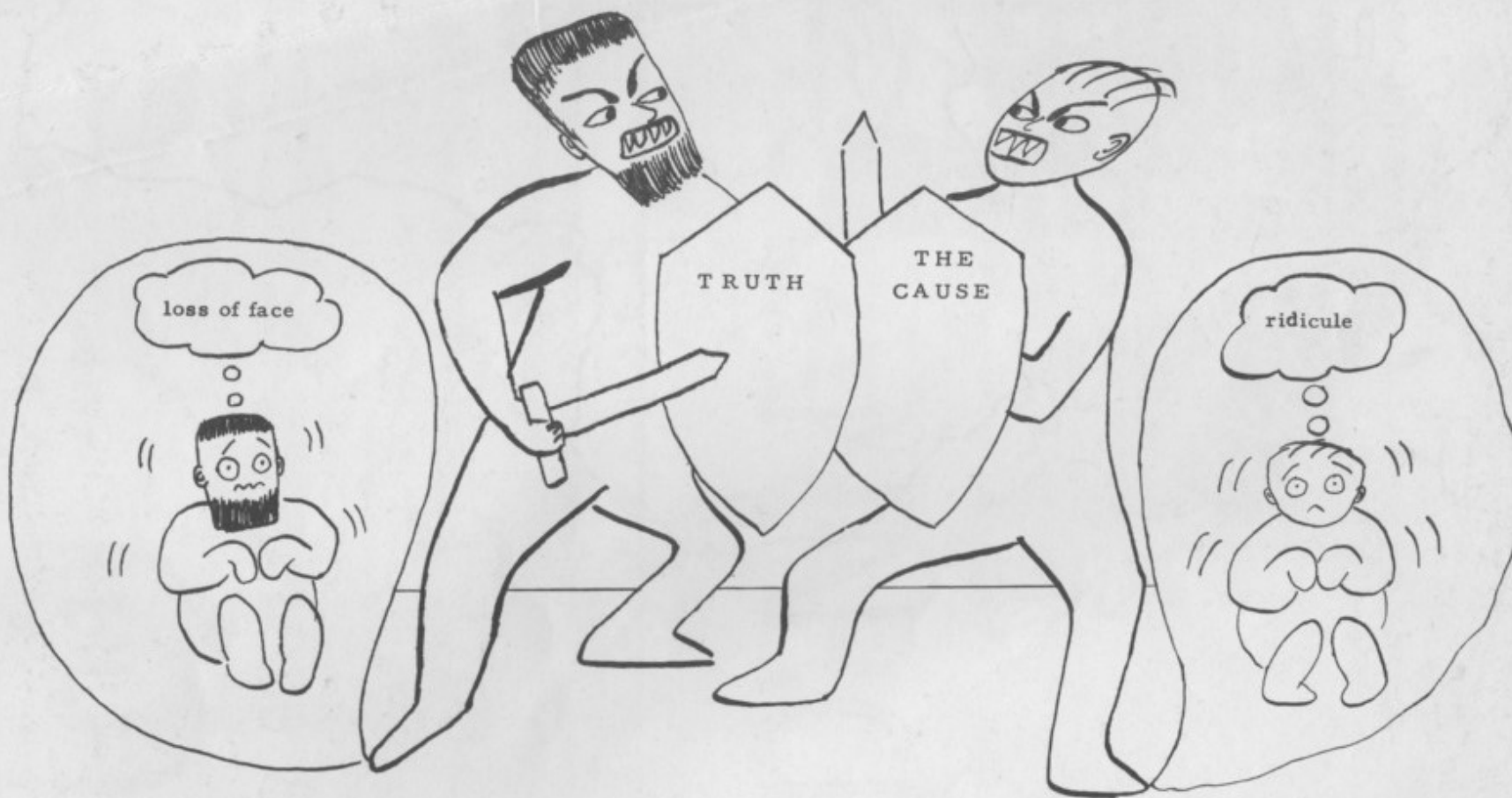
(excerpts from an article
by Trike)

WHAT, LATE AGAIN ?

Yes, well, there we were, four mad anarchists slaving away over a hot printing press....when the guillotine broke down. And then our heart wasn't really in this issue - we can't wait to get started on the next one (which shows both how we feel about this one, and how good we feel the next one will be).

We really do hope to become more frequent soon, long delays piss us off as much as they do you.

— the printers





CANCELLED



Portrait: Michael, Graham