

THE

RAVEN

COLIN WARD on
Anarchism and
the Informal
Economy

DENIS PYM on 'Informing'
*Communicating
and Organisation

HEINER BECKER
on 'Freedom' and
Freedom Press
1886-1986

VERNON RICHARDS
with some notes on
Malatesta and
Bakunin

NICOLAS WALTER
on Guy Aldred

Plus: Illustrations,
Reviews and
Editorial

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ANARCHIST QUARTERLY

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THE RAVEN

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Editorial

The first issue of a new magazine is expected to begin with a programmatic editorial. I am afraid in this case these expectations will be deceived. There are hundreds if not thousands of anarchist magazines and papers with sometimes very elaborate programmes in the respective first issues. Reality usually is different, and often drastically so. But flying balloons is generally a very satisfying and comforting activity. We intend to indulge in that, if ever, only in our last issue, and then in the form of an 'epigram' instead of a 'program'.

What we hope to do is to present articles on a variety of topics, provocative where possible, hopefully somewhat informative, opening up or providing matter for discussions, and related in one way or another to anarchism. And for that, we depend on what is 'on offer' as we do not intend or propose to write ourselves all, or even a major part, of what is to be published. This explains to some extent why in the current issue there is a fairly large proportion of historical material: simply because this (and more even) is what was available in time, not because *The Raven* is intended to centre on history. It has been claimed recently that nowadays there are more people interested in anarchist history than in anarchism. We do not share this position. We even regard it as somewhat foolish or at least shortsighted to split the history of anarchism (and anarchists) from anarchism as such. To put *one* aspect in a somewhat pathetic phrase: dead 'comrades' are nevertheless still comrades, and deserve respect and gratitude, if one is not to behave more 'capitalistic' than the establishment, not caring about human beings, their values, their identity. Furthermore, and rather pragmatically, history is potentially one of the most effective educative and instructive means — that is why for example Kropotkin regarded history as an essential part of all scientific work. (Could *Mutual Aid* have been as successful as it was without all the historical matter in it, which actually constitutes a main part of the 'flesh' of the book? Or why is *The State: Its historic role* one of his most successful pamphlets, if not because it is so *instructive* to understand a very complex and complicated entity?)

It is therefore not an antiquarian interest that is our guideline in historical matters — to us history is a means to understand complex

developments, to evaluate better commonly hidden human (and institutional) potentials, and, by no means least, to acknowledge that we stand on the shoulders of comrades.

This particularly guided us last year to celebrate *Freedom's* centenary with some historical articles — and we were very glad that these elicited many favourable reactions, and many additional queries. Mainly in response to these, and to complement somewhat what was published in 1986 (especially in the Centenary issue of *Freedom*, and in the January/February number) we have written some additional notes on the history of *Freedom*, the Freedom Press, and the people who did the work and kept it alive for a hundred years, the first part of which is to be found in this issue.

Nicolas Walter's article on Guy Aldred, written on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of his birth in 1886, is the first of what we hope will become a regular feature in *The Raven*, biographical sketches of mostly lesser known figures of our movement.

The same may be said also of Bob James' article on a hundred years of Australian anarchism — we hope to carry regular presentations of anarchist individuals, papers, movements all over the world, to inform about the international scope and identity of anarchism. (In our next issue, Rudolf de Jong will write on the Dutch movement today and yesterday.)

The other articles in this issue need no further explanation — they represent what I suppose one expects in a 'theoretical magazine'.

One thing still needs to be done — and that is to apologise for the late appearance of this issue. The main reason may well have been that, of the little time he had between too many still older obligations, the editor seems to have spent more time pondering over the motives for his acceptance of this responsibility and to ask if it was done in a fit of megalomania or simply in a state of absentmindedness, than in just getting on with what he finally had in hand and getting the magazine out.

The idea of trying to take up again a work that *Anarchy* had done so magnificently in the 'sixties, was first raised during the international anarchist gathering in Venice in September 1984. As in numerous other cases, our old friend and comrade A. Bartell immediately provided the material means to produce the first issues. At a number of meetings in London the feasibility and eventual shape was further discussed with two friends who independently had had the same idea. For whatever reasons these plans did not materialise, and in August last other provisions were made, the result of which now and hopefully a long time to come bears the name *The Raven*.

Did somebody ask, 'Why do you call it *The Raven*?' Well —

fortunately — space does not allow us to go into that in detail, apart from what we say on the cover: there are so many meanings, and a lot of them would bring us very near to the dreaded 'program'...

So we just stick to the truth and simply tell how it was found; it is as simple as this kind of story invariably is, and therefore nobody believes it anyhow. After half a dozen nights spent on trying to find a name as simple and convincing as, for example, *Anarchy* was, the prospective editor, completely in despair by then, started to imagine himself pursued, haunted even, by ugly black birds known to populate, among other places, gallows. To stop their dreadful laughter, shoes, slippers, even highly treasured books inspected the walls closer than was good for their shape — but the bloody bird appeared again and again, always in different places. So finally the 'phone was picked up and the silly question 'What about *The Raven*?' was answered with the even sillier one: 'But why *The Raven*?'...

ANARCHIST COMMUNISM* Its Aims and Principles.

Anarchism may be briefly defined as the negation of all government and all authority of man over man; Communism as the recognition of the just claim of each to the fullest satisfaction of all his needs—physical, moral, and intellectual. The Anarchist, therefore, whilst retaining as far as possible all forms of coercion and authority, repudiates just as firmly even the suggestion that he should impose himself upon others, realising as he does that this fatal propensity in the majority of mankind has been the cause of nearly all the misery and bloodshed in the world. He understands just as clearly that to satisfy his needs without contributing to the lot of his ability, his share of labor in maintaining the general well-being, would be to live at the expense of others—to become an exploiter and live as the rich do now live today. Obviously, then, government on the one hand and private ownership of the means of production on the other, complete the vicious circle—the present social system—which keeps mankind degraded and enslaved.

There will be no need to justify the Anarchist's attack upon all forms of government; history teaches the lesson he has learned on every page. But that lesson being concealed from the mass of the people by interested advocates of "law and order," and even by many Social Democrats, the Anarchist deals his hardest blows at the sophisms that uphold the State, and urges workers in striving for their emancipation to confine their efforts to the economic field.

It follows, therefore, that politically and economically his attitude is purely revolutionary; and hence arises the vilification and misrepresentation that Anarchism, which denounces all forms of social injustice, meets with in the press and from public speakers.

Rightly conceived, Anarchism is no more abstract ideal theory of human society. It views life and social relations with eye disillusioned. Making an end of all superstitious, prejudiced and false sentiments, it tries to see things as they really are; and without building castles in the air it finds by the simple correlation of established facts that the grandest possibilities of a full and free life can be placed within the reach of all, once that monstrous bulwark of all our social iniquities—the State—has been destroyed, and common property declared.

By education, by free organisation, by individual and associated resistance to political and economic tyranny, the Anarchist hopes to achieve his aim. The task may seem impossible to many, but it should be remembered that in science, in literature, in art, the highest minds are with the Anarchists or are imbued with distinct Anarchist tendencies. Even our bitterest opponents admit the beauty of our "dream," and reluctantly confess it would be well for humanity if it were "possible." Anarchist Communist propaganda is the intelligent, organised, determined effort to realise the "dream" and to ensure that freedom and well-being for all shall be possible.

* It would be only fair to state that the Individualist school of Anarchism, which includes many eminent writers and thinkers, differs from us mainly on the question of Communism, i.e., on the holding of property, the reorganisation of labor, etc. Anarchism, however, affords the opportunity for expression in all these matters, and in that sense there is no dispute between us. We have purposely refrained from alluding to the burning question of assassination, as we think it will be time to deal with that when government has explained to us all the moral advantages of its wholesale massacres, slaughtering and poisoning.

Freedom printers, 127 Ossington Street, London N. W.

Heiner Becker

Notes on *Freedom* and the Freedom Press, 1886-1928

'It is easy to forget how amazing *Freedom*'s survival has been. Its whole history seems to have been one of staggering from one crisis to another; yet it has always arisen phoenix-like from the ashes while its contemporaries and rivals have gone the way of all flesh.'

Ken Weller, 1986

'*Freedom* was described as a philosophical, middle-class organ, not intelligible to the working classes, not up to date in late information and...less revolutionary than *Comic Cuts*...It was edited and managed by an inaccessible group of arrogant persons worse than the Pope and his seventy cardinals and written by fossilised old quilldrivers.'

John Quail, 1978

— quoting and obviously agreeing with a critic of 1897

'Nearly month by month the friendly co-operation of excellent comrades...produced for the reader a few moments of mental and sentimental life in the free Anarchist world of our hopes, an infinitely pleasant sensation which few other factors can produce. *Freedom* was always kind and gentle, faithful and hopeful, fair and reasoning, tasteful and well-proportioned. It excels by such qualities ever so many Anarchist periodicals and other publications which...possess other qualities, the personal note of interesting men, the elated feelings of stirring times, or they are the mouthpiece of vigorous organisations with all that is inseparable from organised life, predominating creeds, uncharitable criticisms of dissenters, and personal matters. All this may create a stronger impression for the moment, but it passes away...But to *Freedom* one turns back with pleasure...the basis of all was unswerving faith in freedom, fairness in reasoning, and gentleness in feeling.'

Max Nettlau, 1926

Freedom emerged from the British — or rather, London — socialist movement that had slowly but steadily taken shape since the late 1870s. In 1886, the year when *Freedom* was founded, and when a severe industrial crisis broke out which was to last some years, there were

several socialist or 'social democratic' organisations with the express aim to organise the workers or, more basically, to prepare them for organisation (in that sense the Socialist League was to many of its militants more a kind of educational body: 'educate-agitate-organise' was the motto, and in exactly this sequence). More than twenty years later Kropotkin was remembering it in *Freedom* (October 1907) as 'a most enthusiastic Socialist movement':

It was a *Socialist* — not a Social Democratic — movement, whose ideal was that of a society entirely reconstructed on the basis of a social revolution...A severe industrial crisis...contributed to render the movement still more acute...Contrary to what is currently said about the British workers, they received with eagerness, all over the country, the teachings of Socialism. Their only doubts were as to how to organise production when it would be wrested from the hands of the capitalists.

While there were numerous personal links to earlier movements such as the Chartists or the First International to provide some sense of tradition, the 'anarchist heritage' seems to have been completely forgotten at the time, or individuals who had already earlier regarded themselves as anarchists were isolated and even ostracised (like James Harragan, a Proudhonist since the early 1870s).

English anarchism, the English anarchist movement that slowly took shape then, rose essentially from three sources. The most obvious was the individualist Benjamin Tucker's *Liberty*, published in Boston from 1881 onwards, and from the beginning well distributed in Britain. In the first years of its publication *Liberty* was very much in sympathy with all sorts of revolutionary movements and exponents, such as the Russian revolutionists or John Most, though it soon seems to have created the impression with many English readers (such as William Morris) that only individualist anarchism was real anarchism.

Another impulse came from workers frequenting the International Club (originally in Rose Street) and its offspring such as the Homerton Social Democratic Club. There, and at the Social Revolutionary Congress of July 1881, they came in contact with French communards, German refugees like Most and Johann Neve, and with Italian socialists and anarchists like Malatesta. In this environment some English socialists became virtual anarchists, whether they used this word or not. These men, 'who knew also the American publications of the Tucker variety, familiar also with Robert Owen, the Owenites and other surviving old socialists, formed for themselves an anarcho-communism built on solidarity, that came very near to the ideas of Malatesta. Exuberance and formlessness had no attraction to them, nor Kropotkin's particular hypotheses either' (Max Nettlau, *La anarquía a través de los tiempos*, Barcelona 1935). Joseph Lane, the author of *An Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto* of 1887 — 'the first English Anarchist

pamphlet' according to Nettlau in *Freedom* (October 1926) — and Samuel Mainwaring are perhaps the most notable to represent this indigenous English anarchism that tried to combine a maximum of freedom with the greatest feeling of solidarity.

The third source was the French Jurassian anarchist communism, as developed by Kropotkin in the *Révolté* of Geneva, of which regular reports were published in George Standring's *Republican* from 1879 on, and which had a number of English readers especially after the Lyons trial of January 1883. The declaration of the anarchists on trial was published in London as a leaflet (reproduced in *Freedom* on 29 January 1983), and the general attention created by this trial led to many enquiries about anarchism and eventually to expositions like 'Anarchism by an Anarchist' by Élisée Reclus in the *Contemporary Review* of May 1884 or the articles by Charlotte Wilson in *Justice* (November 1884).

Also in 1883, there had been an edition of Bakunin's *God and the State* which gave as place of publication Tunbridge Wells. The person responsible for this, who shortly afterwards was also publishing the first English anarchist paper, was Henry Seymour (1860-1938). Like many others, he came from the Freethought movement, and had been active as a freethought propagandist and director of 'The Science Library' in Tunbridge Wells for some time. Some fifty years later (in a letter of 18 March 1935 to Joseph Ishill) he recalled his development:

In 1881 I had been prosecuted for 'blasphemy' — the first case for 30 years — that is, in England, for actively engaging in Atheistic propaganda. I had just emerged from my teens. I was so disgracefully treated, as I then thought, in the trial of the case, that my perhaps rather proud spirit was in revolt and I soon became a fully-fledged Anarchist, seeing clearly through the humbug as well as the tyranny and hypocrisy of *law* in its actual administration...I chanced to get hold of Tucker's *Liberty*, and I obtained Proudhon's 'What is Property?', and to these, I must confess, I owe much of my later thought and action. Then I discovered a bookseller's 'remainder' of Edmund Burke's 'Vindication of Natural Society'...About the same time I met Dr. William Knowlton Dyer and Mrs. Sarah E. Holmes...on their return to the U.S., the Dr. (a personal friend also of Tucker's) arranged with Tucker that I should be an *English* agent of *Liberty*. They also had a special reprint of Bakounine's 'God and the State' made for me to publish over here...Feeling that I had a mission to fulfill (vain conceit of youth), I made up my mind to abandon a very good business there (i.e. Tunbridge Wells) to seek my fortune in London, the centre, as I supposed, of revolutionary propagandist activity. I had decided to start an English *Anarchist* and London seemed the only place, as there were groups there of all nationalities who would probably lend a hand to their English 'comrades'. I came to London in the early part of 1885...

The first issue of *The Anarchist* appeared in March 1885, individualist from the start, though open also to other anarchists. Seymour

continued, describing 'The Genesis of Anarchism in England' in *Free Vistas* (vol. 2, 1937):

As one of the original members of the 'Fabian Society' before it adopted its policy of political opportunism, I was in friendly contact with many well-known figures in that party, amongst them...Edward Carpenter, Belfort Bax, E.R. Pease, Walter Crane, Hubert Bland, E. Nesbit, Frank Podmore, Sidney Webb, Sydney Olivier...

Perhaps it was here that he met Charlotte Wilson, and also others who eventually, in May 1885 constituted 'a circle of English Anarchists'. Several of its members were in regular contact with *Le Révolté*, and Charlotte Wilson also with Kropotkin directly; and after Kropotkin had been released from Clairvaux prison and come to England (in March 1886), said Seymour (in his letter to Ishill):

He and other of his friends and myself met at the house of the famous Russian Stepniak, and I was induced to stifle myself and my *individualist* tendencies and be incorporated in a 'conjoint editorship' for future issues of the *Anarchist* — there were to be four others, including Kropotkin, Dr. Merlino, Tchaykovsky, and Mrs. Wilson, all of whom were 'Anarchist-Communists'. I soon found that I had become the 'goat', having to do all the drudgery of production, supply most of the cost, while the others were content to *write*, excellently and otherwise. We had a 'tiff' and parted...

The break was reported in *Le Révolté*, the paper Kropotkin referred to as 'my child', in its issue of 22-28 May 1886: 'We learn with regret that the attempt made by some friends in London to publish *The Anarchist* under a new programme has been abandoned. We hope that a new anarchist journal will emerge.' The first issue of this paper, named *Freedom*, finally appeared mid-September (though dated October) 1886. 'It was started by C.M. Wilson and P. Kropotkin, the former acting as editor', wrote Alfred Marsh in *Freedom* (December 1900) — reproducing most of an unpublished draft by Charlotte Wilson (in the Nettlau Collection, IISH, Amsterdam). 'Uphill work it was at the beginning. For over two years the paper was carried on nearly single-handed. How often we were discouraged', added an anonymous writer in *Freedom* (October 1890).

The 'guiding' ideas were Kropotkin's and his particular version of anarchist communism. The predominant view of the situation in Britain is best illustrated by the headings given to reports 'from England' in *Le Révolté* at that time: 'Riots', 'Insurrection', 'The People in Revolt'. And what Kropotkin intended to achieve with a paper like *Freedom* becomes clear in an article on the insurrections in Belgium, published in *Le Révolté* (5/11 February):

It is certain that similar revolts will follow...If these are simple revolts out of despair, they will have the same negative result. But *one must foresee them* and act accordingly.

One must say: 'It is certain that from now to the revolution there will be

similar revolts — revolts caused by hunger, by despair. If we don't prepare the ideas *in advance*, they will be limited to acts of despair... That is much. But it shouldn't be all. The revolt should spread an idea, present a principle — that of expropriation...' To get there, there should already be two or three men *in the locality*, respected for their honesty, their devotion, their revolutionary temperament. If the times are calm, they will be regarded as 'enragés'; but they will be those whom the people follow when the revolt rumbles... There must be *local* writings, *local* pamphlets that spread the same idea. One cannot make a paper in every little place; but one can spread the ideas...

For England, it seems, this also meant that *Freedom* was addressed first of all to socialists, who should be made to understand anarchism, and what had to be done in revolutionary situations. Consequently, *Freedom* was from the beginning — apart from being a medium for Kropotkin's ideas — also a platform for the discussion of socialist ideas in general.

Since virtually all articles were unsigned, it is difficult to attribute them to certain authors; but from a passage in Charlotte Wilson's draft history of the paper (omitted by Alfred Marsh in the article already quoted) it becomes clear that among the contributors in the first year were Edward Carpenter, Dr Burns-Gibson, George Bernard Shaw, Havelock Ellis, Sydney Olivier, Saverio Merlino, E. Prowse Reilly, Nannie F. Dryhurst, and Henry Glasse. The non-anarchist contributors were all members of or linked to the Fabian Society and were certainly asked by Charlotte Wilson to contribute, as were others later like Edith Nesbit, or Mrs Podmore who translated Kropotkin's *Conquest of Bread*. Less known, and of greater interest to us, are anarchists like N.F. Dryhurst and Henry Glasse. Mrs Dryhurst (1856-1930), born in Ireland as Nannie Florence Robinson, was closely linked to *Freedom* and a member of the Freedom Group from the beginning until 1906 (when, after a visit to Georgia and the suppression of the first Russian Revolution, she concentrated her energies on movements on behalf of self-determination of small nationalities as Secretary of the Subject Races Committee). For a short while in the beginning of the 1890s she replaced Charlotte Wilson as editor of the paper, and contributed articles regularly until about 1894.

Henry Glasse, details about whom are very difficult to find, is one of these rarely mentioned people who supported *Freedom* from the beginning until the First World War, both with literary and financial contributions (nearly every month he gave at least 10 shillings — quite a substantial sum at the time — and he supported other papers like *Le Révolté* as well). He had fought as a guerrillero in the Carlist War in Spain in 1872-1874; in 1878 he lived in Margate and submitted a manuscript on 'Caste, Capital and Social Democracy' to the International Labour Union for publication. In December of the same

year, this was published by Bradlaugh's Freethought Publishing Company as a pamphlet, as well as another pamphlet of his with *Thoughts on Religion and Society* (both were later reprinted, if one may trust Frank Kitz's unreliable reminiscences, by the Rose Street Club). He became eventually a member of the English section of the Rose Street Club, and from May 1879 on he wrote regularly for George Standring's secularist paper *The Republican* — e.g. in March 1881 a sympathetic article on 'Anarchism'. Kropotkin translated another one on 'English Liberty' for *Le Révolté* (November 1880), and said in February 1881 in a letter to a friend in Belgium about Glasse: 'I know only one man who seems to be disposed to become socialist and anarchist — that is the new collaborator of *The Republican* whose article I've translated for *Le Révolté*.' Glasse, however, soon left England (probably in February or early March 1881) to settle in South Africa as a farmer, but continued to support financially and with contributions all sorts of revolutionary and above all anarchist papers, starting with *Le Révolté*, *The Commonweal*, *The Anarchist* and *Freedom*, and often arousing discussion or contradiction by his views on the use of force: 'As long as our people simply attempt action in the towns, where troops can be massed, and artillery has the last word — so long, I contend and have long contended, they will be severely handicapped. Action in a *suitable* country, supported by the towns, would be invincible' (a letter to Keell in the Freedom Collection, IISH, Amsterdam).

In Spring 1901 he returned to England for a prolonged visit and addressed a number of well-attended meetings in London. At about this time, two of his contributions to *Freedom* were also published as Freedom Pamphlets: *Socialism the Remedy* in 1901, and *The Superstition of Government* (together with Kropotkin's *Organised Vengeance called 'Justice'*) in 1902 (in 1886 he had already translated Kropotkin's *Expropriation* and *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution* for Henry Seymour's International Publishing Company). In January 1915 he sent for the last time (it seems) a contribution to the Freedom funds, telling Tom Keell at the same time that 'This is no time for propaganda here of any sort. In fact the censorship is very strict, and it may be well not to send me anything at present which might by any possibility be construed into opposition to the war against German Kaiserdom and Militarism. I suffered enough during the Boer War through a similar cause.'

* * *

Although *Freedom* succeeded in attracting quite a number of exceptional contributors and, on an intellectual level, from the

beginning was an attractive paper (of the first issue 1,600 copies were sold in about three weeks, and the sales stabilised and rose even in the following months: quite unexpected at the time and especially at this time of the year, as there were few large outdoor meetings with possibilities to sell the paper), it seems to have remained strangely isolated during the first year of its existence. As Max Nettlau, a member of the Socialist League and close friend of some of the 'indigenous' English anarchists like Sam Mainwaring, later recalled in *Die erste Blütezeit der Anarchie* (1981):

The *Freedom Group* whose paper was read with great interest, whose speakers like Kropotkin were greeted more enthusiastically than all the others at the great international meetings in 1887...otherwise kept itself so completely isolated that its members finally felt themselves that this wasn't the right way, and at the beginning of 1888 they came forward into the socialist milieu with a series of public lectures.

These Freedom Discussion Meetings 'on Anarchist-Socialism', the first of which was held at the Hall of the Socialist League, 13 Farringdon Road, on 16 February 1888, were immediately very successful and drew a number of workers into the Freedom Group, especially from the Social Democratic Federation. Among those who in the next two years joined the Group were Alfred Marsh (from 1895 on the editor of *Freedom*), Tom Pearson, Walter Neilson, Charles Morton, W. Burrows, J.E. Barlas, C. Porter, and James Blackwell.

Another factor for the growing response to anarchism in general and *Freedom* in particular was the sympathy raised by the condemnation of the Chicago martyrs, and especially the visit of Lucy Parsons in October/November 1888. As Charlotte Wilson put it later (in another passage omitted from her draft history): 'She addressed numerous meetings, arousing much sympathy amongst the workers, both for the cause & for the Chicago men, but choking off various lukewarm or partial sympathisers with Anarchist theories by her "wild west" talk about fighting.'

The influx of new members changed the style and contents of the paper somewhat, the most notable new feature being 'regular' reports and notices from the movement in London (from September 1889) and provincial groups (from April 1890). Members of the Freedom Group also initiated the formation of a number of local groups, and soon a number of provincial Freedom Groups sprang up, an example taken up nearly 25 years later by George Barrett and George Davison. The organisation of large public meetings in London and smaller local gatherings in a number of provincial places to commemorate the Paris Commune (around 18 March) and the legal murder of the Chicago anarchists (around 11 November) was another initiative started in 1890

and repeated successfully for several years. And in December 1889 the first Freedom Pamphlet appeared, Kropotkin's *The Wage System*.

Until December 1888 the paper as such had been produced single-handedly by Charlotte Wilson; in March 1889, the 'editorial staff had been reinforced' and 'a committee of workmen formed to manage the publication and sale of the paper'. Actually, from March 1889 the paper was edited by James Blackwell, a compositor by profession. He seems to have become politically active in the Labour Emancipation League, the organisation founded by Joseph Lane and Tom S. Lemon after the closure of the Homerton Social Democratic Club. In October 1884 Blackwell, representing its Bethnal Green branch (with C.W. Mowbray), became its Secretary (with Joseph Lane as Treasurer) for two months, when he left for the SDF (to which the LEL by then was affiliated), and formed in December 1884 with Harry Quelch the Walworth branch of the SDF. The following February he was elected to the Executive Council, and he started writing occasionally for its paper, *Justice*. Thus he related his experience in 'A Fourpenny Dosshouse' (11 July 1885), or warned against 'The Emigration Fraud' (22 August) 'as one who has been to and returned from New York as a steerage passenger'. He also translated from the French Paul Lafargue's 'Right to be Lazy' and immediately found himself engaged in a defence of this 'right'. From April till July 1886 he was again in the United States, sending 'American Notes' to *Justice* — from May onwards actually from Chicago at the time of the Haymarket crisis. Perhaps influenced by what he saw and heard there, he wrote after his return to London on 'The Futility of Manhood Suffrage' (31 July 1886), though still denying that 'we should refrain altogether from parliamentary action', as 'the true Revolutionist adopts all available means to further his ends'. In August he suggested a method of propaganda which 'our religious friends are in the habit of employing...the house to house tract distribution and exchange' (28 August), following a defence of his Lafargue translation that 'to my thinking the Socialist is only half fledged who considers work a blessing and obstinence a virtue' (14 August). Still a Social Democrat (and manager of *Justice*), he was during 1888 an eager participant in the Freedom Discussion Meetings, but he soon declared himself an anarchist. Some time after his resignation from the *Freedom* editorship he left England again, living in 1897 in Paris.

* * *

Apart from the organisation of large public meetings, open-air public speaking was a major concern for members of the Freedom Group, as

for every other left-wing group at least from the late 1870s onwards. The most successful place proved to be Regent's Park, where 'a regular peripatetic school of Anarchist philosophy was formed, the same audience assembling week after week, summer after summer', according to Marsh in *Freedom* (December 1900). This happened usually on Sundays, the speakers being mainly Frank Hyde, Walter Neilson, Charles Morton and Tom Pearson. The same people addressed on Wednesdays open-air meetings usually at the Prince of Wales Road, the formation of the St Pancras Communist-Anarchist Group being one result.

All this work found a stimulus first and some sort of a break soon after a time that has been described as 'an era of repression on the one hand and revolt on the other', starting with the Walsall Police Plot from January 1892 onwards and then the prosecution of the *Commonweal*. *Freedom's* line at this time has been summarised characteristically drily and proudly (but quite correctly) by Charlotte Wilson in her history of the paper already quoted:

During these troublous two years *Freedom* stood firmly on the side of the rebels and against the suppressors of rebellion in word and deed, even when the rebels used weapons which no humane person can approve in cold blood.... On the other hand, *Freedom* did not either advocate or applaud outrage; its own policy advocated a continuous and energetic endeavour on the part of the workers, organised in Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies and other voluntary associations, to obtain by direct action, such as refusing to act as wage-slaves, the control of the means of production.

This may serve as a little hint where one has to look for the first references to and discussion of what later was called 'Syndicalism', a word first used in English — so far as I can tell — in October 1903, by Tarrida del Marmol in *The General Strike*. This was edited by Samuel Mainwaring and Tarrida del Marmol, in cooperation with the *Freedom* Group, modelled on Francisco Ferrer's *La Huelga General*. Three issues appeared between October and December 1903, and a new effort was made on 15 February 1904. The term *Syndicalism* didn't actually come into general use until 1907. The best short definition at the time I have found is in the introductory note to an article by Kropotkin on 'Anarchists and Trade Unions', translated from *Les Temps Nouveaux* and published in *Freedom* in June 1907: 'For the better comprehension of the following it may be noted that the French "Syndicalism" differs from English "Trade Unionism" in its revolutionary character. It considers the "syndicate" as the arm for the Social Revolution and the cell of the future Communist society.' Karl Walter found it still necessary, when reporting from the Amsterdam Congress in *Freedom* in October 1907, to explain "Syndicalism": 'This expression is used

throughout as being less cumbersome than "Revolutionary Trade Unionism".

Among the new contributors in these years were William Wess, Errico Malatesta, Henry Nevinston, and W.C. Owen, J. Sketchley (the old Chartist), George Lawrence (the friend of Frank Kitz), Dr Fauset Macdonald, Louise Michel, Louise Bevington, Olive Rossetti, and Agnes Henry. Agnes Henry had run a Kindergarten in Trinidad in the 1880s. She then went for a while to Italy; her first contribution to *Freedom* on 'How "Risings" are promoted and suppressed by the Italian Government' was published in July 1891. She soon joined the Freedom Group and housed *Freedom* from February 1893 until early November 1894. In April 1893 she made (like other members of the group) one of numerous speaking tours, this time to Scotland. In January 1895 she left England for France, where she lived first in Paris and from June 1895 till March 1896 in Pont Aven (Finistère), trying to make a living by teaching and translating. She returned in April to England, settling for a year in Cromer, Norfolk, where she had found a reform school for the daughter of Antonio Agresti whom she adopted after Agresti married Olive Rossetti. In 1896 she became very much involved in the organisational efforts of the Associated Anarchists and slowly lost contact with *Freedom* and the Freedom Group. In April 1897 she wrote to the *Labour Leader*, the paper of the Independent Labour Party, that this paper 'has almost persuaded me to become an I.L.P.er', and in July explained 'why I am now anxious to join the I.L.P.':

In the first place, together with Krapotkine, Merlino, Hamon and many others, I hold that we Anarchist-Communists are primarily Socialists. Consequently my joining the I.L.P. makes no difference whatever as to my being a Socialist. It only indicates a modification in my views as to *some* of the methods by which the whole country — if not the whole world — may become Socialist. Already as an Anarchist-Communist, I consider that every step towards co-operative production and distribution for use, in place of the competitive and capitalistic system, is a step towards Socialism. Only I *now* am convinced that municipal collectivism is the first practicable step towards general co-operation, leading finally to organised Communism.

Again, as an Anarchist-Communist, I consider that the organisation of labour and of society generally for purposes of mutual advantage is absolutely necessary, both nationally and internationally, in every direction. And I recognise that the I.L.P. are the most effective and active organisers, both of labour and, through political action, of society generally....But, while one object of the I.L.P. is to form a Socialist party in Parliament, you yourself [i.e. the leader Keir Hardie] and several other members of the party have declared that the first chief thing is to convert the people to Socialism, which you can do largely by means of political action....It is therefore as an educative means that political agitation is mainly useful.

That was exactly what critics (like *Freedom*) of the Associated

Anarchists and similar organisational trends predicted and feared, and what George Robertson from Edinburgh said in a reply, making clear that 'you can take part in no political contest without renouncing your claim to Anarchism', for those 'are coerced who don't agree to vote for either side and who have not *joined the Constitution* as it were'. Nevertheless, a number of anarchists went the same way as Agnes Henry, because of a similar reasoning as hers, or regarding the I.L.P. because of its then very open and unusually friendly attitude to anarchism as close to an 'anarchist party'; at about the same time *Freedom* also had to be defended against the plans of so-called 'organisationists' (such as Dr Ladislaus Gumpłowicz).

* * *

During the 'era of repression' and the year or two following, a lot of the support and 'converts' of the years 1887-1892 'dwindled away', either dropping out completely, moving to other places and withdrawing into private life, or getting absorbed in trade union activities or the co-operative movement. All anarchist papers except *Freedom* ceased publication, some of the people who had taken part in these other publications eventually joining and reinforcing the Freedom Group (like in 1895 when Thomas Cantwell, John Turner, Joseph Pressburg, and Max Nettlau from the *Commonweal* joined Alfred Marsh). One of the reasons why *Freedom* survived all these crises and the others did not, in spite of the fact that other papers sometimes had more funds given to them, is the very unspectacular 'accident' that in or around the *active* Freedom Group there was always one person who when it came to it was determined to carry on, combined with the fact that apart from one minor incident, the group was spared (or managed to keep out) members who eventually ran away with the (always meagre) cash-box. Trivialities of this sort are usually somewhat graciously passed over in silence. (For example, no one except Nettlau, in a book not published until 1981 — *Die erste Blütezeit der Anarchie* — mentioned that Frank Kitz was expelled from the Socialist League in 1891 for the in theory somewhat unorthodox use he made of propaganda funds; and as Nettlau added sarcastically and sadly, it was 'this kind of un-culture' that drove people like Morris, who mistook it as typical of anarchists, out of the Socialist League; and it was this, and the alleged involvement of some of the members of the League, in a milieu saturated with police spies, that kept Kropotkin (and the Freedom Group) away from the League.) This was the background, at least essentially, to the often lamented 'exclusivity' of the Freedom Group and to the habit of checking the 'credibility' of 'comrades' before

accepting somebody to 'the inner circle', and not, as may easily be shown, a different view of anarchist tactics or strategy. And it goes almost without saying that this did not exclude the support (financial and otherwise) of the same comrades when they were in need (like e.g. James Harragan, David Nicoll, or Frank Kitz — who incidentally is the only contributor to *Freedom* before 1927 who was paid for his contributions, i.e. his reminiscences in 1912).

And while these digressions may sound somewhat puritanical, they do at least answer most of the reproaches made against 'the Freedomites', and also help to understand the 'amazing survival' of *Freedom* where others failed. It may just be added further that the same can be said and shown internationally for all anarchist papers that lasted longer than a couple of years.

* * *

After *Freedom* had found in 1896 permanent lodgings, a commercial or semi-commercial printing business was set up, called until 1902 the Cosmopolitan Printery, and run mainly by Tom Cantwell and for some time a Belgian anarchist, F. Henneghien. The issue for July 1898 then published for the first time an 'appeal to all friends and sympathisers in the international Anarchist movement' to establish The 'Freedom' Press, 'that we are all assured will have the deepest and most far-reaching effect on the Anarchist propaganda in England'. The object was 'to place the publication of Anarchist literature in England on a business basis'. For,

if £30 can be raised (and surely it can be), we shall be enabled to issue many new works of great interest and importance, besides issuing reprints of others which are badly needed. It would also aid us greatly in reducing the expense of the publication of 'Freedom', and so avoid the constant and heavy strain that publishing at a loss necessarily entails on a few comrades who are only wage-slaves themselves.

This was carried for a few months, but brought no more than about £15, of which £10 came from 'Glasgow comrades' right at the beginning. In the end, nothing came of it, and as before the funds for the printing or reprinting of pamphlets had to be raised, sometimes with great difficulty, for each individual venture. The Freedom Press as a firm seems to have come into existence only with the issue for July 1916, after the trial of T.H. Keell and Lilian Woolf ('Wolfe'). In the years 1898-1902, the Freedom Group complemented their other publishing activities (the paper and the Freedom Pamphlets, of which by the late 1890s some 80,000 copies had been sold) with the mass-production and distribution of single leaflets, a practice adopted, apart

from very special occasions, first for a short time between 1892 and 1894, and then again later around 1909/1910.

In September 1898, as a kind of offspring of the Freedom Group, the Libertarian Lecture Society was formed on the initiative of Miss A.A. Davies, who had made contact with the group some eighteen months earlier. It was established 'for the purpose of disseminating more light on the advanced thought, literature and movements of the day'. It complemented the Freedom Discussion Group, revived early in 1898 and named after similar initiatives in 1888 and 1890, and the two continued for four years, organising weekly (later fortnightly) lectures which were held at the beginning in Athenæum Hall, at 73 Tottenham Court Road, then at Tom Mann's pub The Enterprise, 96 Long Acre. Heading the programme were Goethe's last words 'Light! More Light!' (which a few years later also provided the Austrian anarchist Rudolf Grossmann with his pseudonym in England: Kl. Morleit, before he 'adopted' the name of a helpless French humanist of the sixteenth century, Pierre Ramus), and the lectures started on 16 October 1898 with Louise Michel on 'The Situation in France'.

Very little is known about Miss A.A. Davies, not even her first names. Her father was Welsh, her mother Irish; she came to anarchism when living in New York in the early 1890s. She was attracted to the Socialist League that W.C. Owen and John Edelman had founded there, and then was active in the group that published *Solidarity* (Saverio Merlino, John Edelman and the Krimont sisters). Involved in Irish 'affairs', she came to London early in 1897 and was for some time closely observed by the police, in the aftermath of the so-called Jubilee Plot (several Irish people coming from the United States were arrested for allegedly planning to assassinate Queen Victoria at the time of the Diamond Jubilee). She joined the Freedom Group in 1898 (which then for a while felt unusually conspiratorial, being particularly suspicious with a notorious Irishwoman in their midst). From Autumn 1898 she wrote alternately with Nettlau the International Notes, and in 1905 under the pen-name 'Libertas' she wrote the little tale 'The King and the Anarchist' (published from February until April and then as a Freedom Pamphlet). Harry Kelly has left picturesque descriptions of 'the mysterious Miss A.A. Davies' and her participation in the printing of the paper: 'A.D. did the taking off and I did the feeding...[she] always wore a black hat with a black veil, and black gloves while working; with her face with its fresh color and her gray hair she looked the picture of an old master.' (*Mother Earth*, May 1913, *Freedom*, September 1921 and November/December 1926). And Mairin Mitchell remembered later the 'Irish member of the Freedom Group who had some attics off the Euston Road. She used to ask me there, and in

summer three or four of us would climb up some shaky steps, wriggle through her skylight and sit on the roof, with a glorious view of London's blackest chimneys and the L.M.S. goods yards. And there we would stay, making tea on a spirit stove, generally Russian tea, to please Temoochin, a Tartar sailor' (*Storm over Spain*, 1937, which includes several references to the Irish links with the British anarchist movement — and in the index one may discover that 'The Irish Rebel' who wrote in *Freedom* and *The Voice of Labour* before the First World War was William J. Orr). In about 1910 Miss Davies joined the suffragettes and left the Freedom Group, though remaining in contact with some of her old anarchist friends until the early 1920s.

* * *

From 1900 until 1906, *Freedom* had to endure the most difficult years of its existence so far. During the period of the Boer War, meetings — and especially open-air meetings on which the paper depended for the street-selling — became at times virtually impossible. The group, however, managed to produce all the time a reduced paper, and especially after 1903 the pamphlets were again very much in demand, some of the titles being constantly reprinted (the best-sellers were Kropotkin's *Anarchist Communism* and *The State: Its Historic Role*, and Malatesta's *Talk about Anarchist Communism between Two Workers* and his *Anarchy*). The Freedom Group remained virtually unchanged after 1896, the most active members being Alfred Marsh, Max Nettlau, Tom Cantwell, Harry Kelly and his wife Mary Krimont, Miss Davies, Varlaam Cherkezov and his wife Frieda, John Turner with longer and longer intervals, and to a lesser degree Frank and Lena Hyde. Kropotkin did not take part in the actual production, but confined himself to writing articles, usually not taking part in the group meetings at this time. The sole editor during all these years was Alfred Marsh, who also did virtually all the correspondence until 1904, when Tom Keell, who had been employed as compositor since 1902, after due probation was admitted to the group and also became Manager.

During 1906 the success of syndicalism in France had its effect in London; after earlier abortive attempts following a visit by French syndicalists in London in June 1901, such as *The General Strike* that had been produced in 1903 and 1904 by Samuel Mainwaring and Fernando Tarrida del Marmol in cooperation with the Freedom Group, and a single issue of a *Voice of Labour*, printed for comrades in Glasgow at the Freedom Office in 1904, Marsh, Keell, Turner and Kropotkin planned a syndicalist paper named *The Voice of Labour*. A dummy issue was printed in November 1906 and distributed in a few dozen copies, and

the first proper number then appeared on 18 January 1907. The paper was to last for 36 issues, until September of the same year, the first eight issues edited by Marsh, the rest by Keell. The principal contributors were John Turner, Gerald Christian (who wrote under the pseudonym 'Scorpion'), Guy A. Aldred, Karl Walter, Harry Kelly, Sidney Carlyle Potter, and James Dick. The keynote of the paper was the futility of parliamentary action and the importance of industrial action.

Karl Walter (1880-1965) became involved with the Freedom Group in 1904 and wrote regularly for *Freedom* until 1908, when he left for the United States (where he worked as a journalist and contributed to *Mother Earth*). He was, with Keell, an English delegate at the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam in August 1907, and he wrote the report published in *Freedom* and reprinted as a Freedom Pamphlet. He returned to England in 1916 and in the 1920s helped *Freedom* with occasional translations; he later became yet again an occasional contributor to *Freedom* (and other anarchist papers) after 1958. (His grandson, Nicolas Walter, became active at about that time.)

For the next decade S. Carlyle Potter also wrote regularly for *Freedom* (and then very occasionally until the paper stopped), later becoming a Tolstoyan anarchist and living as a bookseller in Southampton.

Henry May ('Harry') Kelly (1871-1953) was a member of the Freedom Group from his (second) arrival in England in January 1898 until his return to the United States in August 1904; before and after he wrote regular American Notes for *Freedom*. He was, as Nettlau related on numerous occasions, the man in the Freedom Group with practical advice in every situation and a practical solution to all problems. Two American namesakes of *Freedom* were initiated by him (in 1919 and 1933-34), and he remained a loyal friend and supporter of *Freedom* until 1927.

Like Harry Kelly later active in the American Modern School Movement, was James Hugh ('Jimmy') Dick (1882-1965), a Liverpudlian who started with Lorenzo Portet a Modern School in Liverpool in 1908. From then on he also contributed frequently to *Freedom* (as Jey H. Dee, as Dick James or Jimmy Dick), usually apart from reports on the school instructive articles 'For the Young Folk'. In 1912 he started with Naomi ('Nellie') Ploschansky (born in Kiev in 1893 and still going strong in the United States, as listeners to the BBC World Service may have heard last year) an International Modern School in Whitechapel which lasted until shortly before they left for the United States in January 1917.

1909 saw a big boost in the publication activities of the Freedom Group, following the death of Marsh's father. He was left in charge of the family's brush factory, and for the first time in more than twenty years he had not to worry about his and his family's living (after marrying a factory girl, he had been thrown out by his father and had made a very meagre living as a violinist). *Freedom* profited considerably from the change in its editor's living, and saw the reprint of virtually all pamphlets still of current value in 1909, the production of a whole series of leaflets, and a number of newly produced pamphlets, including the publication of the first two longer booklets — Bakunin's *God and the State* in a revised and expanded translation by Nettlau (in 1910) and Kropotkin's *Modern Science and Anarchism* in 1912 for Kropotkin's seventieth birthday (in editions of 5,000 and 3,000 copies respectively).

In 1910 *Freedom* won with George Ballard ('Barrett') a contributor whom Keell later called 'the best speaker & writer the English movement ever had in my time. Clear, logical & concise'. He was born in Ledbury (Herefordshire) in 1883; in February 1908 he was mentioned for the first time in *Freedom*, when in a report on 'Anarchism in Bristol' it was said of him that he 'bears the heavy responsibility of having disturbed the otherwise peaceful routine of that highly successful political organisation', the Bristol Socialist Society, by giving a lecture on 'Anarchy and Socialism'. With him, anarchism spread in Bristol in the next few years. He came to London and became active in the Walthamstow Anarchist Group; getting a job in Glasgow in 1911, he went there, but came nevertheless regularly to London and was asked in the same year, and agreed, to become editor of a weekly *Freedom*. But, according to Keell (in a letter to Nettlau, 27 February 1935): 'On his way home to Scotland he thought it over & then wrote & declined, saying the "tradition" of *F.* was too strong. He wanted a paper entirely different.' He continued to write for *Freedom* also when and after he had 'his own' paper in Glasgow, *The Anarchist* (1912-1913), which he was able to publish thanks to the financial support of George Davison (1856-1930), previously the European director of Kodak, a close friend of Ballard and supporter also of *Freedom* (and other groups and papers, including Aldred's *Herald of Revolt* and *The Spur*). Shortly before the First World War they founded a number of 'Workers' Freedom Groups'; Ballard drafted a statement of objects and took care of regular lectures, while George Davison, who then travelled mostly with Barrett, would not speak but helped to sell literature. He bought houses at Stockport, Ammanford (South Wales), and Chopwell (Co Durham), furnished them, equipped them with small libraries and paid most of the running expenses. It was on his property 'Wernfawr' at

Harlech (North Wales) that the Freedom Group held a number of times around 1914 an anarchist summer holiday camp, as did later, between 1919 and 1921, the colonists of Whiteway. The Freedom Press published Barrett's pamphlets *The Anarchist Revolution* (1915, reprinted 1920), and *Objections to Anarchism* (1921) — and later a small collection of his writings edited by S.E. Parker under the title *The First Person* (1963). He died in 1917 from tuberculosis which he had contracted in 1913 during an agitation tour.

In 1911 also George Cores (1867-1949) returned to London which he had left twenty years earlier. He started to contribute for a while regularly to *Freedom* (usually signing 'G.'), and was in 1912 proposed as co-editor, with Keell — but Keell refused absolutely, thereby drawing upon himself the lifelong hatred of Cores. Cores then ceased collaboration with *Freedom*.

Another contributor from 1912 on was Mabel Besant Hope (born at East Plumstead, Kent, in 1880), who had been a socialist since 1897. She worked in the Telegraph Department of the Civil Service from 1898 and was, apart from being on the local Executive of the Telegraph Clerks' Association, in 1906 secretary of the Joint Council of London Women Civil Servants. In 1913 she was one of those, with Fred W. Dunn, Lilian Woolf, Tom Sweetlove, Elisabeth Archer and W. Fanner, who formed the Anarchist Education League. They published in connection with *Freedom* five issues of a little 4-page sheet *The Torch*, which from 1 May 1914 became a weekly under the old title *The Voice of Labour*. The editor was first nominally George Barrett, but soon actually Fred W. Dunn (1884-1925), the son of Edwin Dunn of Rose Street Club fame and the London Congress of 1881. He wrote the article 'Defying the Act' which then led to the prosecution of Tom Keell and Lilian Woolf, and shortly afterwards left for the United States to escape conscription, where he worked for some time as teacher at the Ferrer School at Stelton, NJ, and then as organiser for the Consumers' Co-operative Housing Association. The *Voice of Labour*, weekly for its first 18 issues until 27 August 1914, and then monthly lasted until 15 August 1916 with altogether 42 issues.

The group around *The Torch* and *The Voice of Labour* had since 1912 become the most active support of *Freedom* in London, especially in regard to distribution. They were staunch supporters of Keell after his split with the pro-War members of the Freedom Group in 1914. The active and actual members at that time were, besides Keell and Marsh, Nettelau, Kropotkin — though he rarely attended meetings — and Frieda and Varlaam Cherkezov; definitely not Cores, as was claimed later; and Turner had not taken part in any meetings of the group, not to speak of working for the paper, for more than five years. What

happened after the outbreak of the War in August 1914, has been told several times and need not be repeated here. How the functioning of the group and its relationship with the editor were understood at least since the 1890s, was most concisely said by Nettlau in a letter to Keell (13 May 1930):

...thus you were editor in 1912, but not a supreme editor, as *Freedom* never had one: the point always was that the editor had to be in full sympathy with the wishes of the group — and the group discussed and had the sincere wish that all should voluntarily agree and be in harmony.

This means that *no one* had a supreme voice as the editor, but the editor as a *comrade* was expected to be in harmony with the group and vice versa — and it was tried to give satisfaction to all....

I say all this, because I think you cannot take your stand upon *editorial rights*. It was known to all that the editor had no rights and so by the death of A.M. nothing could be altered: if there was disagreement, there never was coercion, there was secession — as I wanted to go in November 1912 and as they all went in the autumn of 1914 or as you would have had to go, if they had chosen to stay...

Fred Dunn summarised the view of the overwhelming majority of the British anarchists, as represented for example at the annual national conference held at Hazel Grove, Stockport, on 4 and 5 April 1915 (writing as 'Fred Watson' on 'The Movement in Great Britain' in *Mother Earth*, February 1917): 'From the beginning the Anarchist press, without exception, took up a strongly anti-militarist attitude, despite the fact that in the case of *Freedom* and the *Voice of Labour*, some few of their oldest comrades sided with the government. But the movement as a whole stood firm, and at the Congress held in April, 1915, only two voices were raised to support those who favored war.'

The group set up Marsh House at 1 Mecklenburgh Street, most members living there as a commune, and the place served also as a meeting place for the London movement during its existence between March 1915 and September 1916. Keell edited *Freedom*, while Dunn edited the *Voice* until March 1916, when he became liable for military service. He was arrested and put into a military prison, and in due course officially 'posted to his regiment'. But he managed to escape and hid 'somewhere on the Scottish hills', from where he sent the notorious article 'Defying the Act', which, reprinted as a leaflet, led to the first police raid on Freedom Office on 5 May 1916 and the subsequent prosecution and condemnation of Keell and Lillian Woolf (it was reproduced in the Centenary issue of *Freedom*, October 1986).

From April 1916 Mabel B. Hope became editor until, after the second raid on the office on 29 July 1916, it was decided in August 'to suspend publication of the *Voice of Labour* for a short period'. As Dunn formulated it in the article already quoted:

All honest people are in, or have been to prison, but the work of opposing the State and the war still goes on. The censor has forbidden *Freedom* to be sent out of the country, and the *Voice of Labour* has been suppressed altogether, but it has not died: a metamorphosis has taken place and a bright little paper has made its appearance with the self-explanatory title, *Satire*.

Satire was published from December 1916 by the Freedom Press and edited by Leonard Augustine Motler, a deaf-mute who had written for *Freedom* for quite a few years before the War (we hope to carry a more detailed account of him before long). It was the reason for two further police raids on the Freedom Office, on 20 November 1917 and 14 February 1918 (at the same time raids took place at the house of the editor), and after a raid on the printers on 26 April 1918 it ceased publication with the issue for April 1918. Dunn having left for the United States, soon followed by Mabel Hope and Elisabeth Archer, Tom Sweetlove having dropped out 'in a fit of depression', and Motler by the time of the end of the war involved in other and local activities, it was left to Keell and Lilian Woolf to keep the paper going (Percy Meachem, later one of the bitterest opponents of Keell, had helped with the printing of *Freedom* during Keell's prison term in 1916 and was employed only from the early 1920s as a kind of handyman in the office).

The Russian Revolution brought a number of new contributors, both for and against the Bolsheviks. One was Fred Charles, now a strong supporter of the Bolsheviks and absolutely enthused by the Revolution (an account of him will be published soon). Another one was 'John Wakeman' (behind which name hid a professional Yorkshire journalist named Richard Hawkin). Both contributed regularly for a number of years, and Freedom Press also published a pamphlet by 'John Wakeman' in January 1920, entitled *Anarchism and Democracy*. And then W.C. Owen joined forces with *Freedom*, and became, with Nettlau, the most prolific contributor to *Freedom* in the 1920s (though he never was editor, as Emma Goldman claimed in her memoirs). He was also the mainstay of the meetings of the Anarchist Discussion Circle, organised with great success and taking up an old tradition in the winters of 1922-23 and 1923-24 at the Minerva Cafe, 144 High Holborn.

Freedom Press published between 1920 and the suspension of *Freedom* in December 1927, five more pamphlets (two by Owen, one each by George Barrett and Emma Goldman, and Kropotkin's *Revolutionary Government*), and its first book, Proudhon's *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* in a translation by John Beverly Robinson (who also paid most of the costs). The last two were produced for Freedom Press in Berlin by the German anarcho-

syndicalists. In addition, a number of pamphlets and Kropotkin's *Modern Science and Anarchism* were reprinted. The title *Abolition: A quadruple composition etc.*, listed in Carl Slienger's *Checklist of Freedom Press Publications*, was actually not published by Freedom Press, but only composed and the printing arranged for the author, R. Van.

Throughout the 1920s, *Freedom* carried more and more desperate appeals for financial (and other) help. All contributions came from a very small circle most of whom even didn't live in Britain any more. When the local council gave notice that the building was to be pulled down and that *Freedom* therefore had to quit, Keell decided (after consulting Owen and Nettlau as well as Lilian Woolf) to suspend publication. *Freedom* ended with the issue for November-December 1927, numbered 446 (but actually being 448, as in 1905 there were three issues numbered 197 but none numbered 198, and in 1920 there were two issues numbered 372; earlier mis-numberings had been silently corrected in subsequent years).

At a meeting held in London in February 1928, to consider the possibility of restarting *Freedom*, a new and wider group was formed (including Keell). The only one who actually did something was Keell himself, who published a *Freedom Bulletin* from April 1928 on, the first with a big headline — 'A Call to Arms! *Freedom* must go on. Help to create an Anarchist Movement' — saying among other things:

Comrades throughout the country and comrades abroad have been very deeply stirred by the suspension of the only Anarchist journal in this country. New comrades have come forward determined to help restart the paper....But this interest and enthusiasm...is not enough. Enthusiasm is an essential factor to success, but it will not pay the printer's bill.

Further meetings were held and spent with a lot of talking, the only other thing that happened was the publication of two more issues of the *Bulletin* with further appeals. Keell waited until 29 September 1928, when the final notice to quit expired, but no solution had been found to the problems of where to house the stock of literature permanently and how to pay the outstanding printer's bills for this literature. So Keell decided to move everything to Whiteway Colony, where Lilian Woolf had offered free accommodation for the Freedom Press, and from October 1928 on the Freedom Press was lodged there, and twelve more issues of the *Freedom Bulletin* were published (as well as a couple of reprints). Usually 1,100 copies were printed of each issue of which about 800 were sent out regularly (included 100 exchanges). While a number of orders came in, only a few people occasionally paid for their papers. When the principal financial supporter (Elisabeth Archer in California) was beginning to suffer from the Depression there, Keell decided to stop after Number 15 for December 1932 (a special issue to

commemorate Malatesta). 'The *Bulletin* has just faded out of existence...I feel the loss of a link with old comrades, but without money it had to be broken.'

To be continued

THE FOLLY OF VOTING.

I shall not vote in the coming General Election.
I am fully aware that this will be of little consequence so far as the result of the contest is concerned, and that is one of my reasons for not voting. But I have other reasons, chief among them being that I do not believe in government by the majority, nor the minority either.
I do not believe in government at all.

The ballot system of government is a dismal failure, even supposing it, for a moment, to be right in theory.

Thus, some of those who seek election do so either for the direct emoluments they hope to gain, or indirectly to advance their own interests and satisfy their vanity. Such men will not sacrifice their own ends for the public weal.

Many candidates are, however, in the beginning, fairly honest in their motives and intentions. But a man who enters the political world soon finds out that fraud, cunning, hypocrisy, and trickery are freely used by his opponents, and to successfully cope with them he must adopt their tactics. He thinks he is justified by expediency in doing this, and perhaps honestly believes that he can use these weapons to gain victory for an honest cause. But he is mistaken. Fraud and falsehood can never serve a righteous end. The man who uses trickery, even to vanquish wrong, is already a trickster and is no better, morally, than he who uses trickery for avowedly dishonourable purposes.

But, unfortunately for the honest candidate, zealous for the public good, who refuses to sully himself with deception and fraud—all the political forces are against him. By refusing to be all things to all men, and failing to pander to popular prejudice and ignorance, he fails to secure the favour of the mass and the unscrupulous demagogue, who makes many vain promises, wins. The really honest man who falls into the snare of politics ever figures as the unsuccessful candidate.

Political corruption and dishonesty is a notoriously apparent that even believers in government, advocates of political action, are fully conscious of it. Yet they go on voting, with the vague hope that, in some mysterious way, conditions will be changed, and that, after a while, enough pure men will be elected to ensure an honest administration of public affairs.

Their hopes are never realised. New men are put in and new parties assume control, but the same results ensue. The real trouble is with the system, not with those who administer it. The very nature and principle of government, of human authority, is demoralising, corrupting and wrong. As long as human nature is what it is, we cannot expect men in power to disregard their individual interests, nor to escape the damning influence of power over their better self.

The man who votes, even though he votes for the defeated candidate, gives his sanction to the whole scheme, and process of election, authority, coercion.

I do not wish to be governed, I do not acknowledge and will not admit the right of any man or body of men to rule over me; I do not wish to govern others. I know of no moral or social right that I have to do so, and consequently I decline to impose my views upon others through the agency of the ballot, and thus thus set in motion the whole paraphernalia of force and violence—police, judges, executioners, soldiers, tax-gatherers, etc., used to coerce others into doing as I think they ought to do.

I want for every man, woman and child the right to govern themselves, to direct their own affairs, to live their own lives. This can never be whilst private property, the be-all and end-all of government exists.

Think, workers, and you will acknowledge that it is for the defence of property that all this electioneering, this legislating, this making and unmaking of laws whose name is legion, takes place. To defend the property you have created, the houses you have built, the food you have grown, the clothes you have made—from you, their rightful owners. And you maffick and lose time and quarrel with one another and act like lunatics generally because your masters generously allow you to make a cross upon a piece of paper; and if you have been good and voted as they wish you to they throw you a crumb from the loaf you have toiled to make and which they have stolen from you and you meekly return them thanks.

Learn to be men, Free men, who depend upon no master, who feed no idle, gilded loafers, who cower not beneath oppression, but who assert their right to life, liberty, and all the pursuits of happiness.

I believe you can become this; I believe you can if you will, attain a free life, socially, economically, industrially, that is why I beg you to leave off following the red herring of politics, and instead, to refuse to obey the dictates of the gabblers of St. Stephen's and to support the lazy thieves of the thrice-damned Trinity—Landowners, Capitalists, Parsons.

He who would be free, himself
Must strike the blow.

Freedom leaflet, 1904

No. 7. EXPLANATION. By Peter Kropotkin. 1d.
 No. 8. ANARCHISM AND OTHER ESSAYS. By C. M. WILSON. 6d. down.
 No. 9. ANARCHY ON TRIAL. George Eastman, Jean Grave, Camille Saint. 1d.
 FREEDOM PAMPHLETS: Published by J. TENEYER, 127, Ossulton Street, London, N.W.
 No. 10. ANARCHISM: ITS PHILOSOPHY AND IDEAL. 1d.
 No. 11. THE COMMONS OF PARIS. By P. Kropotkin. 2d.
 No. 14. POLITICS AND SOCIALISM. By Peter Kropotkin. 1d.

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 No. 4. ANARCHIST COMMUNISM: ITS BASIS AND PRINCIPLES. 1d.
 No. 5. ANARCHY. By E. Malatesta. 1d.
 No. 6. ANARCHIST MORALITY. By Peter Kropotkin. 1d.
 No. 1. THE WAGES SYSTEM. By Peter Kropotkin. 1d.
 No. 2. THE COMMONS OF PARIS. By P. Kropotkin. 2d.
 No. 3. A TALK ABOUT ANARCHIST COMMUNISM BETWEEN TWO WORKERS. 1d.

*Colin Ward***Anarchism and the Informal Economy**

A hundred and thirty-eight years ago Marx and Engels claimed that the spectre haunting Europe was the spectre of Communism. Having lived for many decades in a world in which the larger part of the earth's surface is governed by Marxist regimes, most of us have lost our fear of this spectre. We don't actually worry about the redistribution of property that communism implies, because most of us have so little of it individually that it isn't worth worrying over. What we do fear is something which has nothing to do with social justice, and that is the deprivation of ordinary civil liberties which government by technocrats, theologians and ideologists implies. Not one of the innumerable exiles from Marxist countries has complained that he has lost the freedom to exploit other people. That particular freedom was reserved for the ruling elite of the regimes they had escaped from.

It would be closer to the truth to say that the spectre that is haunting us all is that of nuclear war. War is the ultimate weapon of governments against peoples, and it doesn't matter whether we are thinking of our own or other nations' peoples. But if you were a citizen of, say, Austria, Algeria, Tanzania, Uruguay or Burma, you would be obliged to realise that there was no conceivable action you could take to remove this threat, short of a world-wide revolution of people against governments — something which would make a change but is not remotely on anyone's political agenda. It's like the situation of those people who live on the slopes of a volcano: people shrug their shoulders and attend to the problems of daily life.

The computer games of the military and governmental establishments of the great powers pass us by: it's appalling but it's true. The spectre that really is haunting us all in the countries of the East and West, the rich and the poor, whether employment is provided by capitalists or communists, is the spectre of mass unemployment. It is more than a spectre. In most countries of the world it is the ordinary condition that people live in all their lives. Ivan Illich remarks that 'unemployment, a term first introduced in 1898 to designate people without a fixed income, is now recognised as the condition in which most of the world's people live anyway'.

In the rich countries we have been bludgeoned into indifference by

forecasts of the millions of permanently unemployed adults expected by the year 2000. Somehow we feel it won't happen to us, or that its effect will be mitigated by the welfare machinery which is intended to ensure that nobody actually starves. But what is to happen when, as long-term, large-scale unemployment grows, the privileged, employed section of the population shrugs off the responsibility of providing an income for those who cannot get a job and are never likely to have one? There have been glimpses of such a future in the taxpayers' revolt signalled by Proposition 13 in California in 1978 and on the return of a crudely fundamentalist Conservative government in Britain the following year, as well as in the increasingly vicious harassment of 'social parasites' in the Soviet Union and its satellites. The governor of California was elected as President of the United States with an overwhelming popular vote, and re-elected for a second term. Mrs Thatcher's welfare-bashing government in Britain was similarly endorsed.

The town-planner Graeme Shankland, attempting to grapple with the unemployment problems of British cities, saw a prospect of 'increasing impoverished, depressed and demoralised millions, barely sustained by supplementary benefits and on pensions paid for by a diminishing, powerful and resentful elite work-force', just as André Gorz in his *Farewell to the Working Class* envisages a society where the majority will be 'marginalised by an unholy alliance of unionised elite workers with managers and capitalists'.

We have already moved a long way from the expansive 1950s when our prophets were urging us to sever, at last, the connection between work and purchasing power. In those days Robert Theobald was demanding a 'guaranteed annual income' to be paid to every American as a constitutional right, and John Kenneth Galbraith was arguing for what he called Cyclically Graduated Compensation — a dole which went up when the economy took a down-turn, so that people could go on spending, as Keynes before him urged, and consequently keep other people employed, and which went down when full employment was approached. But have you noticed that nobody talks about full employment any more?

'One day', Galbraith forecast, 'we shall remove the economic penalties and also the social stigma associated with involuntary unemployment. This will make the economy much easier to manage.' But, he added, in 1960, 'we haven't done this yet'. Nor have we by the 1980s. Two decades of radicalism and reaction have gone by, and some of the same people who in the 1960s were urging us that the work ethic was obsolete in the days of automation and cybernetics, are by the 1980s protesting as governments cut back on their token job creation schemes, when faced by the era of micro-processors.

All those ingenious calculations of how short a working day, or working week, or working lifetime could be in a rationally organised society were made in the days of relatively full employment. They began to lose their attractiveness as unemployment grew. The prophecies are still being made, all the same. In a paper commissioned by the British Cabinet Office, Professor Tom Stonier of Bradford University declares that by early in the next century only 10 per cent of the present labour force will be required to provide a technologically advanced society with all its material wants or needs.

None of the prophecies are plausible enough to banish the spectre that is haunting the world of work. Still less comforting are the short-term forecasts of politicians and economists. We don't really believe that British or American manufacturing industries are going to recover lost markets. We don't really believe that robots or microprocessors are going to create more than a small proportion of the jobs that they eliminate. Nor do we believe that big business has any answers for us. Even our faith that the tertiary or service economy is bound to expand to replace the jobs lost in the productive sector has been shattered by the demonstration by Jonathan Gershuny of the Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University that employment in service industries in Western societies is already declining. Dr Gershuny, however, does provide a ray of hope that could lead us to look at the future of work in a quite different way. He sees the decline of the service economy as accompanied by the emergence of a *self-service* economy in the way that the automatic washing machine in the home can be said to supersede the laundry industry. His American equivalent is Scott Burns, author of *The Household Economy*, with his claim that 'America is going to be transformed by nothing more or less than the inevitable maturation and decline of the market economy. The instrument for this positive change will be the household — the family — revitalised as a powerful and relatively autonomous productive unit'.

The only way to banish the spectre of unemployment is to break free from our enslavement to the idea of employment. The pre-industrial economy was, after all, a domestic economy, and the old American phrase for an employee, a 'hired man' carries with it the notion that he was something less than a free citizen, as does the old socialist definition of the working class as those with nothing to sell but their labour power. The very word 'employment' has only been used in its modern sense since the 1840s just as 'unemployment' in the sense in which we use it, is even more recent.

We do need of course to remind ourselves that wage labour and even factory production existed before the industrial revolution. Adam Smith in the mid-eighteenth century told readers of *The Wealth of*

Nations that in every part of Europe twenty workmen serve under a master for one that is independent, and he gave us the classic account of the division of labour. A century after him, Marx concluded that the condition he called alienation resulted from the worker's loss of *ownership* of his skills, tools, products, time and space. Any account of the Industrial Revolution in this country tells how workers were driven by starvation to accept the disciplines of employment. For me, the classic description was that of J.L. and Barbara Hammond in their book *The Town Labourer*. The home worker in domestic industry, they observed, 'worked long hours, but they were his own hours; his wife and children worked, but they worked beside him, and there was no alien power over their lives; his house was stifling, but he could slip into his garden; he had spells of unemployment, but he could use them for cultivating his cabbages. The forces that ruled his fate were in a sense outside his daily life; they did not overshadow and envelop his home, his family, his movements and habits, his hours for work and his hours for food.' They declared that:

No economist of the day, in estimating the gains and the losses of factory employment, ever allowed for the strain and violence that a man suffered in his feelings when he passed from a life in which he could smoke or eat or dig or sleep as he pleased, to one in which someone turned the key on him, and for fourteen hours he had not even the right to whistle. It was like entering the airless and laughterless life of a prison. Unless we keep this moral sacrifice in mind, we shall not understand why the hand-loom weavers refused to go into the power-loom factories, where they would have earned much higher wages: a refusal that is an important fact in the history of the cotton industry.

It is enlightening to compare their picture of the horrors of early factory life with the interviews that the sociologist Ferdinand Zweig had with car workers in Coventry. He said: 'It is interesting to note that quite often the worker comes to work on Monday worn out from his weekend activities, especially from "do-it-yourself". Quite a number said that the weekend is the most trying and exacting period of the whole week, and Monday work in the factory, in comparison, is relaxing.' This, of course, leads us to ask what is work and what is leisure, if we work harder at our leisure than at our work.

The first distinction we have to make then is between work and employment. The world is certainly short of jobs, but it has never been, and never will be, short of work. William Morris grasped this a hundred years ago when he contrasted useful work with useless toil. The second distinction is that between the regular, formal, visible and official economy, and the economy of work which is not employment. In the United States, Louis Ferman and his colleagues at the University of Michigan, and in Britain Jason Ditton of the University of Glasgow, have attempted to sort out the various words we use for the disparate

kinds of activities which are not part of the formal, measurable economic system. *Irregular* is one of these words, subsuming such concepts as *secondary* or *shadow* or *secret*. *Informal* is the most widely used word, taking in adjectives like *social*, *peasant*, *subsistence*, *natural*, *domestic*, *household*, *communal*, *cottage* and *ghetto*, as descriptions of these various economies. The final range of words, carrying implications of crime and illegality, includes *hidden*, *black*, *underground* and *subterranean*.

The three main kinds of informal economy are illustrated in a homely example by Professor Pahl, taking the options available to someone who wants to get a broken window repaired. He might:

Firstly, hire a glazier through the formal economy, paying the full cost including his share of the overheads of the building firm and value-added tax;

Secondly, find someone nearby who is known to be able to mend windows and pay cash for the job, possibly thereby entering the black economy because he would not know whether such a person was declaring all his or her income, paying all his or her tax, or working in time already paid for by another employer;

Thirdly, he might ask a neighbour to do it within the communal economy, either in exchange for specific goods or services now or in the future, or as part of a broader ongoing relationship;

Or, fourthly, he might do the job himself in his own time with his own tools, within the household economy.

Now, with some honourable exceptions, public discussion of the informal economy has concentrated on the Black Economy aspect: tax evasion, fiddles, and so on. Efforts are made to calculate what proportion of the Gross Domestic Product is in this aspect of the economy. They differ enormously, just because it is so unquantifiable, but they aren't at all helpful, because the greater part of activities and transactions outside the measurable economy have no tax-evasion aspect.

There are just two points I would like to make about the Black Economy, since the government announced that another five hundred dedicated civil servants would be investigating it for the Inland Revenue. The first point relates to 'moonlighting': people employed in the regular economy with tax deducted under the PAYE arrangements, who have another job in the evenings or at weekends, which may have tax deducted at source, but is unlikely to, or on which they may make a tax return, but are unlikely to. Most of the people I have spoken to in this situation have in fact a tone of outraged moral probity, pointing out that, like anyone else, rich or poor, they pay one-third of their regular income in tax, and that if they choose to spend

their evenings on the serving side of the bar for cash, instead of on the drinking side spending it, that is their affair and not conceivably anyone else's.

The second point is that the Black Economy is entirely the creation of fiscal policy. PAYE and purchase tax were introduced during the Second World War to mop up consumer demand for non-existent goods when, for the very first time in their lives, wage-earners had cash to spare. They remain in existence today with the secondary function of turning market traders, unregistered for VAT, into criminals. Before the Second World War no one would have understood what was meant by the Black Economy, apart from boot-leggers in the United States during the Prohibition period, or the entire citizenship of the Soviet Union, who only stayed alive because of its existence. (The finest flowering of the Black Economy, even today, is in the Soviet Union and its satellites.)

In Britain, a reader of *Freedom* reminds us:

In 1939 a man started to pay income tax if he earned more than £380 per year, and he did so at the rate of 1s 8d (about 8½p) in the pound. Because that income was comparatively high, most men paid no tax at all, so that by today's standards 1939 was an almost tax-free society. Yet it was a society that provided most of the basic services even though money was spent on preparations for war. In 1976 a man would be liable for tax if he earned more than £1,500 a year, but (taking inflation into account) this figure represented less than half of the national average so that most of the people were forced to pay tax and they did so at the rate of 35p in the pound. The amount of tax had increased even more rapidly than inflation.

Let me repeat that the Black Economy is the creation of fiscal policy and is not a moral issue. Many of us, for a whole variety of reasons, do not accept the unspoken doctrine that the State is all-powerful and all-wise. If you make it a moral issue you have to cope with the fact that the governments of the world spend more than a million dollars of their tax income every ninety seconds on their armed forces and on war preparations. Was this what their citizens wanted?

The Black Economy is part, and not the most important part, of the Informal Economy, which I use as a blanket word to cover all the possible conceptions of alternative economies listed above, including ordinary self-employment, which is the official designation of two million workers in Britain and millions more in the United States, and including that multitude of mutual services where money doesn't change hands at all. But each of the descriptions I have listed has its own particular connotations, and they add up to an enormous range of human activities without which life on this planet would be impossible. The Formal Economy *depends* on the Informal Economy, but the reverse is also true. The household economy depends on manufactured

articles produced in the regular economy. So does the hidden economy of illicit sales, the communal economy of joint use of expensive equipment, or the enormous variety of sub-contracting which is combined in the finished and measurable product of the official economy.

It *does* in fact make sense to help people on the way to employing themselves, not as a temporary, bankrupt gesture, but because, whether we like it or not, this is the only discernible pattern of the future economy. In what other possible light can you read the daily newspaper headlines? 'Productivity up and the number in work falls', reports the business editor. 'Half those being trained on youth programmes returning to dole queues' is the headline for the social services correspondent. Victor Keegan remarks that 'the most seductive theory of all is that what we are experiencing now is nothing less than a movement back towards an informal economy after a brief flirtation of 200 years or so with a formal one'.

We are talking about the movement of work back into the domestic economy. There are certainly class divisions in the assumptions we make about this. People selling high technology often fantasise about this when persuading business executives that there was no need for that tedious commuter journey to work, since their personal computer outlet, word processor and videophone would enable them to do all their work from the comfort of home. Since one of the alleged privileges of that station of life is to do most of your work from the company car by radiotelephone anyway, we don't have to worry about them.

What about ordinary productive work at home? Home-working has always been a byword for exploitation, low pay and sweated labour. This is why the trade unions are so hostile towards it. But it is by no means a declining industry, and it is possible to reduce its least desirable aspects. One example of the improvement of the situation of homeworkers in the Nottingham lace industry (not a century ago, but in the 1970s) was given by Peggy Edwards and Eric Flounders in Frank Field's book *Are Low Wages Inevitable?*. The most suggestive illustration of one of the preconditions for effectively moving industrial production back into the home comes from the many studies of the informal economy in Italy. Sebastino Brusco claimed that it was only the existence of a vast informal sector of small workshops that saved the Italian economy from ruin in the 1970s. He points to the phenomenon of whole villages of small workshops with power tools sub-contracting for the industrial giants of the motor industry, and when hit by recession, turning to other kinds of industrial components.

A BBC film took us to another Italian industrial village where 80 per cent of the women's tights made in Italy are produced. It illustrated two

aspects of the informal economy there: the woman who, using a hand machine, earns a pittance from the contractor who brings her the unfinished goods for assembly and collects them finished, in the classic sweatshop situation; and, as a completely contrasted example, the woman who, with her mother, makes a good living assembling tights in her home, using a sophisticated machine which cost them £5,000 and is now paid for. Brusco claimed that what we were seeing was the decentralisation of manufacturing industry in a way which for him, as for Kropotkin, foreshadowed the pattern of a post-industrial society. Even Kropotkin's combination of industry and agriculture can be found, and is in fact traditional, in Italy. Philip Mattera reports: 'There are even people who have been moonlighting in agriculture. Studies of employees of the few large factories of the South, especially the huge Italsider plant at Taranto, have found that many are using their free time to resume their prior occupation as small farmers.'

The key difference between Brusco's two examples of the tights-makers was that one was trapped in the sweated labour situation and the other was freed from it by increased productivity, in just the same way as do-it-yourself users of power tools have increased theirs. It is of course a matter of access to a very modest amount of credit. This is the lesson of the Informal Economy in the exploding cities of the Third World too. Kenneth King, studying the multitude of small-scale producers in Nairobi, reminds us that the enterprising artisans do not use the improvised equipment from choice: 'Many would be anxious to obtain and use lathes if power were available, but the most popular brands now cost £3,000-£5,000. Although Western observers may admire the cheapness and ingenuity of the various Heath Robinson machines, their inventors regard them very differently. They know precisely what sort of Czechoslovakian centre-lathe they would buy first, what it would cost, and why they cannot afford it.' He contrasts the millions of pounds worth of credit advanced for the high-technology plastics industry with the extraordinary difficulties experienced in raising any kind of credit in the artisan sector. 'It is not principally the technical dimension which constitutes the obstacle, but rather the lack of basic credit infrastructure, security of tenure in the urban areas, and a technology policy that would support the very small-scale entrepreneur.'

In the rich world, where we have fallen so far under the spell of capitalist ideology, and of Marxist ideology too, which can only see petty trades as some kind of primitive left-over from some less advanced stage in industrial evolution, the informal society is similarly neglected, apart from token aid to the people who start small businesses in the expectation that they will become big business. Yet while we

have begun to look at its implications and its potential simply out of despair at the irreversible decline of employment, we tend to forget that it also represents an aspiration for millions of employed people. Ask anyone employed by someone else what he or she would do if a legacy or a gambling win suddenly provided working capital. In four cases out of five the answer would not be an aspiration to live a life of idleness on a sun-drenched island in the sun. It would be to set up on one's own, individually or collectively, to be one's own boss, to start a little business, a shop, a workshop, a smallholding or a country pub. It may be just a matter of dreams, but even a survey conducted by the Consumers' Association and published in its journal *WHICH?* indicated that the happiest and most satisfied workers were the self-employed.

What poor people in the world's poor cities do out of necessity, the poor *and* the securely employed in the rich world aspire to. The obstacle in both cases is the same: lack of access to capital or credit, lack of security, since in all countries social security is geared to the employed, controllable worker, not to the self-employed, and the absence of a social infrastructure which could automatically favour the small, local provider.

I often wonder how we reached the situation when honourable words like 'enterprise', 'initiative' and 'self-help' are automatically associated with the political right and the defence of capitalism, while it is assumed that the political left stands for a Big Brother State with a responsibility to provide a pauper's income for all and an inflation-proof income for its own functionaries. Ninety years ago people's mental image of a socialist was of a radical self-employed cobbler, sitting in his shop with a copy of William Morris's *Useful Work versus Useless Toil* on the workbench, his hammer in his hand, and his lips full of brass tacks. His mind full of notions of liberating his fellow workers from industrial serfdom in a dark satanic mill. No doubt the current mental picture is of a university lecturer with a copy of *The Inevitable Crisis of Capitalism* in one hand, and a banner labelled 'Fight the Cuts' in the other, while his mind is full of strategies for unseating the sitting Labour candidate in the local pocket borough.

Whatever did happen to all those aspirations for the liberation of work? Clive Jenkins at least wrote a book called *The Collapse of Work* about the way the micro revolution was going to destroy jobs at a terrifying rate, and urging us to outgrow the work ethic. But he got it all wrong, as usual. In the first place, who actually wants a cradle-to-grave contract with some Mitsubishi type employer just for the privilege of being put out to grass at 55 instead of 65, which is essentially what Clive is advocating? In the second place, he has got the

language wrong. He is talking, perfectly correctly, about the collapse of *employment*. There will never be a shortage of *work* in the sense of coping with useful tasks.

I asked a man who had just, unwisely as I thought, bought the local franchise for a photocopy shop what was in it for him. He replied: 'It's the only way open to me to be my own boss.' But surely you're completely in their hands, I asked. 'Yes', he replied, 'but the *feeling* of independence is the most important thing in life for me.' That this was not total deception can be gauged from the fact that in that arcane speciality known as job-evaluation, a crucial test is the time-span spent without supervision, or that in the Mondragon co-operatives in the Basque country, the absence of supervisors is regarded by workers as the great triumph of the enterprise.

But merely to mention co-operatives is to raise another tricky ideological use of language. If one man and his dog set up a workshop to make rocking-horses and three-legged stools, it is merely petit-bourgeois individualism, and to prove it our local craftsman of this kind is president of the Chamber of Commerce. But if two or three are gathered together to do just the same thing, with the assistance of the Manpower Services Commission, it becomes a worthy example of socially significant job creation. Co-operative production has become an OK phrase once more, in spite of the bashing it got sixty years ago from Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

One of the sad truths about life, which was impressed on me by a veteran of co-operative building enterprises, is that often those who are most in love with the *idea* of co-operation are those most lacking in the market skills of getting the job done on time at the right price, while those best endowed with entrepreneurial skills are often the least able to master the delicate art of working, without coercion, with others. I don't get any pleasure from citing this fact: I merely want to stress that there is room in the garden of the informal economy for both co-operators *and* individualists. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the paradoxical anarchist, would have taken this for granted. His vision of industrial organisation was that of a federation of self-employed craftsmen. We certainly get echoes of the Proudhonian view in Robert Frost's observation, 'Men work together, I told him from the heart / Whether they work together or apart'.

Prophecies seldom come true in the way their originators anticipate. But the idea that I mooted in my edition of Kropotkin's *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, that his decentralist and anarchist vision of the future of work will come true through the collapse of employment and the growth of the informal economy, is less absurd than the faith of his socialist contemporaries that the humanisation of work would come

about through the conquest of the power of the state by a political party claiming to be the proletariat. Communism, as some Polish wit said, is a conspiracy by the unemployed intelligentsia to complete the enslavement of the workers.

The French socialist André Gorz argues that the political left has become frozen into authoritarian collectivist attitudes belonging to the past:

As long as the protagonists of socialism continue to make centralised planning...the lynchpin of their programme, and the adherence of everyone to the 'democratically formulated' objectives of their plan the core of their political doctrine, socialism will remain an unattractive proposition in industrial societies. Classical socialist doctrine finds it difficult to come to terms with political and social pluralism, understood not simply as a plurality of parties and trade unions but as the co-existence of various ways of working, producing and living, various distinct cultural areas and levels of social existence.... Yet this kind of pluralism precisely conforms to the lived experience and aspirations of the post-industrial proletariat, as well as the major part of the traditional working class.

How on earth, he asks, has the socialist movement got itself into the position of dismissing as petit-bourgeois individualism all those freedoms which people actually value: everything that belongs to the private niche that people really cherish? This is important for anyone who has grown beyond the notion that a desirable society is one in which everyone else has exactly the same view of life as himself or herself. We, as anarchists, however, are not, I hope, lumbered with all that out-of-date luggage of the socialist movement. How do we approach the Informal Economy?

Anarchism has many different strands, but the thing that unites us is a hostility towards the institution of the State, and a desire to creep out from under it as much as we can. I have always admired the way in which many anarchists have contrived to scrape a living outside the official economy or in its interstices. I have a good anarchist friend who has always lived that way, but regards the informal economy with great suspicion, because he equates it with tax evasion. He believes that to approve tax evasion is to encourage a selfish individualism which ignores the need to pay for socially necessary services which in our society are provided by the state: the health service, unemployment insurance, education and so on. 'I wouldn't feel happy living in a society of such people', he says. Of course he, like me, pays so little income tax that we don't make any difference, but he is always attempting to draw the Inspector of Taxes into a dialogue about the principles of taxation, about the need to be empowered to transfer to other purposes the portion (13 per cent) of government revenue spent

on so-called defence. He is mortified by the computerisation of the tax system, of course.

Another anarchist friend of mine is hostile to the informal economy because he regards those who earn cash in it as blacklegs, undermining trade union rates of pay and labour protection legislation. He sees it as a conspiracy against working class solidarity. Both these friends look upon the operators in the informal economy as would-be businessmen, little capitalists — the kind of people who believe in the Thatcherite rhetoric about entrepreneurial enterprise.

Now, outside our assumptions, for or against, very little actual study has been made of the psychology and sociology of the small businessman. The only study I know of is a book by Richard Scase and Robert Goffee called *The Real World of the Small Business Owner*. The historian Paul Thompson reports on their findings thus:

It turns out that far from being an especially purposeful breed of men, Samuel Smiles' heroes a hundred years on, many small businessmen are closer to a kind of drop-out. They disliked the whole modern capitalistic ethic, and especially being employed by others; instead they preferred to feel the satisfaction of providing a 'service' and doing a 'good job'. Quite often it was a mere chance which allowed them to find their present vocation. Moreover, they will not provide the basis for our next industrial revolution, because they don't want to expand: that would imply employing people and losing the personal relationships they like to have with a small number of workers. Nor are they in the least discouraged by taxation: on the contrary, tax avoidance through the 'hidden' economy set many of them going, and once started, tax has simply been a 'given' within which they operate. And, most revealingly of all, the real burden of struggle in their earlier years fell as much on their wives as themselves: for it was the wife who had to turn the bedroom into an office and double up as company secretary and accountant for no pay at all.

It's an indication of how research changes stereotypes. Sad to say, the comforting stereotype that the informal economy helps the poorest most takes rather a dent from Ray Pahl's investigation reported in his book *Division of Labour*. He finds that the families who benefit most from the informal economy are not the 'welfare scroungers' that preoccupy the government and the popular press, but the 'moonlighters' in households with at least one formal income. Obviously tools and travel, and even the chance to sit around in a pub and pick up jobs, are expensive and depend on *some* basic income above the welfare minimum.

Well, I've taken you for a tour around the ideas in circulation about the informal economy. I think it's important from an anarchist point of view, and I am pleased that Freedom Press, an anarchist publishing house, has just brought out an anarchist interpretation of it. This is the little book *The Employment Question* by Denis Pym. He seeks to

question the legitimacy of the employing institutions, and the monopoly we ascribe to them of creating wealth.

We already have a dual economy, with on the one side capital, whose object is to do without labour, while the other, which is Pym's view is the unofficial, unmeasured and domestic economy, which 'offers people the opportunity to reunite their social and economic lives and use the tools and techniques which suit their personal and social requirements'. Pym's hero is the *bricoleur*, the local fixer, the man or woman who uses resourcefulness to cater directly and reciprocally for human needs in the interstices of the allegedly 'real' economy.

The entrepreneur, the big-time captain of industry and commerce, not the small-time wheeler-dealer, he sees as an egocentric, bullying, imposing public figure. The *bricoleur*, or *bricoleuse*, the person we know who actually keeps things going — relationships, machines and the natural world — is our warmer, closer, private, indispensable neighbour.

The text of a talk given to the Anarchist Discussion Group at the Mary Ward Centre, London, on 14 March 1986.

THE VOICE OF LABOUR.

September 19th, 1906.

COMRADES,

This is the title of a new weekly labour paper we are proposing to publish. The need for such a paper in England has been long felt, and will be realised to the full by our friends in all parts of the world. We have a great work to do to bring the English workers into line with the advanced movement of other countries. This we hope to accomplish. But few as we are and lacking means, we cannot even start without the help that all our papers need to give them birth. We therefore appeal to the international spirit of all comrades to help us if possible by subscriptions to enable us to appear and to ensure a wide circulation.

It is intended to publish the first number in January next.

Subscriptions should be sent to T. H. Krell, 127 Oscuston Street, London, N.W.
A list of the subscribers received will be published immediately after the issue of the first number.

Yours faithfully,

A. MARSH, J. TURNER, T. H. KRELL.

"Freedom,"

127 Oscuston Street, London, N.W.

Vernon Richards

Some Notes on Malatesta and Bakunin

I

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Bakunin's death in 1926, Malatesta, then in his seventieth year and publishing one of the most important of his many periodicals, *Pensiero e Volontà*,¹ commemorated the occasion with a short article in which he summarised Bakunin's contribution to the anarchist cause, as he saw it, followed by a short statement of anarchist principles as formulated in 1872 at the congress of St Imier which was inspired by Bakunin, and finally a rare piece of autobiography, 'My First Meeting with Bakunin'.² This last is a delightful, generous reminiscent piece which also contains reflections and statements of considerable interest in assessing the influence exerted by Bakunin on Malatesta as well as on the anarchist movement of that period.

Even more important in this connection, however, is Malatesta's long introduction to Max Nettlau's *Bakunin e l'Internazionale in Italia* published in 1928,³ by which time *Pensiero e Volontà* had been suppressed by Mussolini's Fascist government and its distinguished editor was living under house arrest in Rome, isolated from his friends and comrades in Italy and from the international movement until his death in 1932.

II

Arthur Lehning in the introduction to his volume of Bakunin selections⁴ suggests that one of the reasons why 'the philosophical depth and originality of Bakunin's writings' have not been fully appreciated is the 'all too obvious' one that, 'especially in English speaking countries, few of the agencies which have had the responsibility of disseminating revolutionary ideas have had much knowledge of Bakunin; and when they did have the knowledge they lacked the incentive to analyse or propagate his works'.

Assuming that I have understood the academic jargon in Lehning's gentle but clear reproach, and that by 'the agencies which have had the responsibility...' he simply means 'anarchist propagandists' such as the Freedom Press in England and their opposite numbers in other English-speaking countries, then all I can say is that this 'lack of

appreciation' is not limited to the English-speaking countries, and that in the circumstances it may now be argued that perhaps Lehning has overestimated the importance of Bakunin's contribution to anarchist thinking. For instance, apart from a quotation from Bakunin in the best known of Malatesta's pamphlets, *l'Anarchia*⁵ I cannot recall having ever seen direct references to Bakunin in Malatesta's writings. In view of the undoubted influence Bakunin exerted on him, this is surely significant, for I am convinced that Malatesta must have read all Bakunin's published writings that were available in the languages with which he was familiar.

Perhaps Bakunin the thinker has been the victim of his public image — partly of his own creation — as the man of action. It is unfortunately only too apparent that the anarchist 'movement' in all countries, in common with other revolutionary minorities, rejects the Church but sanctifies *its* martyrs, denounces society's war heroes but cherishes *its* men and women of action, and so tends to declare that propaganda by the deed is not only more 'revolutionary' but more positive than the propaganda of ideas. In this age of mass communications, with the emphasis on the visual through television, the fact that 'action' has a larger 'captured' audience than has the presentation of ideas, adds weight to the arguments of those professional revolutionaries who are 'in a hurry' and look to the sensational (kidnappings, hi-jackings, hold-ups, punch-ups with the police, bombs at Embassies, etc.) rather than the prosaic (meetings, journals, pamphlets) — i.e. propaganda *in depth*, continued with patience and without being what Bakunin called *endormeurs* or what romantics today call 'quietists'.

III

In Malatesta's recollections of his first meeting with Bakunin he writes: 'In Naples Bakunin was a kind of myth. He had been there in 1864 and 1867 I think, and had created a deep impression. He was spoken of as an extraordinary personality and, as generally is the case, both his qualities and his faults were exaggerated.'⁶ 'What was important', writes Malatesta, 'was the considerable discussion in all advanced circles, or those professing to be, of his ideas.' For the majority of Neapolitan 'intellectuals' who were patriots and traditionalists Bakunin had come to shake things up. 'For some he was the barbarian from the North, without God or country, without respect for anything held sacred, and was looked upon as a threat to the saintly Italian and Latin civilisation. For others he was the man who had brought to the Stygian marshes of Neapolitan traditionalism a breath of fresh air, and had

opened the eyes of the youth who had approached him to new and broad horizons.'

And the Fanellis, de Lucas, Gambuzzis, Palladinos, were 'the first socialists, the first internationalists, the first anarchists in Naples and in Italy'. Malatesta concludes: 'And so, as a result of hearing so much about him, Bakunin had become for me too a legendary personage; and to know him, to approach him, to warm the spirit before his fire was for me a burning desire, almost an obsession. The dream was about to be realised.'

What contemporary historians call 'charisma' is again revealed in Malatesta's introductory article where he recalls his last meeting with Bakunin in Lugano in 1875 when physically Bakunin was a mere shadow of his former self ('My dear friend, I am present at my own dissolution,' he told his young admirer, half seriously, half jokingly) and yet the by then septuagenarian Malatesta adds nostalgically: 'Only to think of him still warms my heart and fills it with youthful enthusiasm.'

He goes on to emphasise: '...this above all was Bakunin's worth: to create enthusiasm, to encourage a faith in action and for sacrifice in all those who had the good fortune to approach him. He himself used to say that one had to have *le diable au corps*; and he really did have it, physically and spiritually, the rebel Satan of mythology, who knows no gods, recognises no masters and never pauses in the struggle against all that hampers thought and action.'

IV

Arthur Lehning,⁸ in seeking to explain the apparent contradiction in Bakunin's career as summed up by E.H. Carr ('There are few whose life and thought have exerted such immense influence on the world as Michael Bakunin and yet who left such an inadequate and confused account of their views'), points out that 'the turbulent life of this revolutionary did not take place in the reading room of a great library' but adds something which present day revolutionaries could well take to heart: 'To a large extent, his influence was the result of his enormous epistolary activity. He could write some twenty-four letters in one day — many of them having the proportions of a pamphlet.' And in a footnote Lehning states that 'most of his correspondence from 1864 to his death in 1876 is lost'. Nevertheless he is confident that 'when all his works are accessible, it should be evident that they constitute a coherent social philosophy, with a complementary theory of revolutionary practice'.

It should be noted that Lehning omits the word anarchism from his

assessment, though in the opening paragraph of his introduction he does express the view that 'Bakunin's main historical achievement lies in his having linked the libertarian ideas of anarchism with the movement for the emancipation of the working classes, and in his having sown the seeds of anti-authoritarian Socialism and of the theory and practice of anarcho-syndicalism'.

V

Malatesta, however, is as unequivocal when it comes to ideas as he is when describing the personality of his youthful hero. 'I was a Bakunist, as were all my comrades of, alas, those past generations. Now — and for very many years past — I would not describe myself thus.' Indeed, Nettlau⁹ records the fact that at the Eighth Congress of the International Working Men's Association held in Berne in October 1876, only a few months after Bakunin's death, Malatesta, who was one of the Italian delegates, protested against 'the habit of calling themselves or of being known as Bakuninists' for the reasons that 'we are not [Bakuninists] since we do not share all Bakunin's theoretical and practical ideas and because, above all, we follow ideas and not men and rebel against this habit of embodying a principle in a man'.

This is a telling statement for one so young (Malatesta was then twenty-three, and he never deviated from this position throughout his life. The fact that in his youth he had to 'choose' from a galaxy of 'great men' — Garibaldi, Mazzini, Marx and Bakunin — probably gave him at an early stage an awareness of the dangers that stem from associating ideas with personalities.

All these personalities were *consciously* 'leaders of men'. Lehning¹⁰ writes of Bakunin that 'being primarily a man of action [he] always wrote for men and women he was trying to trigger into acting or else to guide while they were acting'. He underlines Carr's observation that it was 'impossible to convey to posterity that sense of overwhelming power which was always present to those who knew him in life' by adding his own that he 'had the rare gift of *persuading people to devote their lives to his cause*, and of quickly forming intimate bonds with them *if they seemed useful to him for his revolutionary purpose*'. (My emphasis.)

All these 'powers' were anathema to Malatesta. In spite of the sycophants who sought to build him up as the 'Lenin of Italy' who would 'lead' the anarchist revolution,¹¹ he directed his propaganda to the people at large, not because he had any special faith in their revolutionary responses, but because he had even less faith in revolutionary élites.

Malatesta¹² summed up his criticism of Bakunin's position in these

terms: 'Ideas have developed and been modified. Today I find that Bakunin, in political economy and in the interpretation of history, was too Marxist; I find that his philosophy was conducted without possible issue in the contradiction between the mechanical concept of the universe and the faith in will over the fate of mankind. But all this is of no great importance. Theories are uncertain and changing concepts; and philosophy, consisting of hypotheses inhabiting the clouds, has little or no influence on life.'

And he concludes with the reflection that 'Bakunin always remains, in spite of all possible disagreements, our great master and inspiration'. I think that we should take this remark and the two concluding paragraphs of that 'commemorative' article more as proof of Malatesta's loyalty to the hero of his adolescence, and of his modesty so far as his own contribution to anarchist thought is concerned, than as his considered opinion of Bakunin's contribution. After all, he ends his memorable 'Recollections and Criticisms of an Old Friend' — about Kropotkin this time — with the words: 'I do not think my strictures on him can diminish Kropotkin the person, who remains, in spite of everything, one of the shining lights of our movement.'¹³

VI

Of his Bakuninist period, Malatesta admitted that 'though none of us had read Marx, we were still too Marxist'.¹⁴ Luigi Fabbri, his closest comrade (and to my mind the most reliable interpreter of Malatesta's ideas), considered that the period of transition between the anarchism of the First International and the anarchism that Malatesta expounded to the end of his life occurred during the seven or eight years from the publication of *l'Associazione* (Nice-London, 1889-1890) to *l'Agitazione* (Ancona, 1897-1898). But Fabbri observes that already in *La Questione Sociale* (Florence, 1884) 'certain fundamental aspects of his development are fairly clearly revealed'.¹⁵ Malatesta confirmed this view in a letter to Fabbri, adding that there was a greater difference between his ideas of 1897 and those of 1872-1874. 'Then we were "Kropotkinians" even before Kropotkin (in fact Kropotkin found those ideas which he made his own, already widely held by us before he entered the "Bakuninist" wing of the international movement).' After 1897 he modified his views on small details only. At the time he had 'more faith in syndicalism — or rather in the syndicalists — than I have now; and communism seemed then a more simple and an easier solution than it appears now.'

In a long and interesting comment on an equally long and interesting article by Max Nettlau on 'The Collectivist International and Anarchist

Communism',¹⁶ Malatesta is in agreement with his old friend that there cannot be one anarchist solution to the socio-economic problems, and that 'perhaps it is true that a kind of narrowness of views, a kind of dogmatism can be included among the reasons — to my mind certainly not the main reasons — which have prevented a greater and more rapid development of our movement'. And one can imagine him adding with a smile: 'But we are talking in historical terms, and Nettlau who is a scrupulous historian and a stickler for the truth will, I am sure, welcome my reminding him of certain facts, which might be of use in making a fairer assessment of the responsibilities of the older anarchist propagandists.'

And he points out things which the academic historians of anarchism simply refuse to face up to: 'The International which emerged from its Congress in Basel in 1869 was collectivist but — even in its most radical sections — could hardly be said to be anarchist. It was *collectivist* in the sense given to this word at the time, that is, that the land and working tools — in other words all the means of production — were collective property and that each worker, alone or in association, had the right to the integral product of his labour; but it had no clear and definite ideas about how each individual or each association would be allocated their share of the land, the raw materials and the tools to which they were entitled, or how to measure the work of each and how to establish a criterion for the measurement of value for purposes of barter. All this had to be run by the "collectivity" and there was not too much concern about the danger that this "collectivity" might ever in fact turn out to be another "government", meaning that some individuals having seized power would impose their will on others.'

It was out of concern with these kinds of problems, and out of agreement with the Internationalists of all countries on the principle that 'everybody should be workers, that no one should live by oppressing and exploiting others, and that universal brotherhood and solidarity should replace struggle and competition by which well-being is achieved at the expense of that of others', that they went beyond collectivism and 'after lengthy discussions and polemics' came to the conclusion that 'the only solution which can achieve the ideal of human brotherhood and eliminate all the insoluble difficulties of measuring the effort expended and the value of the resulting product, is a communistic organisation in which each one freely makes his contribution to production and consumes freely according to his needs — thinking that having thus eliminated all reasons for strife between people in one's daily life, all reasons for power and all desires to dominate would also be eliminated'.

As a result of these discussions the Italian delegates of the

International, assembled at a Congress in Florence in 1876 — the year of Bakunin's death — voted almost unanimously with only one dissentient voice for a resolution in which the communistic would replace the collectivist programme that had been hitherto upheld. Malatesta adds that the Italian resolution was soon accepted with enthusiasm, first in Switzerland where Kropotkin and Elysée Reclus were living at the time and later by most anarchists in all countries 'with the exception of the Spaniards, who by an overwhelming majority remained for many more years faithful supporters of the collectivist programme'. However, his conclusions are, as always, free from any dogmatic pronouncements: 'So we were then, as we are still, communist anarchists; but this does not mean that for us communism is a panacea or a dogma and that we do not realise that from our point of view communism cannot be achieved without first creating the right moral and material conditions.'

VII

When in the 1920s Fabbri wrote to Malatesta urging him to formulate 'a practical and possible anarchism which marks a step forward from Bakunin and Kropotkin', his old friend had replied that he 'did not despair of one day satisfying that wish'.¹⁷ Yet to my mind Malatesta's writings from 1913 to 1932 had done just this. His common-sense approach to anarchism is always informed by a deep understanding of human behaviour and an acute political awareness, and though he may seem a 'quietist' to some noisy anarchists, nobody could accuse him of being either a reformist or a politician. He remained to the end an 'insurrectionist', inspired by Bakunin but without either his romantic and élitist approach or his dubious choice of 'causes'. What also distinguishes the insurrectionism of Malatesta from that of Bakunin is that, apart from the rather ridiculous youthful attempted uprising at Benevento in 1877 (which no popular historian of anarchism seems able to forget, in spite of Malatesta's own assessment of it), Malatesta spent more than fifty years propagating anarchist ideas directed at no specific 'class', with the aim of creating both an understanding of, and a desire for, the anarchist social revolution among as many people as possible. This the historians have apparently not yet discovered.

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 - 9 In *Errico Malatesta: La Vida de un Anarquista* (Buenos Aires, 1923). The previous, incomplete, Italian edition has been reprinted by offset.
 - 10 *op. cit.*
 - 11 Shortly after his 'triumphal' return to Italy after the First World War he published a short statement in the journal *Volontà* (16 January 1920; reprinted in *Scritti*, Vol. 2 (Geneva, 1935), which sums up his whole life style. It includes the following trenchant remarks: 'During the agitation for my return and during these first days since my return to Italy things have been said and done which offend my modesty and my sense of proportion. Comrades should bear in mind that hyperbole is a figure of speech which must not be abused. They should above all bear in mind that to shower a man with praise is politically a dangerous thing and morally unhealthy for the one praised no less than for the one praising him. And anyway my make-up is such that I find applause and acclamation unpleasant, and they tend to inhibit rather than inspire me to work. I want to be a comrade among comrades, and if I have the misfortune of being older than everybody else, I cannot be expected to enjoy being constantly reminded of it by the deference and the concern with which comrades surround me. Have I made myself clear?' *Fabbri* also describes a youth meeting at which Malatesta was the speaker and at which the young chairman presented him as the 'Lenin of Italy', when Malatesta was at pains to explain why not only was he *not* but that they should not *want* him to be!
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Denis Pym
**'Informing', Communicating and
Organisation**

The institutional world and to some extent the domestic, too, is caught in the grip of a bonanza in electronically based 'informing' devices: devices which record, store, analyse, transfer and present vast quantities of data of a visual, abstract kind.¹ This feast of boundless optimism includes in its diet computers, word processors, visual display units, video games and an increasing number of video systems. It provides, too, significant content and background to television programmes, films, radio and other media whose essential content is not obviously abstract. Our fascination for information technology (IT) has no equal in the realm of the now fashionable high technology. In the context of IT the world's most pressing problems pale into insignificance. Indeed, these number among the problems that proponents believe IT will solve within an Information Society which is widely forecast by academics, social commentators and businessmen alike. It is to this organisational aspect of the information explosion that this paper is directed.

From a different perspective the paucity of doubters is equally remarkable. In a world in which change is in vogue and the fashionable dominates the minute, the confidence in IT makes a somewhat desperate faith in its value and cost-effectiveness. This new industry is constructed on the centrality of knowledge and efficiency and yet its operations are shrouded in ignorance and lack adequate means for checking their efficacy. Curious people might care therefore to examine the worthiness of the celebration.

Information and Technology

The most powerful assumption underlying our notion of information is the one we usually choose to ignore, thanks to chirographic conditioning. In our institutional roles, and even outside them, we, industrial folk, equate information, overwhelmingly but not wholly, with visual, verbal and numerical detail. In other words, in many aspects of life we are prepared to reduce human perception to one sense and to reduce further those visual cues we take most seriously, as information, to abstractions. We even believe, contrary to the evidence,

that people think naturally in abstractions (Luria, 1976). It is germane to my argument that such thinking underlies most of the apparently intractable problems facing modern societies. Yet we are also beginning to recognise the implications and ramifications of this impoverished view of both ourselves and the world around us.

The problem, oversimplified, is our attempted encapsulation of existence in writing, the print and the computer and the invention of a host of illusory authorities outside ourselves associated with such media. We can't plead that we were not warned, only that we have failed to hear men of vision through the ages. In his dialogues Plato discusses the opinion that writing should improve memory, wit and wisdom (human attributes much valued by the ancients). Inventors of an art, Plato observes, cannot judge its uses. On the contrary, says Plato of the medium of which he himself was a master, it will lead to a *loss of memory* as people come to trust and depend on external, written characters. Such people will be 'hearers' of many things and will have *learned nothing*, appear omniscient and *know nothing*, and they will be *tiresome company* having the *show of wisdom without the reality*.

In *The Dunciad*, Pope too characterises the multitude of writers and publishers of the eighteenth century who followed in the wake of the new political arithmetic as plodding, witless dullards: victims of the impact of typography on minds already shaped by literacy. But it is Blake who draws attention in *Jerusalem* to the way in which an invention like the phonetic alphabet reinforced by movable type enables people to abstract the visual world from the sensory complex. We then reinternalise writing and the print in our minds in such a way that the non-visual senses are cut off and closed down. So, what we perceive we become. Thus through history people have been prepared to represent the human anatomy in their artifacts — the brain, for example, as a sling, book, clock, mill, water-pump, telephone exchange and computer. Hence my observations (Pym, 1984) that the current information technology is typically a misnomer for devices which 'outform' and confirm rather than inform and surprise.

So powerful is this externalisation of authority, and the associated demeaning of self, even after dismissing notions like artificial intelligence and the interchangeability of computer and human brain, that John Searle (1984) found it necessary to conclude his Reith Lectures with a plea: 'We cannot discover that we do not have minds, that they do not contain conscious subjective, intentionalistic mental states, nor could we discover that we do not at least try to engage in voluntary, free, intentional actions.'² We are left with Marshall McLuhan's (1969) judgement of the industrial age as 'a kind of Theatre of the Absurd in which people train themselves to act without reacting,

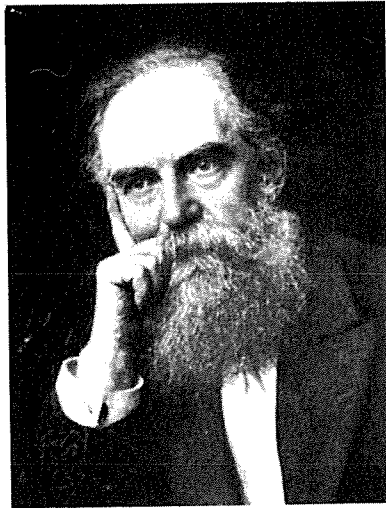
priding themselves on their powers of detachment and non-involvement' — of being something less than human?

According to McLuhan, writing and the print have fashioned a fragmentary existence for a uniform type of citizen, educated by men of letters. Literacy creates homogeneous models of association, industry, markets and national states. But if the dominant technologies of industrial society emphasise sub-division and external regulation in organisation, the promise of electronics is very different. Looking upon the range of machinery and jobs which information technology now embraces, we might be tempted to wonder just what has happened to the electronic revolution which promised *liberation* from the most reducing and devastating aspects of everyday life and the means for *integrating* mind and body, reality and fantasy, subject and object, order and chaos? The answer lies in the nature of electronics, that it is, as McLuhan claims, a gentle giant. It does not dictate the uses to which it is put. We are using electronics in organisation to sustain the institutions of industrial society and to a lesser extent the authority of employment itself.

The impoverishment which comes with the imbalance in the use of our senses, of literally closing some of our senses off, is at last becoming a matter of concern. Let us take as illustration taste and diet. Psychologists who study infant behaviour before and shortly after birth are moving towards the view that we are born geniuses and become idiots in order to communicate with our parents and teachers. I can recall, through a jaundiced memory, similar findings over food and taste. Evidently, the infant child can pick himself a sound diet from a range of foods, a skill many older children and adults have apparently lost. Industrial man judges his food by sight; otherwise how do we explain our consumption of vast quantities of homogeneous, uniform, well-packed junk foods: tasteless stuff devoid of many essential elements and vitamins locked out by nitrates that 'nurtured' them and washed by numerous 'protective' chemicals, every one discovered by the best scientists The Company could employ? But even the belly-ache which provides the cues to warn us against repeats of the ensuing battle between junk and stomach can be avoided by taking the necessary pill or medicine. Both taste and the consequences of our dietary errors can be expelled from our experience — or can they? Whereas once we'd have suspected that seeing taste could be eating cardboard, now we barely acknowledge the cardboard has become poisonous and the plague, cancer, is beckoning. This substitution of sight for taste and the representation of non-visual clues by abstract symbols illustrates a kind of self-inflicted sensory colonialism which impoverishes human



F. Saverio Merlino



Nikolas Chaikovski



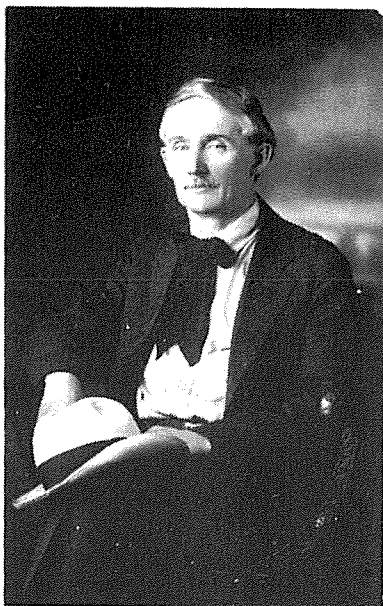
Joseph Presburg



C.W. Mowbray — Tom Cantwell



Agnes Henry



Harry Kelly



Bernhard Kampffmeyer on Jersey, 1896



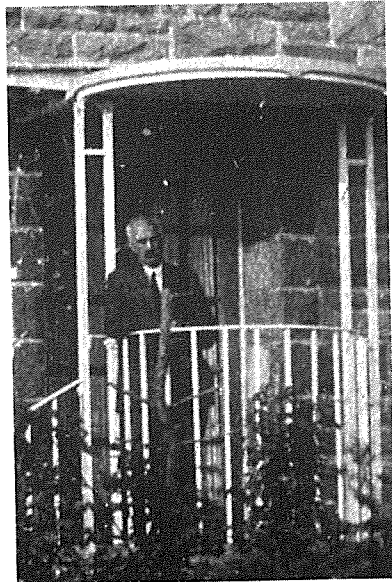
Jones — Jimmy Dick — G. Ballard



S. Carlyle Potter



Karl Walter



George Davison



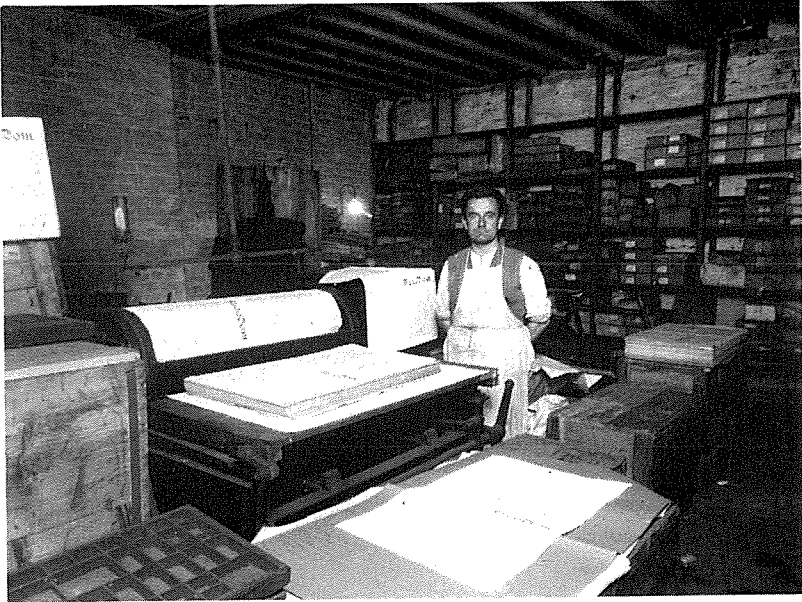
*George Frost, for many years
Freedom's main contact in Leeds*



*'John Wakeman'
(Richard Hawkin)*



*A.B. Howie, before the First World
War reporting on the Glasgow Movement (May Day, 1911)*



*Percy Meachem in Freedom's machine room,
127 Ossulston Street (1927)*

The Anti-Conscription League.

The Anti-Conscription League is an organisation consisting of men and women who are totally opposed to Conscription in any shape or form, whether Military or Industrial. Maximum of the League is confined to men who are likely to be called upon for service should Conscription become law, and who are determined to refuse such service—whatever the consequences may be. Men above military age, and women, who are in sympathy with the aims of the League, are welcomed as Associates. The Associates of the League, besides assisting financially, will be able to render invaluable aid in educating public opinion, and organising protests against any oppressive proceedings which may be instituted against Members.

The League bases its attitude upon the urgent need that has arisen for offering immediate and whole-hearted opposition to the threatened further enslavement of individuals through legislation.

If you are in agreement with the aims of the League, as stated above, act at once! Join the League to-day. Send your name and address (stating whether you are joining as Member or Associate) to the Secretary, Anti-Conscription League, 127 Ossulston Street, London, N.W., who will also gladly receive contributions. The minimum subscription (for Members and Associates) is sixpence per quarter.

This part should be cut off and sent to the Secretary.

Being in full sympathy with the aims and objects of the Anti-Conscription League, please enroll me as a
(State whether Member or Associate.)

Name

Address

Age

Printed by the FREEDOM PRESS, 127 Ossulston Street, London, E.C.

127 OSSULSTON ST. N.W.
Sept. 1916.

Dear Comrades,

Owing to the continued effects of Government expropriations on our printing machine, type, literature, etc., and the arrest of our comrades between the ages of 16 and 41 for transference to either military or prison life, the scarcity of money and workers to carry on the actual production of the paper has decided the VOICE OF LABOUR Group to suspend the VOICE OF LABOUR and to concentrate their efforts on FREEDOM for a short time. FREEDOM will be sent monthly to those who formerly subscribed to the VOICE, unless objection is raised. Will all those who now take both papers please intimate whether they prefer that the balance of their subscriptions be returned or be retained for the FREEDOM Guarantee Fund? In the case of Groups, will they please let us know as soon as possible if they will take an increased number of FREEDOM monthly and if they would like a supply of this explanatory letter for their VOICE subscribers. It is the intention of the VOICE OF LABOUR Group to keep together to re-start the paper at the first possible moment. The propaganda work will not stop at all and we shall be glad if those comrades who are ready to help us by our old methods, or who can suggest new methods more suitable to the conditions we have to surmount, will communicate with us at once. There is no time to be lost. Already suggestions have reached us quite generously from London comrades and a Group will be formed immediately. It is up to our provincial comrades to rally together and carry on the work locally in their own way. Let us show those who are trying to crush all rebel thought before the finish of the war, that so far from having attained their end, they have given our movement an impetus which will culminate in action in stead of mere words.

Fraternally Yours,
VOICE OF LABOUR Group.



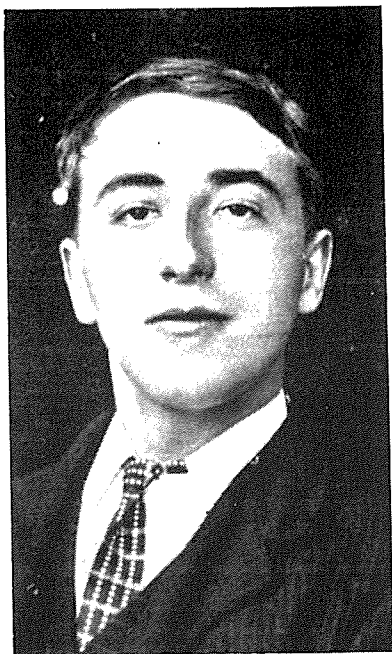
Errico Malatesta (about 1880)



Michael Bakunin (about 1875)



Errico Malatesta during a hungerstrike in prison (1921)

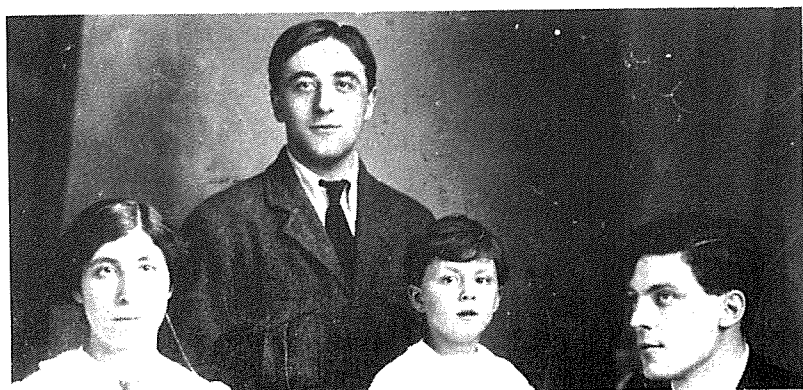


Rev. GUY A. ALDRED

Minister of Gospel of Revolt.



Guy Aldred in 1962



Rose Witcop — Guy Aldred — their son Annesley — Henry Sara

THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE. ARE WE OVER-POPULATED? To Working Men and Women.

Our Land Monopoly and competitive system of society combined have at last brought us to a crisis. On one hand we see men with a million, several with half a million, and many with their thousands of acres of land, used mostly for game, deer, and pasture; the land under tillage not half cultivated, 30,000,000 acres of waste land—half at least of which is only waiting for labour to be applied to enable us to grow more than sufficient food for ourselves, instead of importing as we now do farm produce to the amount of £120,000,000 per annum. On the other hand, we see the Capitalists, the House Farmers—the owners of our filthy slums—and the whole thieving crew who prey on our labour. Between them they have at last brought things to such a state that the producers of all this wealth we see around us are starving. We, the workers, are willing to go on adding to the store of wealth in the social hive, but they say—No, we are suffering from over-production, we have too many clothes in our warehouses, you must therefore go naked; our warehouses are full of food, therefore you must starve; in fact, we are over-populated, therefore you, the workers, had better emigrate. Now, friends, as this question of over-population and emigration is the great bugbear of the day, we will give you the opinions of some of our most eminent men as to how large a population this country could support if properly cultivated.

MUTHALL, in his "Progress of the World," says:—

"The world consumes 38,500,000 tons of wheat yearly, and, at the average English rate of 28 bushels per acre, it would suffice to put the island of Great Britain under wheat to supply all nations. And if England, by any contingency, were compelled to raise wheat for her own consumption, it would be sufficient to sow an area of five counties the size of Devonshire to supply all our needs for the three kingdoms, at seven bushels per head."

Mr. J. J. MCKEE says:—

"Although the quality of the land on my farm is much below the average of the United Kingdom, I produce probably so much more than the usual average yield, that if all our lands were made equally productive with mine, our population could not consume one-half the produce."

SIR RICHARD PHILLIPS:—

"The United Kingdom would support 250,000,000 of people on vegetables, or 80,000,000 on flesh and vegetables, without resorting to importation, or to our 80,000,000 acres of waste land."

Professor NEWMAN:—

"Under an improved land system we could as easily feed 60,000,000 of people as we now feed 30,000,000 with the aid of importation."

ALLISON, in his "Principles of Population":—
"Great Britain and Ireland are capable of maintaining in ease and affluence 120,000,000 of people."

PORTER, in his "Progress of the Nation":—

"The present area of land under cultivation, if properly cultivated, would grow sufficient food for 30,000,000 of people by the plough, or 120,000,000 by spade cultivation."

THE AGRICULTURAL AND TRAMWAY BOARD OF ENGLAND:—

"The present cultivated area of the United Kingdom would keep six times its present population if properly cultivated, without resorting to the enormous quantity of waste land."

"By Heavens, our rights are worth fighting for!"—R. CHURCHILL.

Professor BALDWIN says:—

"There are in Ireland alone 6,000,000 acres of land in need of drainage, which would employ thousands of men profitably."

The Earl of LEICESTER, on the Land System:—
"I believe that if the land under cultivation were thoroughly drained, and all obstructions removed, we might double the present amount of food grown."

JOSEPH ARCH, in his letter to the Meeting held at Stoney Meeting House:—

"I think your State-Aided Emigration Scheme is the best one for relieving our large towns of over-population, but in our rural districts we cannot get men sufficient to reap the harvest, and then we have at least 10,000,000 acres of waste land which could be cultivated at a profit."

HOTEL, on "National Resources and How They Are Wasted":—

"When Labour is rightly applied, and reasonable economy, the accumulative power of human industry is something marvellous. If we take Agriculture, in which there has probably been the least improvement, and where up to the present time machinery has been less applied than in any other department of labour, one man will cultivate sufficient land to produce food for the support of at least twenty persons."

Friends, you will find all these agree that to properly cultivate the land already under cultivation there are not sufficient labourers in this country, and that if it was properly cultivated we should grow more food than required, instead of as now sending £120,000,000 a-year out of the country for food. Then what nonsense to advocate that we should be sent out to colonise the snows of Canada.

The Irish people were told in 1849, when they had a population of 9,000,000 they were over-populated. In 1883 they are told the same tale with a population of 5,000,000. Alas, friends, it is true they are over-populated, but by whom.

Mr. G. Phillips Bevan, D.L., read a paper before the Statistical Society in which he said the working class had decreased from 1,127,629 in 1841 to 538,137 in 1871, or a decrease of 589,492. The non-producing class had increased from 850,353 in 1861 to 2,813,360 in 1871, or an increase in ten years of 1,963,007. When Ireland had a population of 9,000,000 she exported to England on an average of twenty years 20,000,000 bushels of wheat per annum. Now with about half the population she has to import 33,000,000 bushels yearly.

This is the state to which they have brought Ireland; they now want to serve England the same.

When we are over-populated, we would remind you how the bees act in such an emergency. First of all they kill the idle drones as useless members of society; next they send out their young colonies. But we poor fools accept the advice our good drones give us and leave our hive full of honey for them to enjoy while we wander through the world in a state of starvation. Fellow workers, we ask you to wake up from your apathy, and demand that as the land is and always has been the collective property of the nation, it shall be used for the benefit of the whole people; that as the capital and wealth of the country are the results of the labour of many past generations as well as the present, it shall be used for the benefit of the present and all future generations.

Anarchist papers, pamphlets and other literature can be obtained at 127 Oldbath-st., London, N.W.

Freedom leaflet, 1898 (originally published in the English Freiheit, 1881, and as a leaflet by the Revolutionary Committee of Joseph Lane)

experience. The condition comes from passing to our artifacts authorities rightly belonging to ourselves.

In short, the reintegrating aspects of electronics are indeed important and could lead to more questioning relationships with our artifacts and a wide acceptance of William Blake's proposition that imagination, that peculiarly human attribute of the mind, be viewed as the outcome of the interplay of all our senses, in concert.

The Problem

So, my argument goes, the information explosion belongs less to the future than to a rearguard action in defence of the industrial order, its institutions and the linear, sequential way of handling that experience which underlies that order. This, then, is electronics in the service of centralised authority, employment, rampant consumerism, bureaucracy and abstract education. The information society, if we take it seriously, is a dangerous nonsense because, as we will see, it fictionalises people, not as gods but as one-dimensional, one-sense, less than human beings. It advances, too, those very cultural artifacts which preserve the most dehumanising aspects of industrialisation — namely, the erosion of meaning through its divorce from the realities of the everyday, its reification of the abstract and the acquiescence of socially grounded notions of freedom to an abstract totalitarianism which the formal, public, institutional domain is beginning to represent to more and more citizens.

If these assertions appear to be too strong, an exaggeration of the problem, then it would be my preference to go further rather than to retract. Through this overload of visual, literary and numerical data, misnamed as information, and the onward march of fragmented time and space, the 'new' perspective recommends we foist upon ourselves, willingly and in the name of progress, a kind of organised chaos. In this 'order' we come to equate learning, working, travelling and leisure with a ritualised and obligatory sitting inside or before machines. This passive, sedentary existence is remarkably devoid of first-hand experience. Those few genuine experiences that permeate its barricades we encourage ourselves to discard as unreal, for the abstract is now our reality. So the way we now organise ourselves and our affairs reduces human contact. The IT advertisements recommend you can soon shop or work from home or do everything from the comfort of the office. But we cannot yet discern the connections between our proposals for this 'better life' and the lethargy, subservience, ill-health, the abuse of drugs, violence and powerlessness which are the hallmarks of a culture of despair.

Whatever the gains claimed by the Young Turks of the information society, its contributions to the elevation of the human condition are precious few. For all our talk of enlightenment, you and I have fewer opportunities to explore and use our non-visual senses than the citizens of any preceding civilisation. Being able to taste the food we eat, smell the odours of the country after rain, experience the joys of love and the pain of despair are realities of the everyday which we discount as trivial in the face of our abstract society. Sensory experiences, the meaning of being human, which we share with all people through history, now appears to be threatened by a techno-structure which we created but cannot control.

Informing, Communicating and Organisation

Enough of pessimism! In the place of the informing society, I propose we put the performing society and the quest for good organisation. This tradition has an ally in the quiet, less visible concern both inside and outside the institutional world with the state of human communication. Amid our public preoccupations with economy, efficiency, progress, new technology and organisations, such a venture might seem out of place, may even be confused with the call for 'law and order' and the activities of para-military elements which is how government everywhere appears to represent the pursuit of 'order'.

The basis of good organisation, I propose, lies elsewhere, in what people do together and in the nature of their relationships. This doing embraces common activities pursued within a climate mix of certainties and uncertainties of co-operation, competition and collusion that offers the participants, on their terms, the opportunity to engage in their daily lives with a degree of confidence about the outcomes. This is a view of organisation which locates authority with people but recognises that there is a role to play for organisations. Since people have long demonstrated a desire to fashion their own affairs in preference to allowing others that privilege or to permitting events to occur randomly, it is likely that common notions about good organisation are innate to people, a function of the way we could perceive and handle the world around us. This human notion of organisation contrasts with more efficient bureaucracy² and it allows elements of mystery and spontaneity, of natural confusion but *not* the chaos we now impose upon ourselves as organisation.

To advance the argument we must acknowledge a vital difference between informing and communicating. *The proposition that all informing devices require the message sender to invent or fictionalise the message receiver's condition and situation, even his or her capacities and*

inclinations and vice-versa, has been advocated and explored by W J Ong (1977). Hence the proposition that such devices outform.³ By contrast, *all human communication is intrinsically inter-subjective and informing*.

The extent to which the parties are able to climb into each other's shoes is usually perceived by them as an indication of the strengths and likely survival over time and space of the relationship. Good organisation, as I have outlined it, needs that inter-subjectivity too. Communication, not information, is the essential ingredient of organisation as it is represented in people doing things together.

This distinction between informing devices and human communication raises a question about media, usually wrongly described as media of communication. Mass media like television, radio and newspapers are outforming devices and do not demand an anticipated response from the reader, listener or viewer to take place. As Ong (1982) points out, in real human communication the message-sender has to be not only in the sender position but also in the receiver position before he or she can send anything. 'Human communication is never one way. It not only calls for response but is shaped in its very form and content by anticipated response.'

There are, of course, technical devices which facilitate communication, like the telephone, although the communicating aspect is solely auditory. Much invention is necessary and scope for modification limited for both parties. However, if we associate the telephone with a television screen the opportunity for communication is enhanced. When proponents of information technology talk of machines and other devices communicating, they refer to interacting informing devices and they do so from an elevated view of their artifacts and an impoverished view of people. The current fad with 'user friendly' devices is symptomatic of the severe limitations all our so-called informing devices impose upon human perception and action.

As Maruyama (1983) points out, the current range of computers available on the market are characterised by homogenistic, hierarchical and classificational elements. These systems are based on the epistemology that there are objective facts and that such facts are additive. The ideology implies that if everybody has enough information they will agree on the facts. Disagreements belong to the lack of information, ignorance and error. Discrepant information is said to include error and is disregarded. To remind the reader, this framework is a consequence of chirographic conditioning. Maruyama proposes alteration applications which are characterised by heterogeneous, interactive, homeostatic and morphogenetic elements. One

such alteration model I use myself in much of my field enquiries (Pym, 1979).

Assumptions, Stereotypes and Outforming

Let us return to the subject of 'in-forming' and the devices we use in this activity and at the same time focus on their out-forming or externalised elements. We need particularly to explore the problems we create for ourselves when we 'inform' each other and the role of communication in modifying that problem. But first let me reiterate the limitation of all informing devices. If I as message-sender wish to send to you (the reader) my views on informing and communicating, I can know at this moment and place of writing just what my most personal preoccupations are but I know little or nothing about you, the reader, for you are not here with me, so I must invent your capabilities and inclinations if you are to exist in any way at all. This invention may represent pure externalisation to you *unless* you can identify with, internalise and generally go along with part of my invention. You might protest, if you could, 'This is not me.'

However, I do not fictionalise you, the reader, on the basis of nothing. I am most likely to assume that you are a sort of mirror-image of myself. If I think a little about the subject this mirror-image will shatter. I assume you are educated, technically orientated, interested in information technology, youngish — less than 40 years. I doubt, too, whether your education and experience will help you to understand what I am trying to get at, for I have written such pieces before. I suspect you will not like what you read, and so on. Now you can more easily protest, 'You are not describing me!'

These predispositions I must carry through the article for, unless I engage in direct exchange with yourself and other readers, I will be unable to modify my assumptions. Time will pass and different spaces will be occupied without the opportunity to explain, check and modify or reorganise my assumptions through human communication. My isolation from you will almost certainly lead to a hardening of assumptions. These can become iron-hard stereotypes. It is not difficult to imagine that the more we conceive of informing devices as replacements for human communication, the more we proliferate stereotypes and that these develop the capacity, through their isolating effects, of actually discouraging and preventing understanding and action. This way we find ourselves in the realm of disinformation. The distinction between informing and confusing is more tentative than the literary mind can acknowledge.

In human communication we also need predispositions to get

ourselves into exchanges. Society has ways of helping this process, much as the clear status differences between people in non-literate societies aid desired exchange in apparent contrast with industrial societies, where we find status differences often invoke barriers to communications. However, once into the exchange, its fruitfulness and continuity become dependent on the parties modifying their original predispositions or putting them to constructive use in rites or ceremonies which precede or accompany the exchange. Anybody connected with industrial relations and the exchanges between representatives of management and union can observe the ritualisation of their differing interests and of the conflicts between them. Away from the limelight, the naive observer may be amazed with how well these 'conflicting parties' can actually get along together.

This out-forming and hardening of stereotypes is encouraged by those who own the informing devices and their contents. Such ownership typically rests with an ever-increasing professional and scientific work-force — teachers, technicians, journalists, researchers, programme producers, film directors, computer experts, engineers, and so on. These are people we still value for their expertise, impartiality and detachment. When acting in their professional rather than personal capacities, such people will be predisposed to emphasise information rather than communication. Whereas the traditional self-employed professionals like lawyers and doctors might depend on their success and survival on maintaining close personal contact with their clients, the new professionals look to their employment and to their institutional clients. Often the task of keeping in touch with customer and client is delegated to special experts — public relations, audience and consumer researchers, coordinators, or consultants. Sometimes this task falls to sub-professional personnel. Since these experts in relations are usually in the employ of the message-sender or work for the same organisation, they have good reason to tell the message-sender more or less what he wants to hear. Professionals have a vested interest in the build-up of instruments and predispositions that impair human exchange. These are good for business!

To illustrate, one perpetual problem that big organisations are likely to report upon is the gap between the expert (say in IT) and senior management. Investigation shows this gap is universally lamented but exists almost everywhere. It is apparently accepted as a fact of life because, as I have argued elsewhere (Pym, 1980), it both *conceals* serious inadequacies in the way we contrive to structure thought and experience, and preserves the employment of manager and expert. The gap is part of a collusive game to protect and preserve our employment.

To tackle the problem of the 'gap' our practical man needs courage,

for he must refuse to collude. He must also locate his problem in the relationship between categories, between manager and expert. He must, in terms of my definition of organisation, examine what they do *together*.

The collusion gap dividing informing (but not communicating) senior manager and expert is propped up by two widely, if implicitly, recognised stereotypes — the expert's view of the manager as man of consequence and power, and the manager's view of the expert as the holder of an expertise relevant to his problem. Privately, both will know if these stereotypes are a nonsense, but the undoing of such collusive relations is extremely difficult, for it must involve both parties in shedding of roles and statuses and in the elevation of task which would almost inevitably raise doubts about the employment of both manager and expert. In this familiar example, stereotyping, informing, colluding and the protection of employment have become one sticky mess; hence the courage required to tackle the problem of 'the gap'.

Maureen Guirdham (1982) provides research evidence on the detrimental effects of 'gap' inducing detachment and chirographic conditioning on human understanding and exchange. In her doctoral study of inter-organisational transactions, Guirdham found that the perception of these transactions and the language used to describe them depended on the observer's distance from the interface. Those directly involved as customer or supplier, buyer or salesman, and therefore with the most face-to-face contact, were likely to perceive their associations in terms of common tasks, products or friendship, whereas people divorced from the interface, and therefore most dependent on informing devices, structured the same exchanges in abstract, political and instrumental terms — ie the very aspects of the relationship those directly involved often implicitly choose to suspend. Yet buying and selling policies and practices are more likely to be formulated by those removed from rather than directly involved in interface affairs. Guirdham also explored some of the consequences of these differences.

Perceptions, based upon the more public language of distance, will require a very different diet to that which stimulates the more private, personal views of proximity. The former depends heavily, perhaps too heavily, on informing the latter, on human communication.

Literacy and the Way We Think

When meaning is omitted from our considerations, the scope literacy and the digital computer offers to problem-solving by fragmenting, splitting and divorcing is practically limitless. The process, as we have seen, encourages us to attend to the entities we have created. It enables

us, too, to ignore the bits we're not interested in and to forget that the invisible dynamic of the relationship between the categories we have created might in fact be of central importance to many of our most pressing problems. Thus we are able to split the public world of abstractions from more private everyday practicalities. By this method we can, or so we reckon, ignore also many of the absurdities of our existence.

Take the influence of economists in public life. On the basis of any number of assumptions which we might reject as unserviceable — e.g. a rational world, perfect markets, the monopoly of employing institutions over wealth creation, the reliability and validity of public data — we allow economists to construct an abstract world of GNPs, indices of inflation, trade balances, PSBRs, growth rates, etc, which bears no relationship to anything that we can actually sense. However, we do not reject their doctrines as nonsense precisely because we have created an unrelating category for abstractions and the public world into which this lot can be cognitively dumped. Of course, the economist, like the politician and most other public figures, reckons this abstract domain corresponds to reality, whereas many people, in spite of income-providing employment, perceive it as something else. The important point is that these activities, we now reckon, do not bother us because we can divorce them from what we privately value and pursue.

The instruments we use for collecting information, predominantly questionnaires, are crude in the extreme when set against the complex, multi-sensory, largely intuitive perceiving organisms engaged in human communication. All such informing devices are reducing of human complexity, and deployed on the kinds of assumptions that we seldom bother to consider. A questionnaire device, for example, carries the constructor's views of what is important and how the questions ought to be answered. The mechanism is inflexible and can only be modified in ignorance of eventualities or actually after the event. We assume, to remind the reader yet again, that the information we seek is reducible to abstract symbols, that feelings, tastes, sounds and visual ones, if we count these at all, can be recorded as abstract (visual) detail.

All recording and evaluation devices when applied to human behaviour lack the requisite variety (Ashby, 1956) for the phenomenon they are expected to measure and evaluate. Nevertheless, we accept such estimates as accurate and true and become even happier in those convictions as our abstractions are added, analysed and distanced from their source. I have been in meetings with senior civil servants at which the data before us were judged to be incomplete and unreliable, and

then found this judgement totally ignored half an hour later when personal opinions provided the only alternative grounds for decision.

Advertisers are generally reckoned to be a cynical lot (stereotype). If this is so, this cynicism ought to be evident in their view of humanity in general and of the consumer in particular. To test this opinion I observed 36 different advertising slots on Channel 4 on 3 February 1985. Two-thirds of these had people as their subjects. Out of these 23, 18 depicted people in a demeaning or denigrating way. *Is it possible to believe that depicting people as fools and idiots helps to sell many products?* Again, we might reasonably turn for an answer to our classificatory tradition as the basis for handling any cognitive problem the advertisement represents for us as viewers. This would enable the consumer to construct two separate classes, the public (others) and the private (me), and then to post each message in its appropriate box. This perspective might help us to understand why it is that advertisers are stuck with stereotyped advertisements, as they are in selling soap, for example. Any shift from the stereotype requires the viewers' attention and the risk of a private (me) evaluation. The innovation is then disconcerting to the message-receiver. He has to attend to something he expects to handle by dumping it in the 'for others' box. So he doesn't like the new advertisement, and back we go to the old proven line.

Baldamus (1961) found the same kind of behaviour on the assembly line. The traction of simple, repetitive, activity enables the worker to dissociate the task from dreaming and thinking. So when experts offer him an enriched job he 'surprisingly' (?) rejects it, because the attention demanded by the enlarged task threatens to destroy the old structure that enabled him to live with and through his employment. Is there a better explanation of why advertisements alter so little and how some stereotypes become rock hard?

My colleague Rob Goffee reports that on the day the bank interest rate rose to 14 per cent there were many grey faces on the London Business School's New Enterprise Programme. Informing devices and their operators elevate the public and abstract and therefore write money large in our lives. The authority of money grows too with the uniformity, repeatability and standardisation of life to the extent that money becomes synonymous with value. So we find ministers of state baffled by the reluctance of striking miners to trade dangerous jobs and grim environments for 'generous redundancy arrangements'. Without capital and vast sums at that, according to the stereotype, we can plead our inability to fashion a fine home, start a business or beautify the environment. The prospective farmer is summarily informed that 'efficient' farming in Britain is impossible unless one owns large tracts of land or possesses the capital for a factory farm. The idea that human

energy and ingenuity might provide a more hopeful, dignified and better basis for doing things becomes worse than *passé* — it's for fools, cranks and minority groups. We have instead the stereotype view that everybody knows, nothing is possible without capital. While this certainty allows gentlemen in the City of London who lend capital to pay themselves six-figure salaries on the strength of their importance, it also recommends that those who can still dream but lack the capital collapse into lethargic puddles or just live imprisoned by debt. This rock-solid stereotype is now peddled by experts everywhere and acclaimed by the mass media.

So usurers who provide credit on the basis of little or no security and charge vast interest on this hot air become kings and we forget, as Lord Stamp, one-time director of the Bank of England, observed, 'banking is started in iniquity and born in sin. If you want to be the slaves of bankers and pay the cost of your own slavery then let the banks create money and control credit.'

I have kept clear of a definition of information itself thus far, but this question is also important in reflecting assumptions and stereotypes. Is information what we expect or the unexpected? Without thinking we might reckon that information is learning something we didn't know. Yet to begin to define in this direction would be to deal less than adequately with, for example, the content of 'The News' on radio, television or in the newspaper. At the time of writing I can predict that the major items in tomorrow's news (29 January 1985) will include the miners' strike, the Ponting (security) case, disarmament talks, interest rates, the state of the pound and the weather (all these items figured). This predictability tells us a little about how broadcasters and editors determine the content of the news and their responsibility for upholding the interests of the state and its institutions.

This predictability is also characteristic of ritual, a description most apposite for weather forecasts since the predictions bear no better relationship to the actualities than one would achieve by chance. 'The Weather' matters as ritual to industrial people because it represents symbolically, and with a fine flourish of technical jargon and display, the conquest of nature by our culture. The actuality, which clearly is of no concern to most people, raises doubts about this strand in our value system but ecologists are already doing the same.

Nothing wrong with 'The News' as ritual, unless it lacks authenticity — that is, it conveys the meaningless, increases tensions between sections of society and makes us feel more anxious rather than less. There are elements now creeping into the news which have such effects. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere (Pym 1978) with respect to employment, schooling and other central institutions in our lives, bad

ritual is on the increase. If our media folk really see their job as acting to uphold the interests of the State, then their assumptions and preconceptions about 'The News' and what the audience or reader wants may no longer serve this purpose.

We arrive then at a point for reiteration. When informing devices are deployed without an appropriate level of human communication between message sender and receiver they lead to a hardening of stereotypes and views which inhibit divergence in decision and action. They provide a disinformation that is the basis of much organised chaos.

From Organised Chaos towards Good Organisation

There is in our Western, literate way of structuring thought and action a powerful preference for solving our problems by methods which are all of a piece, by fragmentation, through the creation of new categories, by reducing issues to one treatable dimension and by formalising relationships that cannot be categorised through written procedures and agreements. We 're-schedule' Latin American debt. We blame Scargill or Thatcher for the miners' strike. We extend and reinforce our paramilitary operations to deal with insurgents or trouble-makers. We go through the motions of our employment while striving 'to be ourselves' in the privacy of our homes. We (the American government) compose written agreements with the Russians on some limited and irrelevant element of disarmament. We offer youth training to deal with the lack of employment opportunities. We attribute the starvation in Ethiopia to their political regime and nature and laud ourselves on our token gestures at bailing them out. We seek solutions to problems of health and well being in the identification of some treatable virus. We take pills for everything.

By such limited and guileless practices we perpetuate a plague and yet reckon to distance ourselves from it. But that which we dismiss through some cognitive sleight of hand does not go away. The categories are only of our mind, the problems we create are inextricably linked and so we find ourselves lumbered with a residual hysteria, a confusion that easily feeds violence and powerlessness, but a hysteria without an apparent cause.

The way out lies within the notion of organisation outlined earlier, that is, no more than people doing things together. It is not the categories of experience on which we ought to focus our attentions but the relationships between them. We need to make magic of the everyday and dwell in conversation upon what we sense, our hopes and fears, so that we reduce our isolation from each other and recognise the

homogeneity of perception and experience which underlies all our differences.

We become more questioning of our informing devices as we devote more time and energy to interpersonal exchange and we realise accordingly that our informing devices are not a primary but a secondary feature of good organisation. Slowly, as our confidence in ourselves grows, we come to recognise that 'the oral' mafia can always master a literate, mechanistic structure by simple by-pass.

But the pursuit of E M Forster's famous dictum, 'only connect', raises its own problems. Neither competition nor cooperation appear to raise the same order of problems in the British tradition as does collusion. We lack the mechanisms which might allow us in our relations to recognise the limits of collusion. Time and time again sudden disastrous surprises and the collapse of great institutions come upon us as with the British Army in Singapore, spies in the Establishment, Rolls Royce, the Crown Agents, BMC in the 1960s, or the hoisting of damaging interest rates because nobody has been able or prepared to break the collusive game which advertises that all is well when *everybody* knows otherwise. It is topical to attribute this game to welfarism, but its origins go much further back to our role as international pirates, to colonial days and that genteel, easy-going, South-East self-evasion that conceals a nation living off the rest of the world. Whatever the public disasters and the parrot cry for 'Change', we *know* we have an inexhaustible, invisible source. The game will continue until that source dries up and the stereotypes sustained by informing devices and 'the best mass media in the world' no longer work our way; when the rest of the world finally tumbles us. That day may not be far away.

In summary, the *information* society is a dangerous nonsense because it is founded upon devices which fictionalise people and locate authority outside those people (i.e. outforms). A definition which equates information with written detail reduces the human sensorium to one abstract dimension. To the extent that experts perceive informing systems as replacement or substitutes for human communication, so people and their affairs are devalued. Such assumptions proliferate cultural predispositions and stereotypes among people which compound their isolation and powerlessness. These impose, too, a way of thinking about our problems which recommends splitting off the offending part from the rest of reality. The solution is illusory. A more sensible policy is to use electronics to aid the construction of a performing society which represents organisation as people doing things together and human communication as being superior to all so-called informing devices.

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- 1 I am ignoring, with reason, an associated but different strand in the electronic feast which may represent the beginnings of a shift of historical awareness from eye to ear, an emerging sound culture that is driving back the old visual literary order but which the literate mind is still able to dismiss as belonging to a different realm of experience.
- 2 The need for people to be a part of efficient organisation, whose advantages and disadvantages are well documented, ought to be reduced through the appropriate use of technology.
- 3 I shall not replace the word inform by outform, for my purpose is to get the reader to think more upon the meaning of information and its implications rather than to find myself embroiled in argument over definition.

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The text of a talk...

*Bob James***Latter Day Witches: Anarchists in Australia,
1886-1986**

On 1 May 1886, Fred Upham from Rhode Island, USA, and the native-born Andrade brothers, David and William, called into existence the Melbourne Anarchist Club. This, the first formal anarchist organisation in Australia, reflected the Boston Anarchist Club's approach to strategy and philosophy, having a secretary, a chairperson, speakers' rules and prepared papers. It was also a response to a call in 1884 by the Federation of Organised Trades and Labor Unions of the US and Canada, for a celebration of the day — 1 May 1886 — as an expression of working-class solidarity. The six members of the Australasian Secular Association who came together to form the Melbourne Club on that day could not have foreseen that the US connection was to prove not a blessing but a disaster. They were not to know that the establishment of the MAC was to bring to a head rapidly disagreements in radical labour circles over the nature of the 'new order' and begin a no-holds-barred contest over the definition of anarchism itself. They were not to know that in Chicago, three days after their first meeting, would occur the first act of what is undoubtedly a pivotal event, not only in the history of anarchism but in modern history generally.

At 10 pm on 4 May, 176 Chicago policemen were marched out to disperse an orderly meeting called to protest at the shooting of locked-out workers by those same police the day before. The mayor, after attending the meeting, had gone home believing the gathering, which had dwindled from some thousands to about 200, was peaceful and on the verge of being wound up. The police, however, were formed up in ranks by a Captain Bonfield, who ordered the meeting to disperse immediately. At this point someone, to this day unknown, threw a bomb near to the police lines. The police opened fire into the terror-struck crowd and later, after a massive round-up programme, charged the erstwhile organisers of the meeting, eight anarchists, with capital crimes. On the wave of media-fed hysteria which swept the world via the new phenomenon of mass dailies and sea-cables, the Chicago authorities disregarded the evidence and international campaign and executed four and jailed three. The eighth was found dead in his cell the day before the execution on 11 November 1887.

It is from this series of events that 100 years of stigmatisation of anarchists as bloodthirsty terrorists and as a disorganised rabble of unpractical dreamers has flowed. It is salutary as well as important to see how this stigma was put into place and then maintained by the various enemies of anarchy, for it is not only anarchism as an organised and coherent political philosophy which has suffered. Anarchists were key organisers in the strong labour movement in the United States and were participants not only in struggles with the captains of industry for better working conditions and industrial democracy but with Marx-influenced comrades who preferred centralised power and the social-democratic road to freedom, anarchists arguing against parliamentary parties and for decentralised power.

In the heated atmosphere of 1880s America where, *The Age* editorialised, 'attempts to organise an eight-hour working day are put down by volleys of musketry', nowhere was tension higher than in Chicago. In the calmer times that followed the savage repression of militants in general and anarchists in particular, Chicago journalists exposed Bonfield and police colleague Schaak for exaggerating, if not concocting, the Haymarket tragedy to gain promotion and to defuse pressure building up for their dismissal over corruption. Schaak then released a book attacking anarchists in extreme terms to drum up business for his own police and para-military forces like the Pinkertons and to justify further repression of dissidents. In later years he admitted it was lies in large part.

In January 1892 the Chicago *Herald* revealed how police had recently raided a public meeting to delude business people, who had donated \$487,000 since May 1886, to 'wipe out the Reds', that payments should continue despite a lack of results in terms of people charged or plots discovered. In 1893 a pardon was given to the three anarchists still in jail by the incoming Democrat Governor Altgeld, whose published report referred to the injustice done to those executed: the jury had been rigged, the jurors were legally incompetent, the judge partial and the evidence insufficient. An after-the-event, calm reappraisal of the threat by one of the status quo's most militant defenders, Robert Pinkerton, admitted:

The great majority of anarchists...are a harmless body of people...unalterably opposed to all forms of murder and violence.

Unfortunately the illogical stigma was already strong enough by 1893 to mean, for example, that Governor Altgeld never again won public office. It has continued to the present day: 'The romantic image of the anarchist bomber' is just one recent example of a throwaway remark taking the most common of the negative correlations for granted.

Clearly this continuity in the face of the facts must result from the way 'history' has been recorded and transmitted.

Library catalogues do not cross-reference anarchism with cooperation, and writers about anarchism have, with a few exceptions, continued to use biased definitions — those provided by non-anarchists or the enemies of anarchists. Popular authors have found the anarchist stereotype an easy vehicle for jokes and melodrama, while blood and smoke, easily correlated with anarchist colours of red and black, have sold many newspapers and 'penny dreadfuls'.

Historians have been no less likely to adopt ignorant assumptions and stereotypes in place of serious analysis. Only sometimes is their research better informed and their bias more subtle. 'The anarchists have suffered as much as any minority from the historians' cult of success', was how James Joll described his profession's record in a book described by a *Times* reviewer as 'the best survey of the whole subject to appear' and 'scrupulously fair'. There is much more than a mere neglect of 'failures' to this situation, and Joll's own work, selective and very unfair, can be used as a partial illustration.

Anarchists were easily made into scapegoats precisely because personally they posed no real threat, but their ideas did and had to be made to appear unworthy of discussion. Less directly, the 1890s' debate about how democratic the 'new order' had to be tangled symbols, principally those of the 'working class' or just 'the workers', with the questions of personal power, and subsequently these have not been untangled.

A similar kind of tangle sees women's history as simply part of family history or welfare history. The less powerful may have been told to see themselves as 'the workers' just as women have been told to see themselves as home-makers, or as nurses, nannies, etc., but in neither case is the totality of people's lives indicated. It is to accept defeat for protest history to so define people. An acknowledgement of the power 'ordinary' people have to run their own lives, or to influence 'important' matters threatens the hierarchical institutions, state, trade union or professional, which are historians' power bases, and they would undermine their own integrity by questioning their allegiance to such power bases. 'Proletarian' history has not altered and cannot alter this situation as it does not empower. It cannot even inspire large-scale self-awareness and least of all a democratic culture, since it urges discipline and submergence of the individual to the mass, led by others in pursuit of material goods.

There has been a considerable resurgence of academic interest in anarchism in the Northern Hemisphere in the past ten to fifteen years, but the mistakes of the past have by no means all been rectified. It is

still possible to find state terror and coercion described in far less emotive terms than that of the anti-authoritarians. It is still possible to find caricatures of anarchists rather than informed analysis. It is still possible to find so-called social analysis confusing wealth with power, the most irritating being Marxist historians and anarcho-capitalists. As Chomsky points out, it is still the norm to find both Leninist and liberal ideology justifying the selective reporting and distorting the facts in order to denigrate 'mass movements and...social change that escapes the control of privileged elites'.

For English-language historians of anarchism source materials are still especially sparse, throwing further doubt on studies already made, especially those claiming to cover 'the anarchists' comprehensively. Most of Proudhon's and Bakunin's work is untranslated. Maitron's two-volume *History of French Anarchism* and Nettlau's prodigious collection are also untranslated, while it is only recently that English-language biographies of central figures Voltairine de Cleyre (USA), Elisé Reclus (Europe), and Louise Michel (France) have become available. The first study of female anarchists has only just appeared and, overall, it is not surprising that women writers are among the most important of those working to rectify the image.

My research is the first extended attempt to describe the anarchist presence in Australia, while the first general coverage of British anarchists was only published in 1978. No references were made in Joll's study and others like it to Australia, or to Chile, Brazil, Cuba, Japan, China, Korea and Holland, which are just a few other examples of parts of the world without histories in English of 'their' movements. The 'first wave' of English-language accounts contains virtually no discussion of the different strands of anarchism — for example, mutualists, Stirnerite, communist, spontaneist, syndicalist, feminist. No general accounts that I am aware of place anarchist thought fairly in the development of political science, history or sociology. Influential studies of socialist theory written just after the Haymarket event, such as Bellamy's *Looking Backward* or Gronlund's *Co-operative Commonwealth* have not been adequately assessed for their libertarian content. In the case of the last subject area, I simply refer to the preoccupation of noted sociological pioneers such as Weber, Parsons, Tawney and Durkheim with the dilemma of the individual's place in and grasp on morality in an increasingly bureaucratised world, a dilemma that is the very heart and soul of anarchist thought. Thus, the stigmatising and denigration of anarchism have meant whole areas of important research have been neglected and the lack of English-language material available in these areas has further weakened the research that has been done.

In turning to relevant, serious Australian writing, I find near

complete acceptance of the anti-anarchist mythology, one reflection of which is the almost total lack of mention of the philosophy. This omission is an indictment in itself since it means that one whole way of looking at social possibilities, past, present or future — and there are probably only two, the hierarchical and the non-hierarchical — has been ignored. The omission of the non-hierarchical alternative is most obvious in the so-called labour histories where it might have been expected, where one might also have expected a sustained analysis of violence.

It's not as though evidence is hard to find: William Lane, key articulator of labour aspirations and known throughout Australia, if not the English-speaking world, in his long awaited 1891 book, *Working Man's Paradise*, forcefully extolled anarchical-communism and made it synonymous with 'mateship':

The anarchist ideal is the highest and noblest of all human ideals, [and] anarchical-communism, that is, men working together as mates and sharing with one another of their own free will, is the highest conceivable form of socialism in industry.

Early in 1893 he wrote:

W.W. Head, the Wagga ASU Secretary, Jim Mooney, ASU Sydney agent during the Queensland strike, Harry S. Taylor, best known of South Australian single-taxers, Peter McNaught, the Knights of Labor Master Workman, and others are all ready to give their lives and energies to that voluntary communism which is the high individualism.

This identification of communism with individualism is consistent with the views of J.A. Andrews, best-known anarchist at this time.

Despite all this and more, Australian political historians give the impression of being politically illiterate and historically blind. Overall, the same myopia prevails in Australian as in other historiographies, namely: theories of self-management, descriptions of rank-and-file struggles and attempted solutions, and studies of institutional or status quo repression, have all been neglected.

Australian historians have only very recently and very tentatively moved to rectify their neglect of violence. The Australian State as a concept or as a functioning unit has also received little crucial attention, while discussions of the police and military have begun to appear only recently.

One major purpose of the Celebration of the Centennial of Anarchism in Australia which took place in Melbourne in May was, then, to convey to anarchists themselves that they did indeed have a history and that it was a long and honourable one. Given the initial lack of knowledge, however, about the reality of anarchism, the processes of the Celebration were necessarily somewhat 'primitive' in the sense that representatives of different ways of thinking within the anarchist camp

had first to encounter one another and the evidence of the past before any kind of critical debate could take up where previous attempts had faltered.

Some groups had used the pre-Celebration period to discuss and prepare statements of their beliefs, and this will prove useful in itself. Other anarchists, marginalised individuals for the most part, took an unnecessarily negative view of their own experiences of the past decade and projected that on to that gathering, from the organisation of which they stood apart. Amazed perhaps by the hundreds who came together, including twenty or so from nine overseas countries, to attend workshops, view films and to exchange ideas, some of these people were clearly band-waggoning by the close.

It's clear that anarchists have a few symbols of their own to untangle if they are to exploit the collapse of the authoritarian left and build on the positive feelings generated by the Celebrations. There was, for instance, far too little awareness of the potential of such a four-day coming together, and far too much willingness to push aside possible divisive issues. There was far too little skill in conflict resolution, an ironic result of the 'violent' stigma which ghettoised many anarchists into impotence, but one which must be altered if peaceful, cooperative communities are to be possible. There was still far too much acceptance of the mythology about anarchism and thus far too little organised, long-term planning.

The story of anarchism in this country has not changed since the media and state repression of decentralised politics in the 1890s, which paralleled the occurrences in other countries, produced a vainglorious Australian Labor Party bent on introducing a Welfare State, and on meeting capitalism's needs where possible. For the first fifty years of this century, the anarchist presence consisted, with the possible exception of the IWW, of silenced individuals maintaining contacts with their origins in Russia, Spain, Italy, etc., or cranky reformers such as Chidley, Kleber Caux and others who increasingly pursued social change in areas of dress, nutrition and child-rearing.

In all of these things and in the core of the anarchist-influenced Industrial Workers of the World, the disadvantages of being anarchist cannot be separated from the disadvantages of being Australian. Prevailing racism meant that little about self-help consensus decision-making was learnt from the Aborigines by White radicals before the 1970s. Xenophobia meant that the non-English-speaking anarchists rarely met Australian-born advocates, and rarely indeed knew about one another's existence. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, for example, Spanish-speaking north Queensland anarchists formed common cause with local Communists rather than with other

anarchists. Sexism within the movement has been a continuing problem, only addressed directly in the 1970s, when it had already been taken up by the wider community. Anarcho-feminists again talked of organising a women's only celebration later this year as they did in 1975, indicating a continuing lack of satisfaction with the state of gender politics within the official 'movement'.

Overseas visitors, especially the older ones, have a more strongly developed sense of history than locals, but it is significant that, while in scope and in participation in mainstream political events the Northern Hemisphere anarchist movements overshadow enormously the local variant, nevertheless, the position 1986 adherents find themselves in does not vary much at all.

Worldwide 'the State' is undergoing vast and rapid changes. And the challenge for all anti-authoritarians is to renovate their responses, and in particular to devise strategies to enable people to escape the increasingly pervasive surveillance systems and controlling ideologies. A theory of the benefits of freedom is useless if no one wants to be free or autonomous. The theory of peaceful co-existence is irrelevant if citizens are so conditioned by the programme makers that they cannot see any alternative to hierarchies, nation states and a permanent arms race.

Abel Paz, the visiting Spanish anarchist historian, recounted his view of the 1936-39 Civil War as the key conflict between the status quo power-holders and the reformers, but also between the decentralisers and the state-socialists who actively opposed a thorough-going social revolution. He believes that Spanish anarchism, while impressive in stature in terms of numbers, has not yet escaped the imprisonment of the past, represented by that 1939 defeat, its subsequent loss of control of 'the making of history' and its loss of a grip on the momentum of political initiative. Now Spanish anarchists are faced with a need to recast their belief system within the context of a break in the tradition of the overriding principles of voluntary co-operation and self-management.

For Australians, the comparable defeat occurred in the decade of 1886-1896; thus anarchists in this continent have existed in a comparable prison since that time. Signs of a renewed vigour and optimism came with announcements of future projects at the May celebrations, but a greater seriousness of purpose will be required to break free of the restrictions imposed by affluence, and by control of the political agenda being in the hands of those who benefit from a hierarchical, closed, albeit comparatively benign, system.

Much greater regard will need to be given to the definitions of and the criteria for anarchist 'membership', even to the point of publicly

jettisoning those whose only connection with anarchism is their use of circled As on their clothes, or whose only political commitment is to carping self-indulgent criticism. Such a critical appraisal will, of course, spark disputes, and these need to be constructive, or they will be destructive. The traumatising effects of declaring for anarchism have been severe enough without our adding the burdens of unreasonable demands or expectations. Nevertheless, there is a need for a 'lifting of our game': for example, a widening of our mental horizons to include the capacity to discuss in three or four languages other than English the requirements of *organised* dissidence which determines to wrest the initiative from the authoritarian power-brokers. This personal statement must conclude with the view that I am extremely pessimistic about the future, but convinced that an orderly decentralisation of power contains the only alternative to Armageddon.

In this context the 1986 Anarchist Celebration was a major enlivening step, but only the first of the necessary many. In an oration at the 1887 funeral, ex-Senator Trumbull said:

The time will come when mankind will look back upon the execution of the anarchists as we of this day look back upon the burning of the witches in New England.

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Nicolas Walter

Guy A. Aldred (1886-1963)

The centenary of the birth of Guy Aldred is a good opportunity to remember one of the most energetic and eccentric figures ever involved in the British anarchist movement.

He came from the indeterminate area between the lower middle class and the upper working class. His parents were Alfred Arthur Aldred, a former naval officer of 22 who hoped to become a playwright (and later became a theatre manager), and Ada Caroline Holdsworth, a parasol-maker of 19. The circumstances of their relationship are unknown, but on 13 September 1886 they married solely to legitimise the approaching birth of their child. They never lived together but separated immediately after the wedding service, and both later contracted bigamous marriages. The child was born at his mother's parents' tenement at 24 Corporation Buildings,* Farringdon Road, Clerkenwell, in North London, on 5 November 1886; he was appropriately named Guy Alfred Aldred.

He was brought up by his mother first with her parents and later with her new husband at 133 Goswell Road,* Clerkenwell. The main influence on his early development was his grandfather, Charles Holdsworth, a half-Jewish bookbinder who had radical views of politics and religion, supported Gladstone and Bradlaugh, favoured Irish and Indian independence, opposed war, and encouraged Guy in all his activities until his death in 1908. Aldred was educated at the Iron Infants School in Farringdon Road and then at the new Hugh Myddelton School in Myddelton Street (the latter still exists). He did very well, and there was some talk of his going on to take orders in the Church of England, but he left school at the usual age of 14 in 1901.

By this time he had already begun a public career which was to last more than 60 years, joining campaigns against smoking and drinking. His intense opposition to the Boer War soon led to his first publication in June 1902 — a duplicated leaflet called *The Last Days: Peace or War*, a Christian pacifist tract which showed remarkable precocity. At the same time he adopted the style of clothes — a Norfolk suit with knickerbockers — which he retained for the rest of his life.

* Demolished after the Second World War.

For six years he earned his living in a conventional way. After a few months working as a receptionist for an insurance doctor, he got a job as an office-boy at the National Press Agency. He soon became a sub-editor, and seemed to be set on the traditional path to a successful career in journalism; in 1907 he moved to the *Daily Chronicle*, a leading Liberal newspaper, but he left after a few months. At the age of 20 he abandoned paid employment for ever.

During the same period he travelled rapidly along a well-trodden ideological road from Christian and Liberal radicalism through secularism and socialism to atheism and anarchism. The special gifts he brought to this journey were an insatiable thirst to acquire knowledge and an equally irresistible urge to impart it, together with an extraordinary combination of extreme youth and enormous energy (the latter lasting long after the former had gone). At the same time he had the defects of a complete lack of any sense of humour or proportion and an extraordinary combination of self-confidence and self-conceit, which made him an *enfant terrible* in all the many organisations he joined and made him quarrel with almost all the many people he worked with during the next 30 years.

He began as a Christian preacher, and although he soon ceased to be a Christian he remained a preacher for the rest of his life. He was a member of his grandfather's Anglican church of St Anne & St Agnes (near St Paul's Cathedral), but he soon proved too enthusiastic and too ecumenical for such a conventional institution. He took part in the Lamb & Flag Mission to the London poor. In November 1902, when he was just 16, he joined an evangelical preacher called Willoughby Masters as a boy preacher in the Christian Social Mission in Holloway. But his message was altogether too social, and he left after a few months. Meanwhile he met some interesting and influential religious characters, such as George Martin, a High Anglican worker priest who served the poor in the Borough district of South London and who taught Aldred about Greek literature and philosophy, and Charles Voysey, an unfrocked Anglican priest who preached to the rich at his Theistic Church off Piccadilly and who befriended Aldred until his death in 1912.

In 1903 Aldred began to attend the Peel Institute, a Quaker settlement for men in Clerkenwell, where he was soon lecturing and where he became disenchanted with Liberalism. In April 1904 he established his own Theistic Mission at Clerkenwell Green, but he quickly ran into difficulties with the attempt to combine unitarian theology and humanistic ethics, and under the influence of T. H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer he became an agnostic. In August 1904 he took his last step away from religion, changing the name of his project

to the Clerkenwell Freethought Mission, speaking several times a week at Clerkenwell Green and Garnault Place near by, and arguing and even fighting with Christian fanatics. He also began a lifelong practice of writing letters to the press and of producing his own articles and leaflets. (Incidentally, from the start he signed himself 'Guy A. Aldred', always using the middle initial.)

In November 1904 he began to contribute to the *Agnostic Journal*, an established freethought weekly edited by the individualistic Scottish writer William Stewart Ross, who called himself Saladin (after the Muslim soldier who fought the Christians in the Holy Land during the twelfth century). Saladin called Aldred 'a contributor of high promise' in April 1905, and wrote in October 1905: 'This Guy, born on Guy Faux day, and intent on an argumentative blow-up of the Houses of Priestcraft, has done so much at eighteen that I am sure the readers of the *A.J.* would all like to see what he will have done by the time he is eighty.' Aldred later said, 'The *Agnostic Journal* office was my college.' There in Farringdon Road, as well as Saladin he met the equally individualistic Scottish writer Morrison Davidson, who was sympathetic to anarchism, and other leading freethinkers. He learnt about the lives of Richard Carlile and Charles Bradlaugh, and tried to model himself on their examples of courage and persistence. He called himself 'the Rev. Guy A. Aldred', a 'Minister of the Gospel of Freethought' and later 'Minister of the Gospel of Revolt'. For two years he was a frequent contributor to the *Agnostic Journal*, both in his own name and as 'Ajax Junior' (in imitation of the pseudonym 'Ajax' used in the *National Reformer* from 1878 by Annie Besant, whom he interviewed in July 1905). But Saladin died in November 1906, and Aldred soon disappeared from the *Agnostic Journal* (which ceased in June 1907).

During this period he was also an active member of the National Secular Society, frequently speaking on its platforms, and occasionally writing in its associated paper *The Freethinker*. At the same time he was involved in the dissident British Secular League, and in 1906 he tried to form his own group, the London Secular Society (not knowing that there had been one more than 50 years earlier). But by 1907 he had turned away from formal freethought, though he continued to have contacts with the secularist and ethical movements, and he always retained a favourable opinion of Jesus and a mystical view of the world.

He had already been combining secularism with socialism. He was impressed by Robert Blatchford's non-sectarian paper *The Clarion*. At meetings in Clerkenwell he heard Daniel DeLeon, the American socialist leader, and John Burns, the British socialist leader. He became convinced that political radicalism should parallel religious radicalism, and at the age of 18 he embarked on a lifelong political career. In March

1905 he joined the Social Democratic Federation, the leading Marxist organisation in Britain, and soon began to speak on its platforms and contribute to its papers, the weekly *Justice* and the monthly *Social Democrat*. At the beginning of 1906, when a new Parliament was elected with a large Liberal majority and 29 Members representing the new Labour Party, he became the Parliamentary correspondent of *Justice*. But he was quickly disenchanted by this experience and gave up his column in disgust in May 1906, his main reasons being the respectability of the Labour MPs, the religious bias of the Liberal Government's education policy, and the evasion of the religious issue by the SDF.

In September 1906 he left the SDF, disappearing from its papers by the end of the year. He approached other socialist organisations, the new Socialist Labour Party and the newer Socialist Party of Great Britain, but he wasn't happy with either of them. He was increasingly attracted by what he called anti-parliamentary communism, by which he meant participation in electoral politics with a revolutionary programme on an abstentionist basis (like the Irish Nationalists), combined with a policy of direct action in political and industrial struggles. In December 1906 he issued an anti-parliamentary election manifesto to the electors of Finsbury, and at the age of 20 he began a lifelong association with the anarchist movement.

At the end of 1906 he made contact with the Freedom Group, formed under the inspiration of Peter Kropotkin in 1886. This produced the monthly *Freedom*, which had been revived in 1895, and was just about to add the weekly *Voice of Labour* as a syndicalist supplement, produced by John Turner, Alfred Marsh, and Thomas Keell. This appeared from January to September 1907, and throughout its run Aldred was the most active (and awkward) contributor. He initiated the Industrial Union of Direct Actionists in May and the Communist Propaganda Group in June, the latter meeting in the basement of his mother's house. From June the paper commonly contained Labour Movement notes at the beginning by Ajax Junior and IUDA notes at the end by Guy A. Aldred, together with long feature articles in both names in between. In August he made his first speaking tour outside London, visiting Liverpool. At the same time he began contributing to *Freedom*, his articles appearing from June 1907 to November 1908, and he also had some pamphlets printed at the Freedom Press. But at the age of 21 he had become firmly convinced of his own powers, and began to want his own organisation and his own paper.

Aldred's involvement with the anarchists also opened a new stage in his personal life. As a non-smoking, non-drinking Puritan, he had little to do with the opposite sex in his youth (though he had flirted

innocently with the girl who played the harmonium at the Holloway Mission), and in 1907 he both wrote and spoke in favour of celibacy rather than contraception as the solution of the population problem. But the 'life force' — which Bernard Shaw had recently dramatised in *Man and Superman* (1903) — was about to catch up with him. When he opened a benefit meeting for the *Voice of Labour* at the Workers' Friend Club in Jubilee Street, the centre of the Jewish anarchist movement in East London, on 9 February 1907, he met a Jewish girl called Rose Lillian Witcop. She had been born as Rachel Vitkopski near Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, on 9 April 1890 — so she was even younger than Aldred. She was the fourth daughter of Simon Witcop and Freda Grill, who had brought her from Russia to Britain in 1895, and like all her family she worked in the garment trade, as a milliner. Her eldest sister, Milly, was the companion of Rudolf Rocker, the German Gentile leader of the British Jewish anarchist movement; another sister, Polly, was also an anarchist; and she was herself already involved in the movement.

Rose Witcop's first known public action was the appearance of a letter in the *Voice of Labour* on 2 March 1907, criticising the women's suffrage movement for giving too much attention to Parliament and too little to working women. Aldred, who was impressed, met her again at the May Day meeting at the Jubilee Street Club, and she soon became associated with his work and then with his life. She went to Liverpool with him in August, though they still slept apart. They don't seem to have been very popular; according to a letter to Keell from E. G. Smith of the Liverpool anarchists on 16 September 1907, there was a parody of a hymn about them:

Praise Guy, from whom all blessings flow.

Praise Guy, all anarchists below.

Praise him below, ye hellish host.

Praise Guy and Rose, but Guy the most!

They were both very young, very poor, and very determined. Both their families disapproved of their relationship, so they decided to live together without the sanction of Church or State or relations. Aldred left his mother's home, where he had based all his religious and anti-religious, socialist and anarchist activities, a few weeks after his 21st birthday; Rose left her parents' home in Stepney; and in January 1908 they set up house together in Shepherd's Bush, West London, where they remained companions for the next dozen years.

Guy Aldred and Rose Witcop were together, but they were almost alone. Voysey characteristically and charmingly gave them his (literal) blessing. They earned a precarious living from odd jobs and hack work,

supplemented by gifts from Voysey and a few other sympathetic friends. Aldred had left the *Daily Chronicle* in July 1907 in order to become a self-supporting speaker and writer. He lost the use of his mother's house for the Communist Propaganda Group, but he tried to keep it alive and spoke in every place where he was welcome and in many where he was unwelcome. He had launched his Bakunin Press in his mother's home — with the help of Karl Lahr, a German socialist later well known as Charlie Lahr, the bookseller and publisher — and he continued it in Shepherds Bush. He began his first series of publications — Pamphlets for the Proletarian — mainly based on his own speeches and articles, which he rewrote and republished several times during the next 40 years; the fifth in the series was his first autobiography, written at the age of 21. He had more ambitious projects — a Library of Synthetical Iconoclasts, to include biographies of various radicals and freethinkers, and a book on Organisation — but neither got beyond groups of pamphlets.

His main problem was that he belonged to no viable organisation. He had left all those he had joined, often offending senior figures in them — G. W. Foote among the secularists, H. M. Hyndman among the socialists, Kropotkin and Rocker among the anarchists — with the comment, 'Wisdom comes before whiskers!' In 1907 he had founded the Communist Propaganda Group and produced a single issue of his own paper, the *Herald of Revolt*; but the former declined and the latter took three years to be revived. By 1909 he was almost isolated in both thought and action, but it turned out to be an important moment in both personal and political life.

Guy's and Rose's first (and only) child was born on 2 May 1909 (her labour appropriately began during the May Day demonstration in Hyde Park). The boy was called Annesley, one of the names of Voysey, who was still helping them financially and emotionally. Later in 1909 Aldred went to prison for the first time. He had been under police surveillance since 1907, when a member of the Special Branch told him was on a list of known agitators, but he eventually got into trouble not so much for doing something himself as for showing solidarity to someone else. In July 1909 a member of the Indian Civil Service was assassinated in London by a member of the Free India Society, and the official reaction included the suppression of its paper, *The Indian Sociologist*. Aldred decided to defend the principle of press freedom, and in August he produced a new issue of the paper, reprinting much of the suppressed material. He was arrested in August and tried in September 1909 for seditious libel at the Central Criminal Court. Despite his skilful legalistic defence, he was inevitably found guilty and was sentenced to a year's imprisonment — the judge commenting that he was 'young,

vain, and foolish'. He spent ten months in Brixton. Voysey insisted on visiting him as his 'spiritual adviser'; Rose Witcop also insisted on visiting him, although she refused to call herself 'Mrs Aldred'. (In his absence she began one of her many affairs, with E. F. Mylius, who shared their house.) A new friend who added his support was Walter Strickland, a rich and eccentric baronet who lived abroad and gave Aldred financial help for the next 30 years.

When Aldred was released in July 1910, he began to make his own way on the left. He resumed his work for the Communist Propaganda Group. He and Lahr ran a Ferrer School in Whitfield Street, North London, on Sundays from November 1910 to February 1911. And in December 1910 he at last managed to begin the *Herald of Revolt* as a monthly 'Organ of the Coming Social Revolution', the first of the many periodicals he edited and published for the rest of his life. He certainly produced a lively paper, but it was marred by his personal preoccupations. By this time he was combining his early Marxism with his later anarchism and attempting to reconcile Marx and Bakunin in an idiosyncratic synthesis. At the same time he was attacking both Marxists and anarchists with equal abuse, incidentally beginning a feud with the Freedom Press which lasted 40 years. He wrote most of the paper himself. Rose Witcop wrote little at first but more later, originally over her initials in reverse order (WLR) and then in her own name; her writing was markedly better than his. One of the more interesting features of the paper was a series of Lahr's clumsy translations from Bakunin. In 1912 Aldred began his second series of publications — the Revolt Library — which included his second autobiography.

Aldred continued speaking as well as writing, covering the country as well as London. In 1912 he visited Scotland for the first time, and became involved with the Glasgow anarchists. He opposed George Ballard (alias Barrett), who was editing a local weekly paper *The Anarchist*, which was connected with the London Freedom Group; instead he helped to found a new Glasgow Communist Group, and he kept in close touch with it.

In 1911 Mylius was imprisoned for criminal libel, alleging in *The Liberator*, a republican paper published in Paris, that the new King George V was a bigamist, and he later emigrated to the United States; Aldred was caused embarrassment followed by relief.

In 1912 he was briefly involved with *The Freewoman*, the remarkable weekly paper produced by Harriet Shaw Weaver and Dora Marsden from November 1911. It began as a 'Feminist Review', became a 'Humanist Review' in May 1912, and in June 1912 was succeeded by the *New Freewoman*, an 'Individualist Review', which in January 1914

was itself succeeded by *The Egoist*, a paper which combined philosophical anarchism with artistic modernism. Aldred was probably introduced to it by Rose Witcop, whose characteristically sour letter about marriage appeared in it on 22 February 1912. From January to July he wrote interesting articles on women's emancipation, then on the treatment of suffragettes in prison, then on civil liberties and syndicalism, and he edited a reprint of Richard Carlile's 1825 birth control tract *What is Love?* (25 July 1912). A Freewoman Discussion Circle began in April 1912, and he spoke to it on 3 July about 'Sex Oppression' — both the oppression of one sex by the other, and the oppression of both sexes by sex itself. This was a favourite theme, and he seems to have been rather under-sexed by nature, meaning by free love free monogamous unions, whereas Rose Witcop not only preached but practised free love in its more general meaning.

Later in 1912 Aldred became involved with the Industrialist League, a syndicalist organisation which had seceded from the Socialist Labour Party in 1908, and contributed to its paper *The Industrialist*. One of its leading members, Henry Sara, soon joined Aldred as assistant editor of the *Herald of Revolt* and a leading activist in the Communist Propaganda Group (and as a lover of Rose Witcop).

In June 1914 the *Herald of Revolt* was succeeded by *The Spur*, subtitled 'Because the Workers Need a Spur'. Within two months the First World War began, and Aldred entered his finest hour. *The Spur* was one of the few papers which opposed the war without hesitation or qualification from beginning to end. Within two months it was arousing complaints from the public to the authorities, and in November 1914 a Home Office internal memorandum agreed that it should be suppressed, commenting that 'it appears to dissent from all views hitherto expressed' (PRO HO45/10741/263275) — a rather good summary of Aldred's position. In fact the paper was never suppressed, but he ran into plenty of trouble. Meanwhile he began his third series of publications — the Spur Series. He also produced a single issue of a paper called *War News* in 1914.

Aldred continued his busy speaking programme, appearing on the platforms of several socialist organisations and opposing the war at every opportunity. He also opposed the imposition of conscription in January 1916, not only in speech and writing but in bitter practice. In March 1916 Sara was called up and refused to go, and in April he was arrested and imprisoned, being brutally treated in both military and civilian custody. In April 1916 Aldred was also arrested (illegally, as it happened, since he hadn't been formally called up). At that time only single men were liable for conscription, and he argued that he was married to Rose Witcop according to Scots law, having lived with her

for short periods in Scotland during speaking tours; in May a Scottish lawyer agreed, but this argument was rejected by the West London Magistrates Court, and he was handed over to the Army. The resulting ordeal lasted nearly three years.

In May 1916 he was sentenced by court martial to six months' detention. In June he was sentenced by court martial to nine months' hard labour. In August he accepted the status of a conscientious objector, without having to go before a tribunal, and he agreed to go to the labour camp at Dyce, near Aberdeen. He took a leading part in the Men's Committee, edited a prison paper called the *Granite Echo*, and spoke in several places in Scotland. In October he left the camp, and in November 1916 he was arrested and imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubs. On his release in March 1917 he was immediately rearrested and in May sentenced by court martial to 18 months' hard labour. He was imprisoned in Wandsworth, where he helped to lead a brief prison revolt in February 1918, for which he was sentenced to six weeks' solitary confinement in Brixton. On his release in August 1918 he was again immediately rearrested and sentenced by court martial to two years' hard labour. He was returned to Wandsworth, where he refused to work or obey orders, and helped to lead a total strike from October 1918. The war ended in November, and the authorities were unable to impose discipline on the political prisoners. Among their many activities Aldred characteristically gave a series of lectures from his cell. He helped to organise a hunger-strike on New Year's Day, 1919, and after a week was conditionally released for a month. He refused to return voluntarily to prison, and instead began a speaking tour until he was yet again rearrested in March. But after a few days he was unconditionally released in March 1919. He had spent more than two-and-a-half years in custody and, although his health was temporarily damaged, his spirit was never broken. He should be remembered as one of the heroes of the resistance to the First World War.

Rose Witcop continued to produce *The Spur* during his absences, and it was never directly attacked by the authorities like many other anarchist and pacifist papers. Aldred resumed control on his return to a new political situation. The war was over, and the revolution which had come in Russia in 1917 seemed to be spreading across Europe and coming to Britain. Aldred briefly became a prominent leader of the struggle in the British left to form a unified party to support the Russian Revolution and work for a British Revolution.

Among the many complex developments which eventually led to the emergence of a single Communist Party, in March 1919 the London section of the Socialist Labour Party held a Socialist Unity Conference which established a broad Communist League, with a paper called *The*

Communist from May 1919. Aldred was the main organiser for the rest of the year, working again with Sara and campaigning all over the country. But this particular venture was soon swept aside by the rival ambitions of two larger parties — the Workers Socialist Federation (the successor of Sylvia Pankhurst's East London Federation of the Suffragettes), which took the title of the Communist Party in June 1919 and again in June 1920, and the British Socialist Party (the successor of H. M. Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation), which under strong Russian influence became the core of the Communist Party of Great Britain in August 1920 — and the amalgamation of the two (together with other organisations) in January 1921. Revolutionary socialist parties which didn't take the same route fell apart or fell aside, and Aldred moved on again. (Henry Sara moved in a different direction, soon joining the Communist Party and later being expelled in turn from the Labour Party for being a Communist in 1926, from the Communist Party for being a Trotskyist in 1932, and from the Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialist League for being a pacifist in 1939!)

From the beginning of 1920 Aldred concentrated his activities in Glasgow, then the main centre of revolutionary agitation in Britain, and for a time he was one of the leading propagandists, alongside such figures as John Maclean, William Gallacher, James McGovern, and Emmanuel Shinwell. In May 1920 he joined the Glasgow Anarchist Group, which had been re-formed in 1916, and other anti-parliamentarians in re-forming the Glasgow Communist Group, and after the unification of the Communist Party in January 1921 this became the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation. In February 1921 it published the first issue of a new paper, the *Red Commune*; Aldred was not a member of the editorial committee, because he already had *The Spur*, and he had nothing to do with the content of this issue, though it expressed his policy of abstentionist electoral politics analogous to that of the Irish Nationalists, but the authorities used it to strike at him. In March 1921 its office was raided and three of its members were arrested in Glasgow; at the same time his home was raided and he was arrested in London (illegally, as it happened, since the Scottish warrant wasn't valid) and remanded in custody. In June 1921 they were tried at the Glasgow High Court for seditious libel; he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and the others to three months' imprisonment each. He was held in Barlinnie Prison for the full twelve months, without counting the time spent in custody on remand or any remission.

The *Red Commune* wasn't published again, and *The Spur* ceased publication in April 1921. Rose Witcop had travelled to Germany in 1920. In 1921 she seems to have travelled to Russia, partly to get

support for the Third International; but apparently this was offered only on condition that the APCF joined the Communist Party, which was rejected. This episode marked the beginning of the end of the relationship between Aldred and Rose Witcop. Although he never identified himself with the Communist Party in Britain, however, he continued to support the Russian Bolsheviks for several years, even against socialist and anarchist critics.

After Aldred was released in June 1922, he stood as an anti-parliamentary socialist candidate for Shettleston, Glasgow, in the General Election, coming at the bottom of the poll with a few hundred votes — an experience he was to repeat several times during the next 40 years. This episode marked the beginning of the decline of his influence in the revolutionary socialist movement.

Meanwhile Rose Witcop remained in London and concentrated on the movement for contraception propaganda and provision. When Margaret Sanger, the American pioneer (who invented the phrase 'birth control'), visited Britain at various times from 1914 to 1920, Guy Aldred and Rose Witcop were among her strongest supporters and closest friends; she shared platforms with them, and she accompanied Rose to Germany in 1920. Her pamphlet *Family Limitation* was printed by anarchists in the United States in 1914 and persecuted by the authorities, and the same thing happened in Britain. From 1920 the Bakunin Press published a series of British editions. In December 1922 the police raided the London home of Aldred and Rose Witcop and seized 1,720 copies of the third British edition. They were then proceeded against under the Obscene Publications Act — not a prosecution for the criminal offence of publishing an obscene libel, but a summons to show cause why the seized copies should not be destroyed as obscene. The case was heard at the West London Magistrates Court in January 1923, Rose Witcop being defended by a lawyer but Aldred as always defending himself with great ability. Despite the strength of the defence and the calibre of the expert witnesses, they lost the case and also the appeal at the London Sessions in February 1923; a further appeal to the High Court was abandoned because of lack of money and unity. The police also raided Aldred's Glasgow home in February 1923 and seized more copies of the pamphlet, but no proceedings followed.

The defendants were supported by the old birth control organisation, the New Generation League (successor of the Malthusian League), but were repudiated by the new Society for Constructive Birth Control led by Marie Stopes (which provoked Bertrand Russell's resignation from the latter). This was the last known court case in the long campaign for freedom of contraception propaganda in Britain, though suppliers of

literature and articles were harassed by the authorities until the Second World War, and it prompted a strong reaction from the labour movement. Rose Witcop was involved in the developments which led in early 1924 to pressure on the new Labour Government to allow official encouragement for birth control, an overwhelming vote from the Annual Conference of Labour Women, and the formation of the Workers' Birth Control Group; but she soon began to work independently. The prosecution in her case had concentrated not so much on the text of the pamphlet as on the explicit illustrations, and from late 1924 she published further editions without the illustrations and with a new introduction and an account of the case. She also published British editions of other works by Margaret Sanger and other material on birth control and sex education. In May 1925 she opened a People's Clinic for Birth Control and Social Welfare in West London, with support from local Labour Party and trade union members and from health officials and the local press. Later in 1925 she was threatened by the Special Branch with deportation to Soviet Russia, never having been naturalised, and Aldred reluctantly granted her a last courtesy by going through a legal marriage ceremony with her in Glasgow on 2 February 1926, giving her automatic British nationality; they had no further contact. She ran her clinic, first in Fulham and then in Hammersmith, until she unexpectedly died on 4 July 1932 of peritonitis following an operation for appendicitis. Several articles by and about her were published in the rival *Freedom*, including a long memoir by Aldred in November 1932.

From 1923 Aldred lived in Glasgow, though he used his London address until the beginning of 1926. The APCF had branches elsewhere in Scotland and one in London, but it was essentially a local organisation. In May 1923 he began a new paper, *The Commune*, which lasted until May 1929, supplemented by an occasional *Special Anti-Parliamentary Gazette* from May 1926 to May 1929. For ten years Aldred took a leading part in a series of free speech campaigns in Glasgow, frequently being arrested for speaking in public and fined for obstruction. In September 1931 the Free Speech Committee which coordinated the campaigns was transformed into a wider Council of Action, for which Aldred produced a new paper, *The Council*, in association with the APCF, from October 1931 to May 1933.

The APCF was involved in the development of what became known as Council Communism, an uneasy and unstable combination of anarchism and Marxism with an anti-parliamentarian and syndicalist flavour. It made contact with similar organisations in Europe and America, and it was involved in attempts to form a Fourth International. For a time Aldred was sympathetic with Trotskyism, and

he often launched bitter attacks on anarchist individuals and organisations; according to a letter to Keell from Charles E. Ahlgren of the Leicester APCF on 26 November 1924, Aldred was 'running with Communism and hunting with Anarchism'. In February 1933 the APCF split, and Aldred's group seceded to form the Workers Open Forum. (The APCF continued, producing a series of papers — *Advance*, *Workers Free Press*, *Fighting Call*, *Solidarity* — and becoming the Workers Revolutionary League in 1941, eventually joining a new Workers Open Forum which was formed in 1942 and continued until the 1950s.)

In 1932 the Independent Labour Party disaffiliated from the Labour Party, of which it had been the largest element, and it immediately became the target of entrism from Communists, Trotskyists, and other revolutionary socialists (a process which continued until it was reabsorbed by the Labour Party half a century later). In February 1934 Aldred joined the Townhead branch of the ILP, in an attempt to support anti-Fascist unity without sacrificing his anti-parliamentarian principles. But his branch soon left the party and joined the Workers Open Forum in forming a new group, the United Socialist Movement. Aldred had at last achieved stability in unity, but at the expense of numbers or movement, for the USM was virtually a one-man band — or rather a quartet, for he always had the loyal and loving cooperation of Jane Hamilton Patrick (who had been imprisoned in the 1921 trial and who became his companion), Ethel MacDonald, and John Taylor Caldwell — and it stagnated for 30 years, being a populist rather than a socialist or anarchist organisation.

Aldred tried several times to start a new paper — *The New Spur* (December 1933 – April 1934), a *Socialist May Day Special* (May 1934), the *United Socialist* (October 1934), and *The Attack* (May 1936) — but he was hampered by isolation and poverty. The beginning of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 revived him, like everyone else on the left. He began a new paper, *Regeneración* (named after the paper produced by the Flores Magón brothers during the Mexican Revolution 20 years before), which appeared (in duplicated form) from July to October 1936 and again (in printed form) from February to March 1937, and then *News from Spain* and the *Barcelona Bulletin* in May 1937. His publications had the advantage that Ethel MacDonald and Jenny Patrick went to work for the CNT/FAI in Spain, the former becoming well known as a radio broadcaster and then prisoner of the Communists in Barcelona, but the impulse of the Spanish Revolution failed to sustain Aldred's activity, especially as *Spain and the World* grew in influence.

Aldred produced a series of *BE Leaflets* against the British Empire

Exhibition at Bellahouston from January to February 1938, and still tried to start a new paper — *The Word* in May 1938 and *Hyde Park* in September 1938 (the latter connected with a free speech campaign in London). Then his situation was unexpectedly changed by the death in August 1938 of Walter Strickland, leaving most of his fortune to be used by Aldred for peace propaganda. Only a small proportion could be recovered from the various countries where it had been invested, but this was enough for him to revive the Bakunin Press as the Strickland Press and to revive *The Word* in May 1939. In 1940 he began his last series of publications — the Word Library — which included his third autobiography; the series was also bound up as *Essays in Revolt*.

Within a few months the Second World War began. Aldred opposed this as strongly as its predecessor, and *The Word* became a leading anti-war paper. Aldred hadn't been involved in the formal pacifist movement before (though he was elected to the Anti-Conscription Committee of the No Conscription Fellowship immediately after the First World War), but now he was for a time a leading member of the No Conscription League. He was also closely associated with the Marquess of Tavistock (later the Duke of Bedford), a supporter of Social Credit who took his pacifism almost as far as becoming a fellow-traveller with Fascism. Above all he was a consistent advocate and practitioner of free speech, making *The Word* a forum for all kinds of social and political dissent.

After the Second World War Aldred remained on the fringe of the left, an eccentric figure who jokingly called himself 'the Guy they All Dread', though the emotion he inspired was exasperation rather than fear. He continued to speak regularly and to produce *The Word*, and an occasional *Word Quarterly* in 1950 and 1951. He called himself a Humanist and established friendly relations with the ethical movement. He was active in the World Government movement, and formed a shadowy organisation of World Federalists. After the death of Stalin he once again became a fellow-traveller with Soviet Russia. He continued to abuse all and sundry on the left who broke his rigid rules of correct conduct — including many leading anarchists, and even the editors of *War Commentary* at the time of their trial in 1945. On the other hand he fought several elections as an independent socialist candidate. He stood in Central Glasgow as a peace candidate in the 1945 General Election, and came bottom of the poll. In the 1948 Camlachie by-election he stood as a World Government candidate, and came second to bottom. He stood as a peace candidate in Central Glasgow in the General Elections of 1950 and 1951, and twice more came bottom of the poll.

Towards the end he began to mellow, living increasingly in the past and treating old antagonists with more respect. During the 1940s and

1950s he suffered extra difficulties when the Strickland Press was blacklisted by the print unions for being a non-union shop (the ironic situation of so many left-wing printers), and he was deeply affected by the death of Ethel MacDonald in 1960. During the last eight years of his life he wrote the final though still incomplete version of his autobiography. In 1962 he stood as a peace candidate for the last time in the Woodside by-election, and for the last time came bottom of the poll.

Aldred suffered a heart attack in January 1963, but he continued to speak and write to the end, dying of heart failure in the Western Infirmary, Glasgow, on 17 October 1963. A memorial meeting was held in Glasgow on 3 November 1963, and many obituaries were published. Aldred left his body for medical research, and it was eventually cremated in Glasgow on 4 May 1964. John Taylor Caldwell continued *The Word* until May 1965 and occasional issues of the *Word Quarterly* from 1965 to 1967, and finally closed the Strickland Press in May 1968. Large numbers of Aldred's publications remained in circulation for many years, but he left no viable organisation or tradition, only the memory of an extraordinarily courageous but essentially solitary man whose vanity and oddity prevented him from taking the part which his ability and energy seemed to create for him in the revolutionary socialist movement.

Sources and Acknowledgements

Aldred wrote four versions of his autobiography — *From Anglican Boy-Preacher to Anarchist Socialist Impossibilist* (1908); *Dogmas Discarded* (1913); *Dogmas Discarded* (2 volumes, 1940); *No Traitor's Gait!* (19 parts in 3 volumes, 1955-1963) — but never got beyond 1932. Autobiographical material also appears in some of his other publications — *Socialism and Parliament* (1923), revised as *Socialism or Parliament* (1926, 1934, 1942); *For Communism* (1935), revised as *Communism* (1943); *Rex v. Aldred* (1949) — and in many issues of his various periodicals.

Unpublished manuscripts — Aldred Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow; Home Office Papers, Public Record Office, Kew; Nettlau and Freedom Collections, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; Margaret Sanger Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; Marie Stopes Papers, British Library, London. There is an unpublished biographical study by John Taylor Caldwell in three volumes — *The Red Evangel* (1976), *The Essential Aldred* (1983), *Come Dungeons Dark* (1986). First-hand biographical material appears in publications by other authors — R.M. Fox *Drifting Men* (1930) and *Smoky Crusade* (1937); William Gallacher *Revolt on the Clyde* (1936); John McGovern *Neither Fear nor Favour* (1960); Hastings Russell, Duke of Bedford *The Years of Transition* (1949); Margaret Sanger *An Autobiography* (1938).

Thanks are due to Heiner Becker, John Taylor Caldwell, Ame Harper, R.W. Jones, Christine Morris, Fermin Rocker, Carol Saunders, Susannah Walter, Ken Weller.

Note

Two of Aldred's pamphlets in the Word Library are still available — *Studies in Communism* (1940), containing revised versions of five earlier pamphlets; *Pioneers of Anti-Parliamentarianism* (1940), containing studies of dozens of anarchists and other anti-parliamentarian socialists — at 50p (75p post free) from Freedom Bookshop.

Message from America to Great Britain!

On MONDAY, JAN. 24th, 1898,

PETER KROPOTKIN

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AN ADDRESS

IN THE

Memorial Hall, Farringdon-st., E.C.,

ON

"The Development of Trade Unionism"

(Which will include the transmission of a Message from New York Trade Unionists to their comrades in Great Britain).

JAMES MACDONALD,

Secretary of the London Trades Council, in the Chair.

Organ Recital by Mr. Frank Merry.

Doors open at 7 p.m.; Organ Recital at 7-30.

CHAIR TAKEN AT 8 P.M.

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FREEDOM GROUP LECTURE COMMITTEE,
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Review

George Woodcock **Forgotten People**

Homage to the Spanish Exiles: Voices from the Spanish Civil War
By Nancy Macdonald
Human Science Press, \$19.95

The underlying subject of *Homage to the Spanish Exiles* is the life's work of a remarkable, extraordinarily modest woman, and any reviewer or reader who responds sensitively to the book must make a personal homage to Nancy Macdonald. Her book is the tale of Spanish Refugee Aid, of which she was for a third of a century the moving spirit, and of the Spanish fighters with whom it brought her into contact during that long period. But as well as that it is, as Mary McCarthy suggests in her introduction, the record of 'a vocation — a calling, such as happens to figures in religious history'.

Like Mary McCarthy, I have known Nancy Macdonald and done my modest bit to help her work for many years, and her dedication, which shines through the pages of this book, has been a lasting inspiration to me. If I became involved in helping Tibetan refugees, and later in working through small groups to help rehabilitate Indian villages, it was largely because Nancy had shown the way by demonstrating in her own work how little groups of volunteers with low overheads could gain remarkable results for comparatively little money once they moved outside the world of large and expensive charitable bureaucracies like the Red Cross and Care. Indeed, the very name of the small society my wife and I set up in Canada in 1962 — Tibetan Refugee Aid — was not merely an admiring echo of Spanish Refugee Aid but also a tribute to the organisation Nancy had set up a decade before. I am sure we are not the only people Nancy Macdonald inspired to imitate her in the helping of others.

Nancy Macdonald's interest in Spain began when she first went to the country in 1932, twenty years before SRA was founded. The

intervening twenty years were largely dominated by her political and social evolution. Married to Dwight Macdonald, that fine journalist who in the 1930s was one of the editors of *Partisan Review*, she became that magazine's business manager; it was then — in 1938 — that I first came into contact with her and Dwight. Both of them went through a political evolution in the late 1930s and the early 1940s that led them from Communism to Trotskyism and then to the dissident faction of Max Schachtman and his followers, who opposed the Old Man Trotsky himself, by claiming that Russia was no longer a Workers' State. By 1941 the Macdonalds had left the Schachtmanites because of the bureaucratic nature of Trotskyite party organisation, and were drifting towards the kind of liberation attitude that was natural to both of them and which led Dwight to found *Politics* in 1984 as a magazine broadly open to the non-Communist left but veering towards anarchism. I became the London correspondent for *Politics*, and this turned an acquaintance into a friendship that has continued with Nancy to this day, and has given me a personal viewpoint on what she tells in *Homage to the Spanish Exiles*.

Not long after *Politics* began publication it was evident that the war in Europe was drawing to an end, and that many left-wing Europeans who had been persecuted for their beliefs and had somehow survived were living in great distress. Friends of *Politics* like Hannah Arendt, Nicola Chiaromonte and Victor Serge began to send the names of people who were in need of money and clothes, food and medicines, and as a result *Politics* started in late 1945 its Packages Abroad project as — in Dwight's words — 'a token of fraternal feeling across national boundaries'. It was Nancy who organised this project, sending tens of thousands of packages of food and clothing and getting people to 'adopt' individuals and families and help them directly. Some of the people who benefited in these early days were Spaniards, but they were in the minority because to begin with nobody knew how many refugees from the Civil War had survived the rigours of the war years when many of them were sent to concentration camps in Germany or were incorporated in Nazi-controlled labour forces.

Later Nancy Macdonald worked for the International Rescue Committee, which was aware of the Spanish problem and had a section searching out and helping needy Civil War refugees in a desultory way. However, IRC's emphasis fell increasingly on refugees from behind the Iron Curtain, and by the early 1950s it was phasing out its work for Spaniards. This tendency was linked to the loss of Ford Foundation support, which also meant that Nancy lost her job at IRC.

It was this situation, deeply conscious of the continuing need to help the tens of thousands of people, most of them ill and old, who were still

eking out a wretched existence in an unwelcoming France, that Nancy decided to act on her own initiative. She got together an international group of sponsors and a small group of workers in New York and in France, and started Spanish Refugee Aid. In the 31 years over which she directed SRA, it raised more than \$5 million, and gave help to more than 10,000 refugees, usually on a long-term basis. The people it helped were anarchists or members of the various left socialist groups; Communists were not helped because they were looked after already by their fellows in the French Communist Party. Nor did any of the well-known exiled leaders of the CNT or the FAI appear in Nancy's lists; they found their own ways of surviving reasonably well in exile. Essentially, Nancy Macdonald set out to help those of her fellow libertarians whom nobody else would help, and her book is a chronicle of unknown, unfamous people caught in the mill of history.

Homage to the Spanish Exiles is in fact valuable and interesting because it so accurately fulfils its title. Nancy Macdonald includes just enough autobiographical material to explain her own involvement, and enough history of SRA to tell us how the organisation worked in its highly unbureaucratic way, using the help of people attracted by a sense of affinity to those they helped rather than by the hope of a career in a charitable organisation. But beyond such necessary facts, Nancy characteristically tends to efface herself and her organisation and to concentrate on what to her is most vital — the Spanish fighters for freedom whom she encountered and helped, and their stories.

The effect is to reopen, through the memories of the participants, a chapter of history that in recent years has been largely buried under the detritus of later events. Yet the Spanish Civil War was in fact the prelude to many of these events. It set the stage for the Second World War and gave useful military practice to several of the combatant nations. While even in the world of the 1930s Franco and his generals had no monopoly on brutality, they were the first to apply the already existing concept of total war to civil war, an example followed by an endless series of military adventurers in South American, African and Asian countries. On the positive side, the Spanish Civil War in its early stages showed a people rising up and refusing to accept military dictatorship in a way that is rare in history, and also, for the first and only time, successfully applying in the collective farms and factories of Catalonia and other parts of Loyalist Spain the idea of free communism which Kropotkin and other anarchists had long been preaching.

We are reminded of all this in the accounts of their experiences which Nancy Macdonald gathered from the refugees she helped. But these accounts are also valuable and often very moving because they enable one to see into the minds of these uncelebrated men and women who

resisted tyranny and, while others died in the struggle, paid their own price in an exile that often seemed entirely without hope. What is extraordinary is the courage and the good humour that so many of them have shown in telling even of their hardest times. Nancy Macdonald's book is thus a real homage, and at the same time a notable contribution to libertarian and left socialist history, recording the hope as well as the horror of those tragic years. The history of the defeated is always scantier than the history of the victors, and the Spanish anarchists and left socialists were twice defeated, first by the Communists and their allies behind the Loyalist lines from May 1937 onwards, and only afterwards by Franco's troops. In the process much in the way of records and recollections has been lost. *Homage to the Spanish Exiles* fills in a host of missing details, and so it combines with the autobiography of a modest and dedicated woman a valuable late record of what it meant to be double losers in the Spanish Civil War.

