

Nicolas Walter

Rudolf Rocker's *Anarcho-Syndicalism*

Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958) was born in Mainz, in the German Rhineland, into a Catholic family of skilled workers with liberal views. His parents died young, and he was sent to a Catholic orphanage. He was apprenticed as a bookbinder, and followed the trade as a travelling journeyman for several years. He became a socialist in his youth, and joined the Social Democratic Party; but he supported the left-wing opposition group of *Die Jungen* (The Young), was expelled in 1890, and soon moved towards anarchism. He visited several parts of Western Europe, following his trade and his political interests. He observed the second congress of the Second International in Brussels in 1891, began contributing to the anarchist press in 1892, and left Germany to escape police harassment in 1892. He lived for a couple of years in Paris, and then settled permanently in Britain in 1895.

Although Rocker was a Gentile, he became involved in the Jewish anarchist movement. He learnt Yiddish, lived in the Jewish community, and became the lifelong companion of Milly Witcop (1877-1953). He quickly became a prominent speaker and writer, on cultural as well as political topics, and for 20 years he was the most liked and respected person in the movement. In 1898 he edited *Dos Fraye Wort* (The Free Word), a new Yiddish weekly paper in Liverpool, for a couple of months, and then became editor of *Der Arbeter Fraind* (The Workers' Friend), a revived Yiddish weekly paper in London, and in 1900 also of *Germinal*, a new Yiddish monthly.

The Jewish anarchist movement became larger than the native movement in Britain. A federation of Jewish anarchist groups was formed in 1902, the circulation of the papers and other publications increased, and a thriving social club was opened in Jubilee Street in East London in 1906. Rocker was the most influential figure in the movement, representing it at the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam in 1907, and becoming a member of the International Anarchist Bureau established there. The Jewish anarchists were very active in the growing trade union movement, and Rocker favoured the development of anarcho-syndicalism as a new form of anarchist theory and practice.

In 1914 Rocker vigorously opposed both sides in the First World

War, and after a few months he was interned as an enemy alien. Soon afterwards the *Arbeter Frain't* was suppressed and the Jubilee Street club was closed. The Jewish anarchist movement in Britain never really recovered, and most of its members were later attracted to Zionism or Communism.

In 1918 Rocker was deported from Britain to the Netherlands, and he soon returned to his native country. He became a leading figure in the German and indeed the international anarcho-syndicalist movement. He was an active member of the Freie Vereinigung Deutscher Gewerkschaften (Free Association of German Trade Unions) and then a main founder of the Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands (Free Workers' Union of Germany) and an editor of its paper, *Der Syndikalist*. He was the moving spirit of the International Congress in Berlin in 1922 which led to the formation of the International Working Men's Association, and was one of its secretaries. He exerted his influence against anarchist support for the Bolshevik Revolution after 1917 or for Peter Arshinov's *Organisational Platform* (which advocated reforming the anarchist movement as a virtual political party) after 1926, and he led the libertarian opposition to the rising Nazi movement.

In 1933 Rocker had to leave Germany again to escape persecution by the new Nazi regime. He settled in the United States, which he had previously visited for lecture tours, and he continued to work as a speaker and writer, directing his efforts against the twin evils of Fascism and Communism. He spent the last 20 years of his life as a leading figure in the Mohegan community at Crompond, New York, and was the best-known anarchist in the country until his death. He supported the Allies in the Second World War, which caused a breach with some old comrades, but he continued to receive more admiration and affection than any veteran of the movement since Kropotkin or Malatesta.

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Rocker was a very prolific speaker and writer in both Yiddish and German, and he produced a great many articles and pamphlets and several books — especially a libertarian study of the conflict between nationalism and culture, biographies of the anarchist figures Johann Most and Max Nettlau, and a long autobiography. Many of his writings were translated into Spanish and widely circulated in Latin America, but not many appeared in English. Apart from a few pamphlets, three books were published in the United States — the ambitious study of

Nationalism and Culture (1937),¹ an essay in literary criticism called *The Six* (1938), and a popular survey of *Pioneers of American Freedom* (1949). Two more were published in Britain — a popular survey of *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (1938), and the section of his autobiography covering *The London Years* (1956). Some others were translated into English but not published — especially *Behind Barbed Wire and Bars*, an account of his internment during the First World War.

The most accessible of Rocker's books is *Anarcho-Syndicalism*. This arose from the Civil War and Revolution in Spain, which broke out in 1936 and brought anarchism and syndicalism back on to the political stage for the first time since the First World War and the Russian Revolution. It was also in 1936 that Fredric Warburg took over the publishing business of Martin Secker and made the new company of Secker & Warburg one of the main London publishers. He specialised in good fiction, especially by leading foreign writers, and in political books by unorthodox writers, whom he described in the second volume of his memoirs, *All Authors are Equal* (1973), as 'a miscellaneous collection of socialists, anarchists, radicals, independent socialists . . . pacifists and eccentrics', and among whom were several who later contributed to the anarchist press (such as Jomo Kenyatta, Ethel Mannin, George Orwell, Reginald Reynolds, and F. A. Ridley). He took a particular interest in Spain, commenting in the first volume of his memoirs, *An Occupation for Gentlemen* (1959), that 'it was the Spanish Civil War that obsessed me in the first months of the infant firm and dominated its policy for the next three years', and he published several books on the subject (the best-known being *Homage to Catalonia*). A salient feature of the Spanish situation was of course the existence of a mass movement of revolutionary syndicalists led by militant anarchists, and Warburg decided to publish a book on the ideology which inspired them.

In April 1937 — at a time of growing confrontation between the Nationalist rebels and their Falangist allies on one side and the Republican regime and its left-wing allies on the other, and also between the libertarian movement and the Socialist and Communist authorities within the Republic — Warburg approached *Spain and the World*, the new leading anarchist paper in Britain, with a proposal for a quick short book on anarchism. This was passed on to Emma Goldman (1869-1940), the best-known anarchist in Europe, who was then working for the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists in London; but, knowing

1. New editions appeared in the United States in 1947 and 1978, both distributed in Britain by the Freedom Press.

that she had neither the time nor the capacity to produce such a work, she decided to approach someone else instead.

As it happened, there was actually already in existence such a book, or at least the basis for one. This was a long introduction to the subject by Emma Goldman's lifelong friend and colleague Alexander Berkman (1870-1936), which had been written a decade earlier and published in the United States in 1929 in two simultaneous editions as *What is Communist Anarchism?* and as *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism*. Emma Goldman herself wrote the introduction for a new posthumous edition which was published in the United States in August 1937, so she was well aware of its existence. Moreover, it hadn't yet appeared in Britain, and could easily have been published in a revised form as a new book — indeed a shortened version did appear as a pamphlet a few years later.² But it was much too long for Warburg's purpose, it concentrated on communism rather than syndicalism, and it contained much material on the Russian rather than the Spanish Revolution. Anyway, for whatever reason, rather than trying to adapt or abridge Berkman's old book, Emma Goldman approached Rudolf Rocker in the United States for a new one.

She wrote telling him about Warburg's proposal and asking him to accept it, and commented:

. . . A work on Syndicalism in the English language is desperately needed now. It would do tremendous good. The very fact that a publisher asks for such a book shows that he too realises the importance of it. . . . Rudolf dear you really should do the book. And you should do it as quickly as possible. After all a short work on Anarcho-Syndicalism is not a work of science or deep philosophy. To reach large masses it must be kept in a light tone. Anyhow you and no one else are the man to do it. And I hope you will undertake it. It will be a real disgrace to refuse such an opportunity to present our ideas before a large public in England and America. Do you not think so? . . . Of course you must write it in English. If need be it can be revised here. . . . I feel certain if you made up your mind you could do it in a month. . . . Please, please dear Rudolf say Yes. . . . (4 May 1937)

Rocker liked the idea but he was very busy. He had only recently managed to get his magnum opus, *Nationalism and Culture*, translated into Spanish and then into English (the latter work being started by Alexander Berkman and completed by Ray E. Chase, a retired academic in Los Angeles), and he was at this time involved in the details of its publication in the United States. He, too, was much concerned with Spain; at the beginning of the Civil War he had written a pamphlet on *The Truth about Spain* (1936), and now he was writing

2. *ABC of Anarchism*, published by the Freedom Press in 1942 and reprinted several times.

another one on *The Tragedy of Spain* (1937). He was also trying to earn his living. He therefore replied after a few days that he would be able to start work on the new book in a few months (23 May 1937).

Meanwhile, since he was still writing in German, he had written to ask Chase whether he would be able to translate it into English. Chase replied favourably: 'Of course I'll be glad to do it for you, if you are sure that I am really the man for the task' (23 May 1937); and he returned to the subject in further letters: 'What of the essay on Anarcho-Syndicalism? Are you going on with it? Am I to translate it?' (15 June 1937); 'I should be very glad to have the job' (30 July 1937).

Emma Goldman replied in characteristic style:

I wish I had you here. Believe me I would spank you. . . . Don't you realise old dear that we never had such a golden opportunity as the offer of a London publisher to get our ideas before a large section of the British workers? And that there never was a more propitious moment than now to make Anarcho-Syndicalism known in this country? . . . It's you my dear and you cannot get away from it. Please please set to work on it as quickly as possible. After all you even need no material on the subject. You have got it at you finger tips. You should therefore be able to do it quickly. Won't you try? . . . (10 June 1937)

Milly Rocker replied a few days later:

. . . Believe me that he realise what it means to publish a book on Syndicalism by a publisher, where we could reach quite a different circle of readers, and important it is, it is just wonderful. He will do it with great pleasure, and will do it well, as soon as he is through with the work in hands, and just have one or two swims. Is that good enough darling? Say yes, and smile, do, please. (24 June 1937)

Emma Goldman passed the news of Rocker's acceptance on to Warburg, and sent his contract on to Rocker, who signed and returned it at once — though he changed the delivery date from August to September. She wrote several more letters during the next few months, suggesting what he should write and urging that he should write quickly (23 July and 11 September 1937), and then discussing the progress of the production and publication of the book (19 November and 30 December 1937, 4 January and 22 February 1938).

He wrote the 45,000-word text in German between July and October 1937, sending successive instalments to Chase, who rapidly translated them and sent them on to London, reporting progress back to Rocker: 'I am working on your *Anarchism* . . .' (13 September 1937); 'It's going to be hard to make the deadline you said you had been set — but I have kept up with you . . .' (14 October 1937). The job was finished in December 1937, the book was set up in proof by January 1937, and published in London in March 1938.

There were some private misgivings about the result. Emma Goldman wrote telling Rocker that she had complained about 'the

numerous mistakes' to Warburg, who had blamed the proof-readers (29 March 1938). And Chase wrote telling Rocker that he had received his copy of the book, and commented sadly: 'I have had time merely to glance into it. I note that there is no mention of a translator. That, of course, is unimportant, but it seems a trifle odd . . .' (5 May 1938).

But the public reception was good, and the reviews were generally favourable. The most authoritative independent one appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 23 April 1938 (unsigned, but written by E. H. Carr):

Anarcho-Syndicalism, as presented in this earnest but somewhat heavily written little book, is on the one hand a restatement of essential Liberal doctrine in modern terms and on the other a reaction against the form which the Socialist movement has assumed. It is anarchist in so far as it aims at freeing mankind from the coercion of the State, which is to be replaced by a federation of communities, and it is syndicalist in so far as it proposes to free the workers in the industry from employers' control and to place economic power in the hands of the trade unions. Mr Rocker, who is the philosopher of the movement, traces back its beginnings to Godwin and Proudhon and finds its modern inspiration in Bakunin and Kropotkin. It is interesting to note how many modern thinkers find in Kropotkin's study of what may be called collective security in the animal world the answer to the cruder political inferences drawn from the doctrine of the survival of the fittest.

Having set out his principles, Mr Rocker fortifies them by an account of England under industrialism in which all the shadows are energetically inked in. The narrative overstates the influence of Socialistic ideas in the England of the 'thirties and 'forties, just as it overstates the influence of the First International on the Continent a few years later. The present phase of the movement, we learn, is represented by the various national branches of the International Workingmen's Association. The most important of them is the Spanish Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), to whose work in freeing Catalonia from Fascist reaction Mr Rocker pays a whole-hearted tribute on which recent events have passed their commentary.

All this part of the argument is directed against political socialism which in Russia has led to the reestablishment of the coercive State in a strengthened form. The workman's power, Mr Rocker insists, is economic and its weapon is the strike. In this connexion we are told that 'the great general strike of the English workers in 1926 was the result of a planned attempt by the employers to lower the general standard of living by cutting wages.' The value of the book is much diminished by the exaggerations, of which this sentence is a flagrant example.

The book was naturally welcomed by the anarchist movement. A Spanish translation by Diego Abad de Santillan was published in Barcelona during 1938. In Britain Herbert Read wrote a long joint review of *Anarcho-Syndicalism* and *Nationalism and Culture* in *The Criterion* (July 1938). But the most authoritative review appeared, as

might be expected, in *Spain and the World*, on 18 March 1938, being printed in bold type and written by the editor, 'V. R.' (Vernon Richards). He began by describing the interest in anarchism created by events in Spain and mentioning some of the books already published on various aspects of the subject, and continued:

But what was really needed was a complete work on Anarcho-Syndicalism, in which the subject would be dealt with in all its aspects. In *Anarcho-Syndicalism* by Rudolf Rocker we at last have the book. It has no pretension of being complete in detail; that would need a much longer book. However, it is as well that the book is short, for by its brevity it succeeds more successfully in its aim: to briefly explain Anarcho-Syndicalism to the uninitiated — and the initiated. After a summary of the book, he concluded:

The above is but a brief account of Rudolf Rocker's excellent book. It is impossible, in the space available to bring out all the detail which it contains. *Anarcho-Syndicalism* should be read by all who wish to become acquainted with the subject, for an understanding of Anarcho-Syndicalism. So far the few books which have been written during the past two years have been generous in their distortion of the objectives and the work carried on by the Anarchists for the achievement of true Socialism; this is understandable, for the authors have been communists! *Anarcho-Syndicalism* on the other hand is written by one whose life has been dedicated to the Anarchist ideal and struggle, both in Germany and in America.

However, the book wasn't a commercial success at all (nor was *Homage to Catalonia*). Within a couple of years the Freedom Press acquired the remaindered stock (as of several other Warburg books), and sold it at a reduced price. It wasn't reprinted in Britain or published in the United States at that time; but after the war a new edition did appear in India.

Arya Bhavan, an elderly Bombay journalist who had first contacted Rocker and read the book in 1938, moved from socialism towards anarchism, founded a libertarian publishing house, and produced a series of reprints of anarchist classics. During 1947 he wrote several letters to Rocker. He told him that he wanted to publish *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, and added: 'Can you not send an epilogue to it as that will increase the value of the book in this changed circumstances' (14 April 1947). He wrote again a few weeks later: 'I am printing here your *Anarcho-Syndicalism*. It will be out in a couple of months. Can you not oblige me with an epilogue from you' (9 May 1947). When Rocker agreed, he replied that he was 'indebted to you for writing an epilogue for *Anarcho-Syndicalism*. The book is almost complete. . . . Much water has flowed under the bridge since you wrote *Anarcho-Syndicalism* and your epilogue will bring it to date' (1 June 1947). And when he received the epilogue, dated June 1947, he wrote again: 'I am trying to see if it can be added at the end' (24 July 1947). The book was

published by Modern Publishers in Indore in August, and did include Rocker's epilogue, as well as a publisher's introduction (and many more misprints).

Incidentally, Rocker never made any money from the book. His small advance royalty from Warburg (£25) just covered the translation fee for Chase (\$100), and he received nothing from India.

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In 1946 Rocker wrote an abridged version of the book as an essay with the title *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism* for Feliks Gross' American symposium *European Ideologies* (1948), consisting of slightly revised passages from different parts of the book and amounting to nearly one-third of the text. It was reprinted in James J. Martin's edition of Paul Eltzbacher's *Anarchism* (1960),³ extracts were included in two American anthologies — Irving Louis Horowitz's *The Anarchists* (1964) and Priscilla Long's *The New Left* [!] (1969) — and it was later published as a pamphlet.⁴ Extracts from the original book were included in another American anthology — Leonard I. Krimerman's and Lewis Perry's *Patterns of Anarchy* (1966) — and various extracts and versions have appeared in various forms from time to time.

During recent years there have been an expensive American reprint of the Indian edition (Gordon Press 1972) and a cheap (slightly abridged) British reprint of the British one (Phoenix Press 1987). What is needed is a full reprint of the text of the original British edition, together with the epilogue to the Indian edition and also some account of developments during the subsequent forty years. Rocker's account of anarchism and especially of its syndicalist variety is inevitably dated in its general emphasis and in some particular points, and it does include several minor errors (such as misattributing quotations to Jefferson and Byron or misspelling the titles of several non-English organisations), but after half a century it remains valuable as a short and clear view of a significant ideology by one of its best-known and best-informed adherents.

A convenient summary of the recent history of the international anarcho-syndicalist movement is given by C. Longmore's pamphlet *The IWA Today: A Short Account of the International Workers Association and Its Sections* (South London Direct Action Movement 1985). This describes the formation and early development of the International

3. The British edition was published by the Freedom Press.

4. Published by the Freedom Press in 1973 and reprinted in 1988.

Working Men's Association, and the crisis of the Second World War, as discussed in more detail by Rocker, and then takes up the story from the first post-war congress in Toulouse in 1951. The International Workers Association — the original English title was amended for anti-sexist reasons — declined to its lowest point during the 1960s, under the double pressure this time of Communism and capitalism. It revived during the early 1980s, following the revival of libertarian rebellion around the world during the late 1960s and especially the revival of the Spanish movement during the late 1970s, and at the congress of Madrid in 1984 it comprised a dozen national or regional sections.

In Britain, there was a vigorous syndicalist movement before the First World War with strong libertarian tendencies (see Bob Holton's book *British Syndicalism 1900-1914*, 1976) — especially among the Jewish workers in East London, where Rocker himself was so influential — and there were several attempts to form a specifically anarcho-syndicalist organisation during the 1930s. The Anarchist Federation of Britain turned towards syndicalism after the Second World War and became the Syndicalist Workers Federation in 1950, but this too declined. However it was later revived as the Anarchist Syndicalist Alliance and then in 1979 as the Direct Action Movement, which has produced many publications and has been involved in several industrial struggles.

However, the basic principles of anarcho-syndicalism — self-management, autonomy, direct action, spontaneity, mutual aid, libertarianism in general — are nowadays represented not so much by the militant working-class movement as by other social and political movements which transcend class loyalties. Obvious examples include peace and green movements, youth and student movements, women's and gay movements, communalist and cooperative movements, and the informal manifestations of the spirit of revolt which have revived the old attitudes of nihilism and bohemianism in the alternative and underground culture. If the traditionalist concept of anarchism expounded by Rocker has been continued in the International Workers Association and by such writers as Daniel Guérin and Noam Chomsky, more revisionist concepts which were pioneered by many libertarians during the nineteenth century, and which have been expounded and developed by several writers down to Murray Bookchin and Colin Ward in our own day, should also be taken into consideration in any attempt at a balanced account of anarchism. Nevertheless Rocker, in seeing anarchism primarily as a product of libertarian tendencies in the labour movement and anarcho-syndicalism as the final result of his process, was giving a true picture of the emergence first of the historical anarchist movement during the late nineteenth century and then of one

of its most important forms during the early twentieth century (though he himself had increasing doubts about the value of syndicalism, especially towards the end of his life). So his exposition of anarcho-syndicalism at the peak of its influence is both a precious document of its time and a valuable reminder in our time of the continuing importance of an essential element in the complex ideology of anarchism.

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Corrections

We have received some belated but welcome comments on Nicolas Walter's article on Guy A. Aldred (*The Raven* 1).

Judy Greenway, who is working on a study of the *Freewoman* and *New Freewoman*, points out that Harrier Shaw Weaver wasn't really involved until after the *Freewoman* ceased publication in 1912 (see page 83).

Mark Shipway, who has just produced a study of anti-parliamentary communism in Britain, points out that the single issue of the *Red Commune*, published in January 1921, was the organ of the Glasgow Communist Group and not of the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, which wasn't formed until Easter 1921, and that one of the four people imprisoned at the resulting sedition trial was not a member of the group but only the printer (see page 86); and that Aldred also stood as a parliamentary candidate in the Glasgow Bridgetown by-election in 1946 (see page 90).

John Hewetson
Sexual Freedom for the Young:
Society and the Sexual Life of
Children and Adolescents

Preface by Colin Ward (1987)

I must have been present, although I had forgotten the occasion, when at a meeting of the *Freedom* editorial group in 1951 (at the time when the paper was changing from fortnightly to weekly publication), the question arose of how an anarchist paper should treat a topic that was dominating the headlines of the popular press: a wave of child murders with, I assume, sexual overtones.

The particular editor who was given the task was John Hewetson, because he was a doctor and was therefore thought qualified to cope with such a topic. John was then in the early stages of his many decades as a general practitioner in poor, working-class districts of South London from which he recently retired. He was also for many years the medical officer for The Spike, a lodging for homeless men in Camberwell, against whose closure he fought a long and unavailing battle. There isn't much about the seamy side of life that he doesn't know.

So John went home and in between surgeries wrote five articles on *Sexual Freedom for the Young* which were published in *Freedom* during August and September 1951 and which Freedom Press gathered together in November 1951 as a pamphlet, reprinted in the following pages.

The most remarkable thing about his pamphlet is its date. It is hard to convey to readers in the late 1980s that in the early 1950s sex in general was a taboo subject still, and that to discuss the sexuality of children was to risk prosecution for obscenity. It is one measure of the distance we have travelled since then that it now seems absurd that this should have been a 'risky' publication.

John Hewetson was arguing a case, familiar to most of us, that behind the adult offender, convicted of terrible crimes, there is a lonely, unloved and sexually repressed child. Since every one of these cases dominates the headlines for a week or two and is then forgotten, I hope that some researcher has been gathering up the background stories of the forty-odd years since he was writing, as every one of the

horror stories that I can recall has been revealed to have just this kind of background.

He drew heavily upon the books that happened to be on his shelves: the works of Bronislaw Malinowski and Wilhelm Reich. The case of Malinowski is simple. He revealed to a Western readership in 1929 the carefree sexual lives of the Trobriand children and felt obliged to provide moralistic comments. But of course there have been published, in the post-Malinowski and post-Hewetson years, a host of anthropological studies of what were once known as primitive societies where everything that is taboo in our own society is normal, whether it is publicly displayed sexual conduct among children, public masturbation or inter-generational sexual relations. The trouble about the evidence that everything is normal somewhere and its consequent revelation of our own culture-based taboos is that a whole lot of things we can't approve, like the automatic assumption of male dominance, are similarly taken for granted in plenty of our chosen 'simpler' societies, too.

Similar problems arise with Reich. I take the ordinary 'common-sense' view of him, which, I fully admit, may be profoundly wrong. Here was a disciple of Freud who, like several others, sought to marry Marxian insights with those of psychoanalysis, and consequently earned the hostility of both factions. Long before he reached a position which I as a layman would describe as paranoid megalomania, he produced several very important books.

Considering the way the best-educated nation in Europe assisted its rulers in eliminating every last Jewish child in the populations it controlled, none of us can ignore or decry Reich's book on *The Mass-Psychology of Fascism*. It was a bold attempt at explaining the inexplicable. For exactly the same reason the arguments of his books on *The Sexual Revolution* and *The Function of the Orgasm* cannot be dismissed.

Interestingly, in giving this journal permission to reprint his pamphlet, John Hewetson remarks that 'I did a lot of work on birth control from my earliest days because anxiety about getting pregnant was tremendously common when I was first in practice. It was an enormous factor in preventing working-class women from enjoying their love-making, and this was especially true in those who most believed that they were more likely to "fall pregnant" if they had an orgasm, and who used to try and inhibit their orgasms. . . .'

Asked about his attitude to the immense changes in the sexual climate since his pamphlet was written, he replies: 'Birth control, especially the pill, must have been an important factor in the sexual revolution of the 1960s. But it is disappointing that sexual attitudes

have changed less than one had hoped. Certainly the Reichian dreams of liberation and mental and emotional health don't seem to have materialised. I wonder if the attitudes to sex enshrined in the words we use (discussed all too briefly in section 4 of the pamphlet) may be a more significant factor in a conservative attitude to sex and the act of love than one realises. I used to be rather depressed by terms like "having sex" rather than "making love" which the young of both sexes tend to use.'

What John is lamenting here is the fact that it is possible to be completely uninhibited sexually, but to remain brutally exploitive in sexual relations. This isn't what the sexual liberators had intended. I think it was a forgotten Scottish doctor, Ian Suttie, who coined the phrase 'the taboo on tenderness' in the inter-war years in a book called *The Origins of Love and Hate*. It is this quality of tenderness that John most misses in the partial and incomplete sexual revolution we have witnessed in the decades since his pamphlet was published.

But of course all revolutions are a disappointment to their harbingers. An American anarchist contemporary of John's, Paul Goodman, wrote a book in 1960, *Growing Up Absurd*, in the course of which he discussed the 'missed revolutions that we have inherited', one of which was the sexual revolution, about which he commented:

This has accomplished a freeing of animal functioning in general, has pierced repression, importantly relaxed inhibition, weakened legal and social sanctions, and diminished the strict animal-training of small children. The movement has not so much failed as that it is still in process, strongly resisted by inherited prejudices, fears, and jealousies. By and large it has not won practical freedom for older children and adolescents. The actual present result is that they are trapped by inconsistent rules, suffer because of excessive stimulation and inadequate discharge, and become preoccupied with sexual thoughts as if these were the whole of life.

Goodman went on to lament another, related, partial revolution, that of permissiveness. He wrote:

Children have more freedom of spontaneous behaviour, and their dignity and spirit are not crushed by humiliating punishments in school and in very many homes. But this permissiveness has not extended to provide also means and conditions: Young folk might be sexually free, but have no privacy; they are free to be angry, but have no asylum to escape from home, and no way to get their own money. Besides, where upbringing is permissive, it is necessary to have strong values and esteemed behaviour at home and in the community, so that the child can have worth-while goals to structure his experience; and of course it is just these that are lacking. So permissiveness often leads to anxiety and weakness instead of confidence and strength.

These comments strike a responsive chord in me, long after they were written, and so does John Hewetson's pioneering pamphlet. But

in introducing it to a different generation of readers, I have to relate it to current preoccupations.

The first of these is AIDS. This disease has arrived on our doorsteps as an absolute gift to the anti-sex brigade: God's retribution on the fornicating multitudes. One of the great benefits it has brought in its trial is the advertising on television and on full pages in the press of the condom as a prophylactic, sternly resisted for generations by the anti-sex lobby. But I was reminded recently, listening to Schubert's *Schwanengesang*, his setting of poems by Heine, that both composer and poet died of syphilis. We have had a daunting series of sexually transmitted diseases, and this has significantly failed to persuade people not to be sexually adventurous. There will come a day when the AIDS virus is laid to rest as a result of the new equivalent of Dr Ehrlich's magic bullet that conquered syphilis. Meanwhile *Take Care* is our best advice for the young.

The second of these contemporary issues concerns the activity known as 'child sexual abuse'. Here we are completely in the hands of our sources of information, usually the mass media. We used to be presented with the stereotype of a lonely man in the park, exposing himself to the girls or fondling the boys. He fitted completely the stereotype of the victim of a repressive childhood. We had a ready answer in the aim of providing a sex-affirmative ambience for our own children. Today we have a quite different stereotype, which is that sexual activity between adults and children is, like child murder, mostly a family affair.

The British are, at the time of writing, enjoying one of their periodic moral panics on this issue, and the rights of children to a sexual life of their own are certainly not on the agenda. Nor, evidently is any suggestion that they have a right to privacy, and a right not to have their genitalia or anuses manipulated and photographed by medical zealots bent on finding evidence of abuse.

In such a climate of hysteria it is useful to be reminded of John Hewetson's lifetime of gentle propaganda for what he, in his quiet way, calls a sexually affirmative outlook.

Introduction by John Hewetson (1951)

This short pamphlet originally appeared as a series of five articles in the anarchist weekly paper, *Freedom*. The articles themselves took origin from the newspaper publicity given to a series of child murders. Despite this somewhat ephemeral form, I have, in preparing its present form, made a few minor corrections but no other adjustments than were necessary to avoid needless repetitiveness. I am fully aware that the treatment is incomplete, that many major questions go unmentioned, and that many statements are made dogmatically without any proper clothing of facts. These are serious blemishes, but for a number of reasons it seemed worthwhile to issue the pamphlet as it stood, even in so incomplete and unsatisfactory a form.

There is, to my knowledge, no readily available discussion of the role of child upbringing — especially in regard to sexual development — in the motivation of sexual crimes. This pamphlet, if it does little more, does at least draw attention to the connection between taboos which society imposes and the behaviour of individuals exposed to such pressures and denials. The point which requires emphasis is that nothing can possibly be gained by moralistic judgements which assess individuals as 'wicked' or, in more modern usage, 'criminal' or 'delinquent'. It is only when we begin to understand how such aberrations come about that we shall see the way to dealing with them on a humane and rational plane. Understanding meets no more formidable opponent than the attitude of moralistic judging and condemnation.

But understanding defeats itself if it remains on a lofty theoretical plane. Not only must one understand that society is responsible for the behaviour patterns of its members; one must also feel responsible for society and play one's part in changing it.

To do this successfully requires something deeper than slogans and a few reforms. I have often used the term 'sex-affirmation' in contrast to the sex-denying, love-hating and life-fearing qualities which so abundantly characterise our society and social conventions. It is no empty expression. The need for healthy sexual functioning is something which everyone feels but — in our society — very few achieve. Indeed, the wonder is that in our sexually sick society anti-social acts are so comparatively exceptional.

Malinowski's account of the sexual upbringing of the Trobriand Islanders serves to throw our own practices into relief. His book is not readily available, and if they do nothing else, these articles provide a summary of his findings, which urgently deserve to be so much more widely known.

The appreciation of the Trobriand lessons to our society is, of course, no simple or easy task. The aim should be to adjust society to the needs of the developing child — and not vice versa. That means first understanding the child's needs, and then affirming them socially. It is not enough to adopt an attitude of 'tolerance' towards the sexual needs and activities of children: one must create the means to *facilitate* them and underwrite them socially.

To do this requires individual parents, nurses, doctors and educators who have themselves a sexually affirmative outlook, and have somehow managed to achieve sexual health in their own lives.

It will also require struggle, just as the early birth control movement had to struggle. And, like the birth control movement, it will find the anti-sexual attitudes of society hardened into legal enactments; for in this country, sexual relations below the age of 16 are regarded by the law as abnormal and a crime, however charming and beautiful they may be in an individual instance. The history of progress, however, is littered with reactionary and cruel laws which had to be broken and swept aside.

The reader will notice that I have made no mention of political parties. Few people, I think, will today expect help from this sterile quarter. The struggle for a recognition of the sexual needs of the young and for a sexually affirmative society rests on the shoulders of individuals and it is they and they alone who will carry it forward.

I have mentioned already my awareness of the sketchy nature of this pamphlet. Perhaps I may make amends in some degree by referring the reader who is interested to writers who discuss these questions more fully. First of all there is Bronislaw Malinowski's own book, *The Sexual Life of Savages* (Routledge, 1929). Then there are the works of A. S. Neill, who has done so much in this country for the recognition of children's needs. More than either of these, there is Wilhelm Reich, whose books *The Sexual Revolution* and *The Mass-Psychology of Fascism* are by far the clearest and most uncompromising discussion of the interrelation of sexual needs and social pressures. Finally, I would like to draw attention to many fascinating and immensely fruitful articles buried in the *International Journal for Sex-Economy and Orgone Research* and its successors, *Annals of the Orgone Institute* and the quarterly *Orgone Energy Bulletin*.

1 Child murders

Cases of murder of children have called forth in recent time an immense amount of newspaper publicity and sensational newspaper articles. In its turn this publicity has made the question of child murder a subject for everyday conversation and, for many parents, of increased anxiety. Not infrequently this anxiety is then passed on to the children themselves. One child recently told the writer that 'strange men strangle little girls', and went on to ask, 'What does "murder" mean?' It transpired that an adult had used this sensational matter as further means of instilling anxiety in order to exact obedience — a process which can be observed every day, and which is productive of most far-reaching harm.

Murder and sexual activities against children must inevitably produce horror and anxiety. But it is clear to an impartial observer that society's reaction to these crimes only consists of these responses in a superficial conventional way. It is easy to see that they sell the newspapers and that the avid way in which they are read tells of other unavowed and less respectable emotions. In brief, the way such murders are read and discussed is not normal. Normal people do not respond to horror and tragedy with half-concealed avidity and superficial comment. The enormous horrors of Belsen and Buchenwald, or Hiroshima and Nagasaki, called forth a similar abnormal response. It is the reaction of people without contact with reality.

If the response of the newspaper readers is superficial and unreal, so also are the remedies put forward. The law, of course, knows only one remedy: the alleged deterrent effect of capital punishment. But the general response to the problem of what to do about child murder is on an even lower level.

An impartial observer — and it needs little knowledge of psychology to recognise that this means one who does not need to project on to the criminal the energy with which he represses his own sadistic impulses — the impartial observer immediately sees that the violation and murder of children is an extraordinary and abnormal act. It is natural to love and cherish children: it is absolutely foreign to normal human impulses to harm them. Hence it could not be more obvious that people who murder children in this way are mentally abnormal: and it follows that there must be causes and that these can be investigated, that we are dealing with a psycho-pathological problem, and that powerful emotional responses and denunciations are quite out of place. And, let it be added, those who are able to take such an adult view of the problems are exactly those people who react in a normal deep way to the

actual tragedy — not those who lasciviously read their newspaper and then fall back into casually lascivious righteousness.

Yet even the reasonable, fairly well-adjusted people who approach the problem in an adult way also show, often enough, an abnormal element in their response. For the problem is of much greater magnitude than that of psychiatric assessment of sadism in individual cases. It does not need a display of statistics to show that child murder is always with us: so many for each five-year period, no doubt with rises and falls due to this or that external influence. And this fact, taken in conjunction with the abnormal response of society generally, indicates clearly enough that there are factors in our society which make abnormal sexual crimes inevitable, if sporadic, events. And it is surely clear enough that the sensational prurient interest these crimes provoke indicates that the impulses which lead on to sadistic crimes exist in virtually everyone.

We cannot today be satisfied with 'explanations' entailing expressions like 'wickedness', unless we extend such abusive condemnation from the emotionally sick criminal to the whole of society, and then move on to the problem of improving our society so that such abnormal impulses shall not be fostered.

Those who are honest with themselves and possess some insight into their own thoughts and actions will not require much argument to convince them that the problems of sexual crime are connected with the sexual repression involved in the frustration of normal sexual impulses in infancy, childhood and youth. The lascivious superficial response, the anxiety, and the quite unsuitable use of such abnormal threats to children all come from the same source. *And everybody with a feeling for life knows that this is true.*

Yet the same newspaper which denounces in over-righteous terms the child murderer may well carry another article denouncing attempts at sexual enlightenment in schools. It is evident that a radical approach to this problem requires a much clearer grasp of the whole problem of the social role of sexual repression. Still more important is the need for insight into the positive values of a natural living out of the sexual impulses in development.

2 The extent of sexual abnormality in society

It is not difficult to see that child murders and violations are a manifestation of sadism. And after half a century of study of sexual abnormalities the proposition that sadism is not simply cruelty but contains a distorted sexual element (to put it no more strongly) is almost

self-evident. That the fascination of such abnormalities for so large a proportion of the newspaper-reading public — even the most apparently respectable — represents a vicarious satisfaction of repressed sadistic impulses in the readers is a reasonable deduction. And if one looks dispassionately at people when they are discussing these matters all doubts will be dispelled. Often they are abnormally bland about it; or they are altogether too avid, and the emotion they show is partly suppressed as though (as is indeed the case) it contained a guilty element. A normal response to tragedy is quite rare.

Perhaps it may be thought that too much is being made of the public response to events which are not only abnormal and extraordinary, but also very infrequent, for all the publicity they receive. But as we have already suggested, the same non-adult response is also seen in regard to the enormous and overwhelming tragedy of war in general, or of its particular enormities as at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This point of war could be insisted on in detail, and extended to include wars in which the English public were not directly involved, such as the Sino-Japanese War or the Spanish Civil War. The same indifference-fascination was apparent in the case of Nazi Anti-Semitic enormities.

But, coming once again nearer home, the interest in cases of cruelty to children also presents an abnormal face, and once again the reality of vicarious satisfaction of repressed sadistic impulses becomes apparent.

Now sadism is recognised as a deviation from normal sexual development. What we see today, in these instances of abnormal public response to open sadism, is the extent of this deviation in a repressed form. The mass gloating, once it is recognised as such, is an appalling vista of the extent of the diversion of sexual impulses from their normal development. It means, in short, that sexual normality is unusual, and that abnormality is the rule, in our society.

This conclusion is so extraordinary and carries such far-reaching implications that it would require the most sceptical examination but for the fact that a similar conclusion is reached from quite different approaches. For example, it is common knowledge that most marriages are failures and that they do not bring sexual fulfilment. Then there is the fact that Freud's view that the neuroses are due to disturbances of the sexual impulse (in the broader sense in which he used it), though frequently attacked, has never been successfully overturned, and still retains its force. Major neuroses are fairly common, but in recent years the widespread extent of minor neurotic disorder has been increasingly recognised so that doctors estimate that between 50 and 80 per cent of the patients who come to them are suffering in some degree from neurotic illness.

Finally, a specific search for sexual disturbances in individuals quickly reveals the appalling extent of sexual misery.

This, then, provides additional background for the conclusion that the preventing of child murders (to say nothing of the other disasters which provide vicarious sadistic satisfaction to millions of people) involves a reorientation of the sexual attitudes of society. It provides additional grim clothing to the bare observation, so often made for so many years, that whereas men and women come to sexual maturity around puberty, sexual gratification is socially vetoed till many years later. The limitations which are then placed upon it, and the weight of sedulously inculcated guilt feelings which it is then made to bear, make our general conclusion regarding sexual frustration not merely seem no longer extraordinary but actually inevitable.

But social prohibitions on sexual activity do not begin at puberty. The anti-sexual attitude of our society presses heavily on its members from the day of their birth. Infants from their earliest years are taught to be ashamed of their genitals, that it is dirty to touch them, and that to derive pleasure from them is immoral and perverse and may be followed by disasters of a fairy-tale hideousness. A natural, free and innocent delight in sex is regarded with more horror and cruelty than the lubricious smuttiness of the lavatory-joke attitude to sex. Indeed, to most adults, the latter is regarded as normal though perhaps unmentionable.

The problem is stated thus, because to tackle it requires a sex-affirmative attitude to infant sexuality.

3 A sex-affirmative society

In the foregoing, an attempt has been made to indicate the ramifications of the sexually negative attitude of our society. We started from the most sensational of its results, the sex murder of children; but we should not fail to retain a proper sense of proportion. Far more important is the overwhelmingly widespread sexual misery which afflicts all civilised peoples and which stems directly from the sexually negative attitude of our type of society. It is this misery which underlies the apathy, the desire for leaders and the desire for power, which strangles the creative abilities and the capacity for joy of which human beings are potentially capable.

It is also this apathy that makes men and women easily lose themselves in despair and pessimism when they seek remedies for the evils of society. But it is as well to remember that the desire for sexual happiness is probably the most powerful driving force in human life

and that, however much individuals may despair, the search for a solution will never die but will be born anew with every generation.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the sexually negative attitude of society is derived from a sexually negative attitude in the individuals who comprise that society. The defeat of sexual desires has to be accomplished anew in every child that is born. It is accompanied by denial of the breast, often by denial of affection; by discipline with regard to toilet and the establishment of an identification of the excrements with ideas of filth and dirtiness; by punishment and fear of touching the genitals and deriving pleasure therefrom; by frustrating curiosity about the bodies of the parents and their sexual activity; and by inhibiting the free release of energy both in bodily activity and in emotional releases whether in affection or in anger — the whole mystique of self-control and 'not showing one's feelings'. And over and above all this preliminary defeat of infantile sexuality, there comes the rigid prohibition of masturbation, of sexual games, and finally of the sexual act itself. And when the child is able to understand the attitudes of its elders it begins intellectually to absorb the sexually negative orientation of society at its conscious level, and in its turn to pass it on to the next generation also.

We have mentioned these matters thus cursorily in order to show that an understanding of the mechanism of sexual defeat in children provides many points for attack. From a feeling of helplessness in the face of an overwhelming problem we can begin to discern practical ways of tackling it individually and socially.

But we also know that many readers will have ready an armour of scepticism ever ready to deprive understanding of the complementary will to action. Let us therefore try to undermine this scepticism by turning away from our own society to consider one in which the affirmation of sex is the naturally accepted attitude of everyone. Our own society is too close to us, and perhaps by examining the problem at a distance and in a simplified form we may overcome our own pessimism and derive hope for the ultimate success of our endeavours.

Our example will be familiar by repute to many readers. It is based on Malinowski's account of the sexual lives of the Trobriand Islanders (*The Sexual Life of Savages*, 1929). Familiar, perhaps, but how often fully understood or pondered over?

Children in the Trobriand Islands enjoy considerable freedom and independence. They soon become emancipated from a parental tutelage which has never been very strict. Some of them obey their parents willingly, but this is entirely a matter of the personal character of both parties: there is no idea of a regular discipline, no system of domestic coercion. Often as I sat among them, observing some family incident or listening to a quarrel between parent and

child, I would hear a youngster told to do this or that, and generally the thing, whatever it was, would be asked as a favour, though sometimes the request would be backed up by a threat of violence. The parents would either coax or scold or ask as from one equal to another. A simple command, implying the expectation of natural obedience, is never heard from parent to child in the Trobriands. . . . The idea of retribution, or of coercive punishment, is not only foreign, but distinctly repugnant to the natives. Several times, when I suggested, after some flagrant infantile misdeed, that it would mend matters for the future if the child were beaten or otherwise punished in cold blood, the idea appeared unnatural and immoral to my friends, and was rejected with some resentment.

These remarks of Malinowski serve to show how different is the naturally accepted relationship between children and adults from that which seems natural in our society and prompted his suggestion regarding punishment. He goes on to point out that 'such freedom gives scope for the formation of the children's own little community, an independent group, into which they drop naturally from the age of four or five and continue till puberty. . . . If the children make up their minds to do a certain thing, to go for a day's expedition, for instance, the grown-ups, and even the chief himself, as I observed, will not be able to stop them.'

This freedom extends also to sexual matters:

To begin with, children hear of and witness much in the sexual life of their elders. Within the house . . . a child has opportunities of acquiring practical information concerning the sexual act. I was told that no special precautions are taken to prevent children from witnessing their parents' sexual enjoyment.

The older children also allow the younger ones to witness their own sexual acts:

There are plenty of opportunities for both boys and girls to receive instruction in erotic matters from their companions. The children initiate each other into the mysteries of sexual life in a directly practical manner at a very early age. A premature amorous existence begins among them long before they are able really to carry out the act of sex. They indulge in plays and pastimes in which they satisfy their curiosity concerning the appearance and function of the organs of generation, and incidentally receive, it would seem, a certain amount of positive pleasure. Genital manipulation and such minor perversions as oral stimulation of the organs are typical forms of this amusement.

In quoting Malinowski, the same Western attitude as appeared in his remarks about punishment emerges in the use of words which cast moralistic shadows like 'perversion', and the implied surprise at the achievement of positive pleasure. Of course, babies and children do experience orgasm, unless the moralistic taboos succeed in obliterating the capacity for it.

There is, unfortunately, no space to indicate further the charm and liveliness of these children, which Malinowski brings out in abundance.

Even so, the contrast between the life described in these bare quotations and the solitary and anxious and furtive and inhibited sexual explorations of civilised children — when they have not been wholly suppressed by their elders — is only too plain. 'Small girls', writes Malinowski, 'follow their fathers on fishing expeditions, during which the men remove their pubic leaf. Nakedness under these conditions is regarded as natural, since it is necessary. There is no lubricity or ribaldry associated with it.' Again, the contrast with the salacious modesty of our own society is marked.

Malinowski, despite his cautious language, makes it quite clear that these sexual activities of the children are not merely tolerated by the adults, they are regarded as natural and proper behaviour. Following his description of their erotic pastimes described above, he makes this plain:

As they are untrammelled by the authority of their elders and unrestrained by any moral code, except that of specific tribal taboo, there is nothing but their degree of curiosity, of ripeness, and of 'temperament' or sensuality, to determine how much or how little they shall indulge in sexual pastimes.

In brief, their sexual development is allowed to follow a perfectly natural course.

The attitude of the grown-ups and even of the parents towards such infantile indulgence is either that of complete indifference or complacency — they find it natural, and do not see why they should scold or interfere. Usually they show a kind of tolerant and amused interest, and discuss the love affairs of their children with easy jocularly. I often heard some such benevolent gossip as this: 'So-and-so (a little girl) has already had intercourse with So-and-so (a little boy).' And if such were the case, it would be added that it was her first experience. An exchange of lovers, or some small love drama in the little world would be half-seriously, half-jokingly discussed. The infantile sexual act, or its substitute, is regarded as an innocent amusement. It is their play to *kayta* (to have intercourse). They give each other a coconut, a small piece of betel-nut, a few beads or some fruits from the bush, and they go and hide and *kayta*.

Even in our society, children sometimes have love affairs whose depth and seriousness is entirely overlooked by adults. Almost always, however, and inevitably, they end in misery and disappointment and so add their quota not to joy but to the mechanisms of repression. Is it necessary to point out, furthermore, that overt sexual activity in civilised children means often enough the juvenile courts and approved school, or even the misery of Borstal training till the age of 18.

Limitation of space precludes further illustration of the sexual life of the Trobriand children. But it will be in place to draw attention to an accompanying aspect of family life which is also in contrast, though less glaringly, with civilised life. This is the role of the father. We will use Malinowski's description:

The husband fully shares in the care of the children. He will fondle and carry a baby, clean and wash it, and give it the mashed vegetable food which it receives in addition to the mother's milk almost from birth. In fact, nursing the baby in the arms or holding it on the knees . . . is the special role and duty of the father. . . . Again, if anyone enquires why children should have duties towards their father . . . the answer is invariably: 'because of the nursing', 'because his hands have been soiled with the child's excrement and urine'.

The father performs his duties with genuine natural fondness; he will carry an infant about for hours, looking at it with eyes full of such love and pride as are seldom seen in those of a European father. Any praise of the baby goes directly to his heart, and he will never tire of talking about and exhibiting the virtues and achievements of his wife's offspring. Indeed, watching a native family at home or meeting them on the road, one receives a strong impression of close union and intimacy between its members. Nor . . . does this mutual affection abate in later years.

Such a situation can only come about where affections in childhood have not been brutally frustrated, so that the father treats the children with the same love which he himself received.

4 Society and the adolescent

Thus the Trobriand Islanders place no obstacles in the way of their children in respect of their sexual games and sexual activities. Neither do they surround their children with an atmosphere of 'morality', in the sense in which it is generally understood in our society, nor exact a compulsive obedience from them. The adults are able to do this because they themselves were brought up in freedom and love. Love for children exists, to be sure, in our society; but because it is combined with the idea that children must learn to obey *at any cost*, it becomes tempered on the children's side with resentment and on the parents' with irritation. In the upshot it becomes mixed with a good deal of hatred, often enough disguised as excessive affection, and becomes the motive for much undesirable behaviour. (It is not possible here to illustrate and develop these bare statements any further. To anyone who is accustomed to look beneath the surface and to understanding family situations they will, however, seem self-evident.) We shall see that a like atmosphere of freedom and approval is extended to the sexual activities of adolescents. With his customary brevity of expression, Malinowski describes this period thus:

As the boy or girl enters upon adolescence, the nature of his or her sexual activity becomes more serious. It ceases to be mere child's play and assumes a prominent place among life's interests. What was before an unstable relationship culminating in an exchange of erotic manipulation or an immature

sexual act becomes now an absorbing passion, and a matter of serious endeavour. An adolescent gets definitely attached to a given person, wishes to possess her, works purposefully towards this goal, plans to reach the fulfilment of his desire by magical and other means, and finally rejoices in achievement. I have seen young people of this age grow positively miserable through ill-success in love. This stage, in fact, differs from the one before in that personal preference has now come into play and with it a tendency towards a greater permanence in intrigue. The boy develops a desire to retain the fidelity and exclusive affection of the loved one, at least for a time. But this tendency is not associated so far with any idea of settling down to one exclusive relationship, nor do adolescents yet begin to think of marriage. A boy or girl wishes to pass through many more experiences; he or she still enjoys the prospect of complete freedom and has no desire to accept obligations. Though pleased to imagine that his partner is faithful, the youthful lover does not feel obliged to reciprocate this fidelity. . . .

Young people of this age, besides conducting their love affairs more seriously and intensely, widen and give greater variety to the setting of their amours. Both sexes arrange picnics and excursions and thus their indulgence in intercourse becomes associated with an enjoyment of novel experiences and fine scenery. They also form sexual connections outside the village community to which they belong. . . .

As time goes on, and the boys and girls grow older, their intrigues last longer, and their mutual ties tend to become stronger and more permanent. A personal preference as a rule develops and begins definitely to over-shadow all other love affairs. It may be based on true sexual passion or else on an affinity of character. Practical considerations become involved in it, and, sooner or later, the man thinks of stabilising one of his liaisons by marriage. In the ordinary course of events, every marriage is preceded by a more or less protracted period of sexual life in common. . . .

The pre-matrimonial, lasting intrigue is based upon and maintained by personal elements only. There is no legal obligation on either party. They may enter into it and dissolve it as they like. . . .

I have quoted Malinowski thus at length because he gives in these paragraphs an account of the development of sexual life which comes as near to a natural unfolding as one could imagine. Moralistic complaints are obviously quite out of place. If put forward they would show themselves openly to be motivated by the unspoken belief that sexual activity is, in itself, wrong.

As with child sexuality, Trobriand society finds the sexual activity of adolescents natural and desirable. But it does more than that — and this is especially important for our society — its social structure is modified to *facilitate* the needs of the young.

At puberty 'a partial break-up of the family takes place. . . . The elder children, especially the males, have to leave the house, so as not to hamper by their embarrassing presence the sexual life of their parents.

This partial disintegration of the family group is effected by the boy moving to a house tenanted by bachelors or by elderly widowed male relatives or friends. Such a house is called *bukumatula*. The girl sometimes goes to the house of an elderly widowed maternal aunt or other relative.'

Such an arrangement makes for much greater freedom for the growing children and serves to liberate the parents also. The contrast with our society is even more marked when one considers the difficulties which beset young people in large cities in finding a place of privacy in which to be merely alone, let alone to make love. The use of so inconvenient a place as the cinema whose only advantage is the darkness, but which allows only of a more or less furtive petting, vividly illustrates the difficulties in our society. Anyone who reads the *News of the World*, and many must be adolescents, knows that it is a criminal offence to make love with a girl under 16 years. Such girls are regarded as being 'in need of protection' — an elegant way of saying the remand home and reform school. It is a relief to return to Malinowski and the Trobriand Islanders whom he so unreasonably calls 'savages'. It is necessary to add that the places used for love-making differ at this stage from those of the previous one. The small children carry on their sexual practices in bush or grove as a part of their games, using all sorts of makeshift arrangements to attain privacy, but the adolescent has either a couch of his own in the bachelors' house, or the use of a hut belonging to one of his unmarried relatives. In a certain type of yam-house [a house for storing food — J.H.] too, there is an empty closed-in space in which boys sometimes arrange little 'cosy-corners', affording room for two. In these, they make a bed of dry leaves and mats, and thus obtain a comfortable *garçonnière*, where they can meet and spend a happy hour or two with their loves. Such arrangements are, of course, necessary now that amorous intercourse has become a passion instead of a game.

It is obvious that the lasting liaisons of youth and adult girls require some special institution, more definitely established, more physically comfortable, and at the same time having the approval of custom. To meet this need, tribal custom and etiquette offer accommodation and privacy in the form of the *bukumatula*, the bachelors' and unmarried girls' house. . . . In this a limited number of couples, some two, three, or four, live for longer or shorter periods together in a temporary community. It also and incidentally offers shelter for younger couples if they want amorous privacy for an hour or two.

By now, the reader will be glad to excuse me from making the comparison or rather, the contrast, with our own, supposedly civilised, society. Instead, I will point to an aspect which might otherwise go unregarded, but which is also illuminating in regard to ourselves. This is the obvious difficulty which besets Malinowski in his search for words to describe the sexual lives of the islanders. He is at pains to

stress their freedom and naturalness, yet he has to use words like 'amours' and, still more frequently, 'intrigues'; both words carry the implication for our ears of *illicit* love. The fact is that we do not have words to describe an innocent and natural love relationship, so long has a natural attitude been repressed.

An instance of the same revealing kind arises when Malinowski comes to describe the act of sex itself, for in describing the difficulty he unconsciously reveals the European's attitude. 'When the natives wish to indicate the *crude, physiological fact*' (without, that is, any moral overtones — the italics are mine — J.H., he writes, 'they use the word *kayta*, translatable, though pedantically, by the verb "copulate with"'. Now there is another briefer word which would also do; but, once again, the associations of this word, in our society, are unpleasant and reflect the smut and repression with which we surround sex. The context in which the word *kayta* is used by the natives shows quite clearly that for them it has no such overtones, nor would they regard intercourse as a 'crude, physiological fact'. In this respect the Trobrianders are considerably more delicate than European society, and even so valuable an ethnographer as Malinowski cannot escape the vulgarity of language which centuries of sex-negation impose.

5 Liberation of sexual aspirations

I have sought to describe the life of a primitive people who, in contrast to our society, adopt a natural and sex-affirmative attitude towards their children from infancy to adult life. Necessarily, such a presentation has been sketchy, but those who would like to fill in the details are referred to Malinowski's book.

The sex-negative attitude is so widespread that it is necessary to stress the *significance* of Malinowski's study. It shows that free development and satisfaction of sexual needs from the earliest years of life reveal no inherent biological complications. Our starting-point was the existence of child murder and the pathological response of our society to them. The following brief summary of Malinowski's findings by Wilhelm Reich (*The Function of the Orgasm*, 1942) indicates their relevancy to contemporary social problems:

Children in the Trobriand Islands know no sex repression and no sexual secrecy. Their sex life is allowed to develop naturally, freely and unhampered *through every stage of life, with full satisfaction*. The children engage freely in the sexual activities which correspond to their age. Nonetheless, or rather, just for this reason, the society of the Trobrianders knew, in the third decade of our century, no sexual perversions, no functional psychosis, no sex murder; they

have no word for theft; homosexuality, and masturbation, to them, mean nothing but an unnatural and imperfect means of sexual gratification, a sign of a disturbed capacity to reach normal satisfaction. To the children of the Trobrianders, the strict, obsessional training for excremental control, which undermines the civilisation of the white race, is unknown. The Trobrianders, therefore are *spontaneously* clean, orderly, social without compulsion, intelligent and industrious. The socially accepted form of sexual life is spontaneous monogamy without compulsion, a relationship which can be dissolved without difficulties; thus there is no promiscuity.

The same writer then goes on to stress a point of great social importance:

At the time when Malinowski made his studies of the Trobriand Islanders, there was living a few miles away on the Amphlett Islands, a tribe of patriarchal authoritarian family organisation. The people inhabiting these islands were already showing all the traits of the European neurotic, such as distrust, anxiety, neuroses, perversion, suicide, etc. . . . The difference just mentioned, between the matriarchal, free organisation of the Trobriand Islanders and the patriarchal, authoritarian one on the Amphlett Islands, has more weight from a mental hygiene point of view than the most intricate and seemingly exact graphs of our academic world. This difference signifies: *The determining factor of the mental health of a population is the condition of its natural love life.*

If we are honest, it is impossible to escape the conclusion from Malinowski's work on the one hand and the misery and sexual abnormalities of our own society on the other. It is easy, no doubt, to point out that the society of the Trobrianders is a simple one based on agriculture and fishing, whereas ours is a highly complex economy. And there are those (for example, Freud, in his later years, and J. D. Unwin) who contended that the repression of sexuality was necessary for culture to develop. These arguments cannot here be explored further — except perhaps to point out that if the development of civilisation be taken to include the development of modern weapons and the manifestation of child murder, then it is time to wonder whether 'civilisation' is a reward worth the repression of natural sexual impulses.

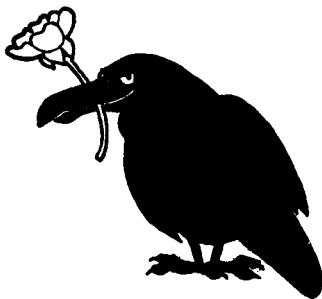
Actually, however, such objections do not in fact brush away the importance of Malinowski's study. Nor do they side-step the conclusions regarding sexual misery which a direct study of our own society compels. The simple fact is that every natural feeling urges that our society radically alter its attitudes to sex in general and to the sexual needs and activities of children and adolescents in particular. There can be no real doubt that the capacity for love and the capacity for fullness in life and work go hand in hand. (The credit for the full working out of this relationship goes to Wilhelm Reich, and the reader who wishes to pursue further studies is referred to his work, especially *The Function of the Orgasm* and *The Sexual Revolution*.) From a revolutionary and social

point of view, the recognition of these facts is of the greatest possible importance.

It was suggested earlier that the ability, which we now possess, to understand something of the mechanism whereby the sex-negative attitude of society leads to the development of individual unhappiness, the brutal suppression of natural impulses in children and the consequent destruction of natural family affection; the mass misery and apathy, the general incapacity for creative activity and productive work — the ability to comprehend these processes enables us to see the ways to combat problems of our time which before seemed overwhelming and unapproachable.

The problem itself — that of replacing a socially sex-negative attitude by sex-affirmation — is, of course, enormous. But the social work of tackling it is not impossible. It requires work in all activities regarding the upbringing of children, in antenatal clinics and postnatal clinics, in schools and universities, and in establishing facilities for contraception and the removal of other barriers to sexual fulfilment. Not least, it requires that continuous pressure by individuals which gradually alters the outlook of society in general.

An enormous task, undoubtedly. But whereas authoritarian concepts demand all the time that men and women should disregard and suppress natural desires and aspirations, the task we envisage is in line with natural desires, natural strivings. Whereas a structure founded on the continuous denial of human function — as our society is — must for ever be unstable, the establishment of a social environment for free development has the consent and the wholehearted, undivided energy of human functioning.



Gone with the Wind-up — Back with Full Sail

Black Flag began as a booster for Black Cross work which was hoped to be a ginger group in what was hoped to be a revived anarchist movement which turned out to be a chimera; faced with genuine activism the pacific and liberal element were soon 'gone with the wind-up'; we carried the main burden of anarchist activism with a few friends here and abroad. In the intervening years the movement has been revived, and the recent General Election in particular turned attention on the potential of the Anarchist movement. Many are turning to class struggle and direct action not necessarily because they are convinced anarchists but certainly because they are convinced of nothing else. It becomes vitally necessary to get the message across. At this juncture we find those who went with the wind-up are back in full sail.

The pacific and liberal element have crept back to form a phoney folksy 'anarchism'. The tiny London group that has taken over the Freedom Press and now consider they own it and have done so since 1886 and have for years been pleading poverty mysteriously have come into money. For years they have brought out one book a year — if that. Suddenly, with the publication of the 'Centennial' they are in huge funds — not reflected by the pathetic list of contributions in 'Freedom' or the abysmally low support and sales nor even by their traditional way of conning Italo-American workers into thinking it's still anarchist. The liberal-'anarchs' have numerous books appearing — all re-writing the past; an expensive quarterly *The Raven* — beautifully printed — appears (significantly with contributions by Herr Doktor Heiner Becker and Prof. George Woodcock) merely to boost the London Freedom group, 'out of respect and gratitude' to dead comrades but who are nevertheless slagged off viciously

if they did not toe a party line or happened to work for their living. Frank Kitz, possibly the pioneer of British anarchism, is rubbished; George Cores is treated as viciously by the worthy Herr Doktor Heiner Becker as Richards treated Sam Dolgoff in a review for disagreeing with him; unfortunately for the worthy doctor, Cores may be dead forty years but left an unpublished autobiographical snippet that exposes his lies. George Frost, a notable working class struggle figure, is reduced to being only 'Freedom's main contact in Leeds'. The Craven is we fear part of the blitz by the Amsterdam Institute, perhaps working with certain German institutions, to take over the anarchist movement. It cannot be a coincidence that at the same time the entire works of Kropotkin — as edited and interpreted by (guess who?) the renegade Woodcock — are to be published in Canada. The Craven reminds us in style and production of *Encounter* with a similar format, design, and a lesser- but would-be known type of intellectual gent writing.

Our warning to Anarchists everywhere is to be cautious of this type of smoothie approach to 'civilise' anarchism which emanates from the various continental Institutes funded by their respective governments. We have shown in Black Flag how the Amsterdam Institute has furthered the schism in the Spanish movement to the benefit of the State. For years we supplied it with free copies for its archives. Now we will not. We advise everyone to cut it off from supplies; these archives will be used against genuine anarchist movements — not just because the reading of them is confined to government and academic students but as a means of making bourgeois factions seem to be the true possessors of historic continuity.

from *Black Flag*

A reply to Black Flag

In the box is an unsigned article by Albert Meltzer which first appeared in *Black Flag* 174 (11 August 1987), following the first issue of *The Raven*. Albert Meltzer contributed many articles to Freedom Press periodicals over a period of 30 years, but has been campaigning against Freedom and the Freedom Press for the past 20 years. The longest of a long series of items in this campaign was Supplement 3 of *Black Flag* 166 (25 January 1987), consisting largely of an unsigned 7,000-word article by Albert Meltzer called 'Liars and Liberals'. We reprint the present shorter article as part of our work of establishing the truth about anarchism in all its variety, and also of entertaining our readers.

Seriously, though, we have the following comments. The financing of Freedom Press publications is openly mentioned in them, and that of *The Raven* was described in our first Editorial. Heiner Becker is indeed German, but we are surprised that this should be considered ridiculous or even relevant in an anarchist paper. His references to various individuals in his article on *Freedom* were strictly factual. George Cores' autobiography was published soon after his death, in *Direct Action* (November 1952 — July 1953). The International Institute of Social History can look after itself, but its archives are open to anyone who makes the journey to Amsterdam (as several present or former members of the *Black Flag* collective know from personal experience). *Encounter* has a quite different form and content from *The Raven*. And *The Raven* is of course editorially independent of any individual, institution, or interest.



Donald Rooum

The Catachresis of Ecology

'Catachresis' is a word with one meaning. If you are unfamiliar with it, you need only look it up.

'Ecology', by contrast, is a word which requires explanation whenever it is used, because it has two entirely different meanings, one scientific and the other political. In the scientific sense, ecology is a branch of biology, the study of interrelations between organisms and their environments. In the political sense, ecology means calling attention to, and proposing action against, human activities which damage the human environment.

The scientific usage was well established before 1900. The political usage began in the 1960s, developing out of the scientific usage by the accident of careless reading. Many young people in the 1960s were interested in saving the world, so ecologists advertised their calling, to potential students and others, as a science which could help to save the world.* I quote as an example Max Nicholson, who said ecology was 'the main intellectual discipline and tool which enables us to hope that man will cease to knock hell out of the environment on which his own future depends'. Sixties radicals, too busy to read carefully, overlooked the words 'intellectual discipline and tool', and mentally inserted 'emotional commitment and rhetoric'.

The 'E' volume of the *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, published in 1972, discusses 'ecology' in the scientific sense but makes no mention of the political usage, presumably because it was thought catachrestic. It is allowed in some recent dictionaries; usages which began as errors have often become conventions. But it remains inconvenient to have one word with two disparate meanings.

I demonstrate the inconvenience with an assertion in expanded, then concise form. *To be effective, any call for action to protect the environment must be informed by knowledge of how the organisms within the environment*

* There was no hypocrisy in this. Ecology is the quantitative science nearest to natural history, and has always attracted nature lovers. Ecologists were concerned about habitat destruction and pollution, long before such concerns became fashionable.

interract with each other, and with their non-living surroundings. More concisely: ecology needs ecology.

The latter sentence means nothing, unless we interpolate 'in the political sense' and 'in the scientific sense'. When 'ecology' only had a scientific sense, it was possible to say 'Environmental protection needs ecology' without being misunderstood.

In its political sense, 'ecology' is a buzz word. That is to say, if it is used on a public platform, a buzz of approval is heard in the audience. Everyone disapproves of avoidable damage to the environment, and likes the idea of preventing it. Actual *programmes* for defending the environment do not command such universal approval, so rhetoricians tend to disguise their proposals with frequent repetitions of 'ecology' and other buzz words (such as 'freedom'), to keep the approving atmosphere for as long as possible.

Two very different programmes for the environment are discussed by Murray Bookchin in 'Social Ecology versus "Deep Ecology", a Challenge for the Ecology Movement' (*Green Perspectives* 4/5, reproduced in *The Raven* 3).

'Deep ecology' means, apparently, being deeply concerned for the environment as distinct from being just concerned; a distinction which is either just silly, or deeply silly. The book by Sessions and Devall, *Deep Ecology*, is not easily obtainable in this country (I cannot find it even in the British Library catalogue), but in view of its daft title I see no reason to doubt Bookchin's word that 'deep ecology' is a mish-mash of proposals, authoritarian, liberal, practical, ludicrous, provocative, and vapid; a little for everybody adding up to an authoritarian tendency.

To this 'eco-la-la', Bookchin opposes 'social ecology'. Under the sub-heading 'What is social ecology?' we are informed, first of all, that social ecology is *social* (fancy that!). Philosophically, it is in agreement with a near-evolutionary dialectic and a critique of logical positivism. Socially, it is rooted in a diverse collection of political and economic theories. Politically, it is *Green*, and not any old green but *radically* Green (the colour of a green root). Morally, it is humanistic, not in a degraded sense but in the High Renaissance sense of the term (the humanists of the High Renaissance were students of Greek and Roman literature).

I have not summarised Bookchin's catalogue of social ecology's attributes, but stated the first item in each category. No item could fail to provoke a buzz of approval, or even a round of applause, from any audience of revolutionaries who stayed awake.

Somewhere in Bookchin's extensive writings, no doubt, is an explicit statement of the programme of action proposed under the name of

social ecology. In this article there are only pointers. 'To separate human beings and society from nature is to dualise and truncate nature itself'; 'Social ecology . . . calls "technological/industrial" society *capitalism* — a word which places the onus for our ecological problems on the *living* sources and *social* relationships that produce them'; 'The primary question ecology faces today is whether an ecologically oriented society can be created out of the present anti-ecological one'; '. . . a crude biologism that deflects us from the social problems that underpin the ecological ones and the project of social reconstruction that alone can spare the biosphere from virtual destruction.'

The opinion behind all the words appears to be that environmental problems are caused by capitalism. The programme proposed to the 'ecology movement' (if I discern it correctly) is not to waste energy tackling environmental damage as such, but to concentrate on the destruction of capitalist society.

In Britain, where catachresis is under persistent attack from pedantry, the political usage of 'ecology' seems to be going out of fashion. The Ecology Party has changed its name to the Green Party. Dillons University Bookshop keeps its 'Ecology' shelf for scientific works in the biology department, and has put the label 'Environment' on a different shelf in the geography department. There are books on the 'Environment' shelf with 'ecology' in their titles, but all of these are published in America.

What we have to say about the world being wrecked could be said with less ambiguity and less waffle, if the word 'ecology' returned to its original, single meaning. If this is happening in Britain, but not yet in America, then we in Britain should not hesitate to lead.

Acknowledgement

The quotation from Max Nicholson is lifted from *Beyond Ecology* by George Walford (1979).

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