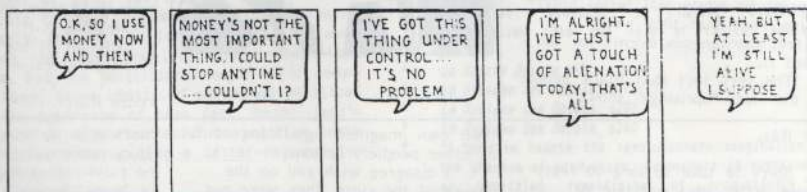


HERE AND NOW

A
LIBERTARIAN ROAD
TO SOCIALISM ?

Issue 4 50p



O.K. SO I USE
MONEY NOW
AND THEN

WHEN PEOPLE
TOLD SUSAN HOW
MONEY WOULD
MAKE HER FEEL
GOOD, WHAT THEY
DIDN'T TELL HER
WAS HOW LOUSY
IT WOULD MAKE
HER FEEL TOO...

MONEY'S NOT THE
MOST IMPORTANT
THING. I COULD
STOP ANYTIME
.... COULDN'T I?

...HOW, SLOWLY, SHE
SHE'D COME TO
SEE MORE AND
MORE THINGS
IN TERMS OF
MONEY...

I'VE GOT THIS
THING UNDER
CONTROL
IT'S NO
PROBLEM

...HOW SHE'D SOON
SEE EVERYTHING
AND EVERYONE
AS SOURCES OF
PROFIT...

I'M ALRIGHT.
I'VE JUST
GOT A TOUCH
OF ALIENATION
TODAY, THAT'S
ALL

...HOW SHE'D START
TO LOSE HER
FRIENDS BECAUSE
SHE'D NEVER
DO ANYTHING
FOR NOTHING...

YEAH. BUT
AT LEAST
I'M STILL
ALIVE
I SUPPOSE

...HOW, IN THE
END, SHE'D LOSE
HER SELF -
RESPECT, HER
FRIENDS, HER
LIBERTY, HER
HOPE -
EVERYTHING.

EVERYONE THINKS THEY CAN CONTROL MONEY
UNTIL IT STARTS TO CONTROL THEM

Money Screws You Up

LETTERS: RIOTS CROSSFIRE

Dear Here & Now,

A friend recently passed me a copy of your Spring '86 issue, with the words "it's interesting", and never having seen it before. I thought I'd give it a read, but nearly tore it up in disgust at the "Riots and Their Respondents" article, by K.H.

The smug, self-satisfied way that s/he intellectualised about real events, (very real and important to those involved) and dismissed them with not having anything to do with REAL politics, ie white intellectual politics, was sickening, but even more sickening was the narrowness of view of the "riots". The article was devoted entirely to what K.H. thought of WHITE groups analysis of the riots, which is ridiculous - considering that all of last years "riots" were in Black areas and were largely about the grievances of Black people and came about largely due to the mood of Black people in those areas.

In short K.H. has completely ignored Black as an issue and Black people's thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the subject, typical of the racism shown by white intellectuals. (From the article I assume that K.H. is white.) To say that "these riots are isolated from other forms of discontent" is to bury your head in the sand and pretend that it all happened as the "Sun" said. Just because the riots weren't the outcome of any industrial dispute, or political campaign (in white left terms only) doesn't mean that they were isolated, spontaneous events for the hell of it.

The very fact that Black people call the riots "uprisings" shows

that they are serious expressions of Black people's anger and discontent and a look at the events which sparked off the uprisings confirms this. In nearly all of the cases, police were the targets of the riots and as the police are just one arm of the State, as Black people well know and recognise, then doesn't it point to something more than the aimless brick throwing which K.H. implies. And the closer you look at the uprisings, the clearer it is that they have very strong links with other forms of discontent, Black people's discontent with the constant racism and harassment which we face.

For instance 1981, St Pauls, Bristol, the riot began in response



to a police attack on a local cafe, used mainly by Black people... Brixton, sparked off by 'Swamp '81' ...Southall, where local Black people organised themselves to fight off fascists who had invaded the area and the police who had come to defend them. What about the Bradford 12 who organised themselves, ready to defend their community? And still you say that "these riots are isolated from other forms of discontent" RUBBISH.

Look at the vigorous defence campaigns for those victimised because of the riots, in Handsworth, in Brixton, Broadwaterfarm Est etc, etc, - how can these things be "without any particular aim"? Black people will not forget events like the Deptford massacres, the deaths in police custody, the deportations, the everyday harassments nor the circumstances of our arrival, from countries impoverished for Britain's gain, to further boost that wealth, and what do we get nothing but abuse and attacks.

But it seems as if you do forget, and all too easily, about Black people and our struggles, and then go on to write an article about riots without even mentioning how Black people saw the struggles... Once again a white intellectual fails to get past their left/ultra left myopia, dismissing Black people without even a thought, you make me sick.

Regardless of publication, I would like a reply to this letter, preferably from the person responsible, K.H., with some explanation of the absence of any Black perspective in this article.

Yours Raf.

Dear Raf,

Sorry to take so long to reply to your letter, this was due to unavoidable circumstances rather than an unwillingness on my part to reply.

Firstly, making no reference to what was written by, and concerning, Blacks was an omission on my part. However, I doubt whether my conclusions would have been any different had I done so. I did not dismiss these "Real Events" as having nothing to do with real politics, as you would see from re-reading the article. It was trying to show the overblown way Leftists in particular responded to the riots, and other issues, and as such are just an isolated fringe in British politics. Secondly, I deliberately downplayed the significance of the riots because of the way such groups try to justify

their own imagined significance out of other people's actions.

I disagree with you on the nature of the riots, they were not uprisings because of their confinement, and the lack of support they got from the rest of society, as such the riots can only be seen as riots whose significance in creating real change for those involved and for the rest of us is minimal. If there was such a political consciousness as one would expect in an uprising, then why didn't these riots happen during the miners' strike? No doubt the repressive attitude of the police was just as obvious (or was it?) and the setting up of a "Second Front" in the form of rioting would have been more effective for all concerned when the police were at their most stretched.

As for me not having a Black Perspective in my article, firstly

this was an article on a specific topic, namely the representation of the riots rather than their reasons for being. Secondly, I am very dubious on this whole question of identity in politics, e.g. black identity, women/feminist identity etc. Surely this form of separation in politics is just reproducing the divisions imposed on us by capitalism? What is being created is a negative reaction which reinforces those divisions and thus capital rather than create a strong and more effective form of opposition.

I was not, therefore, lamenting the fact that the riots were not connected to industrial disputes or political campaigns, but was pointing out that where people, especially the left, suggest so, they are wrong.

Cont. p.6

December 1981) Nicholas Ridley (now Environment Minister) said:

"...we have to consider two principles. One is that employees should be able to participate in the profits of the company in which they work, that they should own a stake in their company, and that they should be motivated to try harder on its behalf by the financial incentives of the share that they own. The other, which is an equally laudable but separate proposition, is that the more widely share ownership can be spread throughout the community, the more individual investors there are in the Stock Market, the better it will be for general political reasons."

Exactly what these general political reasons may be can perhaps be shown in a *Guardian* review of the book "Shared Ownership" by Copeland et al:

"...the failure of business to share capital growth with employees discredits the Free Market system and, therefore, leads to an unhealthy concentration of ownership and decision-making. Thus a weakness in Capitalism is found to be also a potential weakness in democracy. But, they claim, shared ownership will actually strengthen Capitalism by spreading rewards, power and responsibility and provide 'ideological common ground between East and West'."

The authors might just as easily have said "provide ideological common ground between Left and Right". For what is being considered here is a brand new refurbishment of Capitalism. This decentralising approach seems to offer to the commodity system a human scale which has been so sadly lacking in the vast enterprises and conglomerates of modern society. It appears to answer many of the criticisms of Capitalism which the old socialists levelled at it: that it was uncaring and remote, that people were ordered about like cattle, that they never saw the fruits of their labour nor got a look-in on the profits, that the people were condemned to obey and never initiate, that they were excluded from power. Such criticisms seem to fade in the face of the new ideal, an ideal which questions the very descriptive term *Capitalism* as the spectre of a *Free-Market Socialism* drifts into view.

Now, as we all know by now, the menu is not the meal, and the reality of the dishes served up by the upgraded management is unlikely to match the superlatives of its advertisement, and I, for one, doubt just how much power is going to devolve onto the individual employee (or, for that matter, how much overall bureaucracy will disappear as the judicial apparatus replaces the administrative), but the degree of involvement of the individual in the web of commodity relations is unprecedented, and leads directly to new forms of discontent which demand fresh approaches from those who consider themselves on the side of human happiness.

A document which describes a proposal from the forefront of the popular capitalist approach has been published by the *Suntary Toyota International Centre for Economics and Related Disciplines*: called "Service Credits: a New Currency for the Welfare State", it discusses what purports to be a solution to the problem of the increase in Welfare recipients by examining a currency based on hours spent in the service of others recently set up in some American towns.

The basic approach is simple:

"We can begin to address our social problems by creating a new medium of exchange that can convert presently unutilized personal time into a marketable asset that can generate real purchasing power."

Each hour spent in the service of another (usually one suffering from a disability or disadvantage) entitles you to a *service credit* which guarantees an hour of equivalent "service" in the future. This invention of a new currency is, like Green attempts to do the same, a kind of local Keynesianism and fraught with the same problems of inflation and "currency confidence" - but the internal failings of this scheme need not concern us here. What is of interest is that this "fresh start" for exchange is a parable of the wider project to make the individual the centre of profit in contemporary society, and the assault on our humanity which can be perceived in this particular scheme has the same source as the new forms of discontent engendered in the wider economic sphere.

For neither system, be it the Service Credit system or "Free Market Socialism", will work where the individual does not think economically. Whereas human activity has always had a "free" side, in that unreciprocated favours abound, co-operation exists, and jobs are done for the love of them, the further devolution of monetary responsibility upon the individual squeezes these qualities out of life. Just as in the Service Credit system the individual is made to see his activity in terms of "hours equivalent", so the new capitalist worker must measure his activity to what is affordable and "competitive". No "spontaneous living" can exist in this environment. The individual must always see an equivalent return from what he does. Acts and services, which in reality have their own idiosyncratic value, must be reduced to a common value, enabling exchange to take place while undermining the human appreciation of their own uniqueness. Whether the system is determined by the Exchange Value of the Free Market or the Labour Value of the Service Credit, each individual must turn accountant, calculating the value of their actions to an all-pervading, but totally-arbitrary measurement, that of abstract value, that age-old con-trick based on the lie that human actions have direct equivalents. The fact that this has been with us for a long time does not rule out the particular dangers of the new developments, as the economic sphere, which was once an activity with its own restricted place in human affairs, comes to dominate and determine all human living.

Just as the *service-giver* tots up the hours he has spent visiting the old-age pensioner next door to see whether he can afford to "give" any more time, so the Capitalist Worker will have to enter each action in the balance-sheet in his mind. Why talk to a friend at work when money could be lost? And it won't be money stolen from you by the boss, but money lost by your own "inefficiency" in the new battleground of the war of all against all, where each individual becomes a company pursuing profit mediated only by a tumescent legal bureaucracy. Such is the nightmare reality of the popular capitalist dream.

What are being sacrificed on the altar of individual property-ownership are all those relations between people which are based on the uniqueness of individual desire, the unpredictability of human beings, and the existence of values higher than the mean-

The DEMISE of the CLASS OBJECT

A survey of recent pamphlets on the agency of change and the scope for revolutionary organisation.

To speak for, and claim the following of the 'moral majority' has become the ideological goal of the 'New Right'. This is being contested by a repackaged democratic socialism, with Kinnock asserting that the ground has shifted towards greater social responsibility, and that public perception of [symbolic] protests over armaments, jobs and the environment has ceased to be a liability post Band-Aid.

Developing a strand of neo-cardanist and post-situationist concern for placid values at the centre of the radical project

The Pleasure Tendency have sensed a contemporary relevance for questions deemed secondary to the Left. Starting from a shaky beginning with their "preliminary theses", two pamphlets, leaflets on Stonehenge and strikes, articles in this magazine have demonstrated an improved blend of heresy, originality and the willingness to 'experiment' with forms of communication. They have therefore departed from being the 'conscience of the left' [as 'Solidarity & certain anarchists were in the past] to seeking to identify a new constituency who question the values of consumer society and who adhere to a morality that is open to radical expression & collective projects.

As articulated in THE RETURN OF THE MORAL SUBJECT(1), such a pre-occupation, while timely, is not opportunist. It stems from a philosophical basis that stresses that: "Man has the unique capability of being able to form an idea of what does not exist, and the responsibility of being able to choose to create it" [p.11]. Inextricably interwoven is that "the guilt we feel is our salvation", for "if moral rules are only there for convenience, they are subject to erosion" [p.10]. Determinist theories are the tools of our oppressors and are the product of 19th century scientific rationality whereby an elect are legitimised as engineers of the destiny of the masses.

Being less concerned with the fate of Marxism, than its legacy for humanity, it follows that a clear demarcation is drawn between the practice of Leftist groups and the consciousness of radical potential. The fetters of Scientific Socialism lead to a belief that their theory can discern an authentic proletarian response which can be manipulated and that whatever lights the fuse is permissible, no matter how many untruths have to be swallowed by the workers to get them on the march" [p.16]. Hence we have the rituals of making economic demands, instigating strikes and regimenting protests to perpetuate an awareness of class interest. This pursuit of material self-interest aggregated to a class objective is contrasted with a social

consciousness" which would not make "use of other people's suffering as a tactic in the struggle" [p.21] and which would "look more to what they are fighting for and less to what the system makes people fight for" [p.20]. 'Good work strikes, such as offering a better service, are viewed from this perspective rather than as an occasional option which might be good for 'public relations'.

The conclusion, therefore, is that those with a radical vision should abandon such efforts to radicalise 'the class' in favour of an appeal to individual dissatisfaction. It is 'discovered' that the ranks of radicals are drawn precisely from those whose experiences have led to such a consciousness, rather than through an influx of workers who have graduated through prescribed levels of consciousness acquired in class struggle. In this vision, "a more significant division of society today is between different forms of social relation" [p.22] and this is expressed in opposition to the dynamic of the commodity social relation and for a pleasure tendency which poses a threat to instrumental reasoning.

This has important implications in terms of revolutionary organisation. While Marxism, in virtually all its guises [with the exception of the S.P.G.B.], and libertarian spontaneism both share in common is a preoccupation with the combativity of the class. While the former identifies a historical mission which is only possible through the intervention and leadership of the vanguard Party [Leninist or Bordigist], the latter marginalises the impact of the revolutionaries in favour of a celebration of the autonomous activity which emerges in periods of resistance. With the "declassification" of the human agency an already precarious drive to free "the transcendent

impulse" comes to rely increasingly on any impact of revolutionary organisation. Faced with a diffuse society where class position is separated from the experience of alienation, those that adopt "voluntarist methods" [p.18] shoulder an enormous task of creating imaginative and effective means of radical communication.

Before embracing such a challenge, and the practicalities that "a reduction to common terms" [p.11] involves in this new style of propagandising, we must subject such a "return" to self-confident utopianism to closer scrutiny.

The first flaw that springs to mind is that by flowing from a philosophical basis there is a lack of historical and cultural comparison. Granted, history is stressed with the import of preconceptions, which as Marx expressed it weigh "like a nightmare on the brain of the living" But "they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (18th Brumaire). Just how 'given' also varies enormously depending on an accident of birth and corresponding location. With an internationalist perspective it is possible to appreciate precisely the constraints that humanity experiences to different degrees. The attraction of 'free will' being exercised therefore more closely corresponds with assumptions, which, if not exactly ethnocentric, then at least correspond with the peculiar characteristics of the western, 'developed' societies. In these societies the economic infrastructure produces repeated changes in class structure and severs many of the traditional influences including the religious



Photo: Mike Galloway/Network

legacy. Rapid change is occurring through-out underdeveloped societies, and although swamped by national liberation and 'anti-imperialist' politics in the main, there are examples in Latin America and southern Africa, especially, where 'class' interest and solidarity emerges through collective organising in the new workplaces and townships. Any 'voluntarist' practice deemed appropriate for a new radicalism must be tempered by such an appreciation of the 'uneven' potential for organising and limitations placed by factors as diverse as transport and communication to the primacy of basic physical needs of food, health and shelter.

A second consideration is that the broad-side against 'class struggle' politics may in fact be better described as a demolition of workerism. But how many on the Left subscribe to such an orthodox today? With different emphases and motives, the 'new left' orthodoxy being primarily the outcome of '70s fragmented politics, appeals to doctrines as diverse as certain strands of Trotskyism, Euro-Communism, 'new left' labourism, socialist feminism and single-issue libertarian socialism. Organising around issues such as housing and health were no longer subordinated to industrial agitation, since 'class' reduced to the confines of the factory were seen as inhibiting the development of the struggle, whether it be in the Fisher-Bendix dispute of 1971 or in the efforts to reassert 'proletarian autonomy' in Italy. There is also an 'ideal type' reduction of workplace struggles which describes what typically occurs but which understates the 'drawing of conclusions' outwith the parameters of the immediate struggle. In the 80s, what are represented as set-piece confrontations by the media, are increasingly the product of the deployment of mass policing to enforce one side in an industrial dispute. With a corresponding shift in employment law, the State has returned as a more visibly oppressive force in industrial and urban conflict. For a significant minority, the media's role to cloak such militarised policing is seen through, and "the reduction to common terms", is to project solidarity amongst objectively disparate groups who have experienced first-hand the application of the new State methods and strategy. To identify with this and disseminate such first-hand accounts to the 'resisting' minority, as practised by COUNTER INFORMATION (3), necessarily reflects the tension of 'balancing' this against the scrutiny of critical judgement which includes the examination of what people think they are struggling for. For example, the much maligned or celebrated spectre of riots is seen in better perspective in terms of the history of over 15 years of organising for autonomy and against policing for many black activists.

The question of revolutionary organisation, forms a third qualification which is formed in reference to the analysis of major periods of upheaval and unrest. TEN YEARS OF HISTORY is a pamphlet in a series by a post situationist author, Francois Martin [4]. He explores mass struggles in France, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Poland and assesses the legacy against the capacity "of the ruling class... to reverse the tendency of their rate of control over society to decline" [p.24]. Being an example of one of the few exponents of this current not to have been drawn into the workings of the system as willing agents of recuperation, there is a tone of bitterness and pessimism understandable in present French conditions. Fear of unemployment and the institutionalisation of labour turnover is seen as effectively neutralising the formerly destabilising influences of young deskilled workers. Yet Europe remains the arena where "the most modern forms of contestation have always had their being" and where the "restoration of alienation" involves the suppression of "the memory of a proletarian project of a classless society and the memory of individual emancipation formulated by modern art" by "neutralising and recuperating" [p.23]. For Martin, the survey of recent mass struggles should not be viewed by the celebration of the spontaneist or the despair of the armchair critic. The view that "unbridled autonomy and total liberty would take care of everything" demonstrated a failure "to think strategically" which accompanied an abstract identification with the 'proletariat' resulting in the loss of "intelligence of what it had done and what it could do" [p.25]. There are strains of a Maciavellian conception of a contest for the seizing of initiative between an "international revolutionary current" and the system's champions, in which victory "will come to whomever is the first to inform themselves on the state of their enemy" [p.33]. There is therefore a renewed advocacy of the [horizontal] party which can restore "a factual truth" and organise to outlive moments of unrest in order to continually assess the 'balance of forces' and engage in communication which seeks to 'transmit' the significant conclusions to social struggles. Setting aside the practical questions of how best this might be achieved[5], here is a conception which defines the reason for the existence of a revolutionary minority beyond individual 'conversion' to a consciousness of 'what might be'. Incidentally it is somewhat curious that all consciousness is viewed in relativistic terms since the profound awareness associated with the P.T. position is of a different [qualitative] kind to that say of a 'lumpen' consciousness which descends to the level of stealing from your neighbours and being mercenary in dealings with others.

Such a 'rugged individualism', wherever it arises in the class structure is despised by the P.T. and all who 'aspire' for a society in which such relations will scarcely exist and even less be nurtured. In our frustration at the muddled and contradictory struggles it is easy to cry: let's leave this 'reality' behind. However we may wish otherwise, the class object cannot be so easily disposed of. Granted too often class has been taken to mean MASS (6), and with it a prescription for manufacturing the correct slogans to mobilise people around transitory demands. But the object of a classless society is inextricably associated with the experience of alienation. Are we seriously suggesting that those for whom class identification is the least meaningful could ever constitute anything more than a small minority for whom the espousal of a 'utopian' message could become a vital attraction? Voluntarist methods can so easily lead to a self-promotion mentality [such as CLASS WAR] in which the centre of our 'universe' is the group's impact. Such a narrowing of horizons could lead us to believe 'that tomorrow belongs to us'. For some anarchists 'faith' is paramount. For us, a responsible engagement as a minority will be to combine imaginative appeal to those aware of alienation with the capacity to assess 'what's going on' in social relations and social struggles and communicate our critical theory in a language appropriate.

- 1) S.A.E. to P.O. Box 109, Leeds LS5 3AA.
- 2) "the class struggle is slowly but surely becoming the central issue of peoples lives." This is the blind faith of a born-against spontaneist. Although the author attempts an assessment of the contradictions in riots, football hooliganism and individual acts of violence, the sum total of the actions are heralded as signifying that an 'impossible class' exists after all and that this factual truth is publicised everyday in the tabloid press albeit in a distorted form. Rebel Violence vs Hierarchical Violence (BM Combustion, London).
- 3) S.A.E. to Box 81, 43 Candlermaker Row, Edinburgh, for nos. 11 & 12 of free broadsheet.
- 4) Loose translation, SAE/Donation to BM Blob, London.
- 5) The preoccupation of LIBERTARIAN ORGANISATION & STRUCTURE, c/o Co-op Bookshop, 85a New Elvet, Durham City.
- 6) "Anti-Mass" collectives as a form of organisation" USA text, early '70s often reprinted, heralding strategy for emergence from the 'underground'.

Jim McFarlane

Letters Cont. from p.2

The reference you make to me saying that riots [can be] "Without particular aim" was, as the article suggests a comment made about some riots rather than specifically those that occurred last year in Britain.

Are we to support all riots as uprisings? Such as those by Right wing and Fascist students in Paris 18 months or so ago? Or the riot in

the Heysel Stadium as an expression aimed at the heart of Capitalist Ideology? Obviously not, then why suggest that riots where Blacks are concerned are uprisings just because a few police get their heads panned in, despite the support campaigns which have been formed to defend the communities and those arrested and the justifiable grievances of those involved in these particular riots

in Tottenham etc?

My article did not in any way suggest that there were no justifications for rioting, rather, that the riot as a form is no more effective in gaining real change in society than is the Petition, Terrorist bomb, or joining the Labour Party.

Yours K.H.

Animal Liberation

a loss of clarity

"What is at work here is a transposition of the discontents of life under Capital onto mutely suffering animals instead of onto human individuals"

Thus concludes ADs article *Animal Liberation* in H&W no.3, a statement many would feel inclined to agree with. However, as someone closely involved in the Animal Liberation movement of 4 or 5 years ago, the question which this statement provokes is this: Is such misplaced concern the inevitable consequence of the ideas of animal liberationists or has there been a traceable deterioration of clarity and pertinence in the actions of the liberationists themselves?

AD identifies the ethical system underlying animal liberation as one "which suggests that people can only be free if all animals are free". This is, or was, largely incorrect. The phrase *Animal Liberation* was originally coined by the philosopher Peter Singer, whose argument, briefly, ran something like this:

Human beings have the capability to imagine themselves to be in the position of someone else. This capability and the resultant empathy we feel for others is at the root of all human ethics and (as Kropotkin believed) expresses itself in the "Golden Rule" *Do unto others as you would be done unto* (or, perhaps more relevantly, Hillel's formulation of the same rule *Do not do unto others that which you would not have done unto yourself*).

This idea underlies all sympathy with the oppressed, all ideas of equality, all demands for social justice. When applying this rule to issues involving cruelty, Singer argues, we should do so on the only point of identification which is logically relevant; that is not the capability of the victim to rationalise, but rather the capability of the victim to suffer. If rationalisation or other higher thought processes were held to be the most important factor determining empathy with another, then logically we would afford precious little rights over cruelty to new-born babies who have, perhaps, less in common with us as regards intelligence than do, say, pigs or dolphins. If it can be argued that babies have at least the potential to grow into fully cognisant sensitive beings like ourselves, then why, asks Singer, do we afford the right of freedom from experimentation to severely mentally handicapped individuals who have little hope of developing the elaborate mental processes by which we identify ourselves?

To describe the illogically preferential rights we do ascribe to members of our own species, Singer coined the ugly and fortunately little-used neologism *speciesism*. Rights of freedom from cruelty, Singer argued, can only be based logically on the empathy we feel with the capability to suffer that we imagine a given organism to have. In other words, he exhorts us to ask the question "If I were such-and-such an

animal, with the central nervous system that I suppose such-and-such an animal to have, would I like that done to me?" Thus the "freedom" of animal liberation is not an abstract, political freedom, not a freedom of rights and corresponding duties, not freedom of speech, thought and assembly, but simple freedom from imposed suffering. And whereas most notions of rights involve corresponding notions of duties, since we afford these particular rights by virtue of the empathy we feel and, as far as we know, animals are incapable of empathy, we do not expect similar behavior from animals towards their fellows or ourselves. Thus the "nature red in tooth and claw" argument used by some to oppose the notion of animal rights as unnatural is not strictly relevant.

The above was, at any rate, my understanding of the philosophy behind animal liberation which led to my own involvement. The understanding that the basis upon which so many of us identify with others is political, social, and ethical causes could and should be logically extended to creatures who, while not of our species, still shared with us the capacity for suffering.

However, if this idea was truly the ethical basis of animal liberation - an empathy based upon assumed function of a central nervous system - then surely it contains within it some notion of priority, some assumed hierarchy of suffering to which the activist must pay heed. To swat a fly is less heinous, say, than torturing a human being and there must be infinite gradations between. The loss of this perspective appears to be one of the first signs that the animal liberationists had lost their way. The quote from an ALF spokeswoman which heads ADs article "I wouldn't be at all concerned if a vivisector was killed, compared with the death and suffering they cause to millions of animals" clearly makes nonsense of the ethical premise outlined above and stands in marked contrast with the earlier denunciations of action in the cause of animal liberation which were designed to cause harm to human beings, from the ubiquitous Ronnie Lee, spokesman for the Animal Liberation Front: "We would not be in favour of any incident where someone was hurt".

The events which prompted both opinions were the actions of the Animal Rights Militia (an even more shadowy group than the ALF), who took it upon themselves to launch attacks, usually in the form of crudely-prepared letter bombs, on people whom they saw as legitimate political targets in the struggle to "liberate" animals. The ARM emerged at two significant points in the recent history of the animal liberation movement: first in 1982, when the media were first giving full vent to reports on animal militants, by a series of letter bombs to the House of Commons; and secondly, after a period of media disinterest in the subject in 1985. All ARM actions that have been

reported were aimed at individual human beings, never at rescuing animals themselves.

The second media appearance of the ARM coincided with reports that things were now so bad (many liberationist attacks a week according to *The Guardian*) that pressure was growing for a national police section, along the lines of the Drug Squad, to combat this growing menace. Too close a reading of Sanguinetti's *On Terrorism and the State* might even lead one to suppose that these two facts were not unconnected. Whether the ARM were indeed part of a "dirty tricks" campaign to discredit the Animal Rights movement and gain extra support for the police, as some of the facts might suggest (not least the 3 year gap between their appearances), the invention of some adolescent adventurers, their overall effect seems to have been every bit as reactionary as those which most of us have come to expect from purely terrorist actions. Be that as it may, the most significant development as regards the animal liberation movement as a whole was most certainly the shift from out-and-out denunciation of these attacks as inconsistent with the ethical premise of concern for animals, to a cautious reluctance to condemn such behaviour. Whilst it is fair to say that debate still continues within the movement as to whether such tactics are a useful step forward, the clarity of earlier ethical guidelines has most certainly been greatly obscured.

Another aspect of the decomposition of the animal rights movement can be seen in the importance afforded to the intent behind the various actions as a whole. Broadly these can be characterised as falling into three categories:

- Direct Action**, where animal suffering is seen as the problem and the steps taken to remedy this are immediately the liberation of the animals concerned and their removal to a place of sanctuary (not necessarily, indeed rarely, liberation into the countryside), where they can live lives free from experimentation and cruelty;
- Economic Sabotage** - the destruction of lab equipment, smashing of shop windows, campaigns against the certain product, etc;
- Terrorism** - the intimidation of people by personal attacks and harassment, and the poisoning of products like *Mars Bars*, designed to coerce people into accepting the point of view of the liberationists by offering dire consequences if they do not.

There has undoubtedly been a significant shift from the former types of action towards the latter. This shift reflects the discussion on confusion about the term *direct action* itself, outlined in Nicolas Walter's *About Anarchism*, 1969. According to Walter, the term *direct action* originally referred to action that "...applied .. directly on the situation and is intended to win some measure of success rather than mere publicity... (it was) developed in reaction to the more extreme techniques of propaganda by deed; instead of getting sidetracked into dramatic but ineffective gestures."

My own involvement suggested that by far the most difficult thing about the animal liberation movement was the arrangement of safe places to take the animals after they had been liberated, the checking over by a sympathetic vet, and the transportation often in the dead of night. The quiet forethought that this *direct action* required appears to have been largely abandoned in favour of just letting animals



Andrew Ward/Report

loose in the countryside which, in the case of minks, betrays what AD rightly describes as an "ignorance of life in the wild and an over-acceptance of Walt Disney's version" or worse, a resort to an over-indulgence of balaclavas and the seemingly-compulsive video camera to record the exploits of the "guerillas" for *News at Ten*.

As the animal libbers become caught up in the spectacle of their own opposition to certain aspects of this society, the paraphernalia of stylised struggles assumes a growing importance - to the detriment of the animals themselves. Opposition becomes formalised and forgets the ethical premise upon which such opposition was originally founded. There was a time when being a vegan - a logical corollary of any person's pretensions to the cause of animal liberation - was to awaken one to the fact that some 85% of the products with which one was bombarded with exhortations to buy were rendered unacceptable by virtue of the ethical objections one had to their manufacture. This can only have been a radicalising phenomenon, however partial. The "lesson" to be learned from subsequent developments, however, is not so much, as AD suggests, that only the image of the commodity's image was attacked, but that Capitalism is infinitely flexible to consumer demand. (Vegeburgers and Soya Milk are now available in supermarkets.)

The growth of vegetarianism / veganism appears with hindsight to have resulted in little more than an expanding market for specialized products - a foreseeable shift in consumer demand that has been increasingly and more-than-adequately catered for. Whilst I continue to be a vegan, the conclusion that what could once be seen as a conscious attempt to control an area of one's own life has become just another example of "informed consumption" is inescapable. Most important of all, however, what should be clear by now is that the opposition have themselves played into the hands of that which they seek to oppose - by losing sight of their comparatively-lucid ethical objections to an aspect of this society and trading it for a dramatic stylised role-playing which helps no-one save those with an eye for a good story or a new market.

MUNICIPALISM



Murray Bookchin's
LIBERTARIAN

Murray Bookchin is almost the only person writing in English and in the Anarchist tradition who has essayed a critique specifically of our times and has attempted to evolve a strategy to bring about revolutionary change. Whereas the critique has remained fairly consistent, rooting itself in ecological thought and proclaiming the obsolescence of the working class as revolutionary subject, Bookchin's strategy of opposition has gradually shifted over the years. Most recently he has advocated a strategy to which he's given the name *Libertarian Municipalism*.

In the Sixties Bookchin expounded the idea that there was a link between growing disruption and imbalance in the natural world and social imbalance and disruption. Each age throws up a science which is potentially liberatory, and in this age it is Ecology. Just as the maintenance of a viable ecosystem depends on diversity rather than uniformity, spontaneous development rather than inflexibility, and a balanced interdependence rather than linear hierarchy, the flourishing of a system fit for human beings depends on these same characteristics. Capitalism disrupts human community, a disruption whose effect is the disruption of natural communities. In biological terms, humanity is now a parasite.

The politics which can right this state of affairs is the politics of what Bookchin calls *Social Ecology*. The principles of ecology become the paradigm for social organisation; such a politics will therefore emphasise the ecological virtues of decentralisation, diversity, smallness of scale, mutuality,

spontaneity.

Bookchin saw any revolutionary strategy as necessarily being consistent with these virtues. Movements displaying them would be anathema to Capitalism because they countered its most basic dynamics. To the Bookchin of this era spontaneity was the best way to resist Capital. The apparent breakdown in social discipline evinced by such developments as the new sexual freedom of the Sixties, the experiments in lifestyle, the worldwide eruption of an insurrectionary youth, was a positive counterblow to Capitalism. It was in the spontaneity of this rebellion, rather than in the organised resistance of the working class, that the best hope for revolution lay. With the benefit of hindsight some of Bookchin's claims look a little sorry, but he was not alone in his optimism at the time:

"The growing refusal runs very deep... In its detestation of middle-class values it rapidly evolves into a rejection of the commodity system ... In short, it tends to transcend every particularistic critique of the society and evolve into a generalised opposition to the bourgeois order on an ever-broadening scale"

From *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 1968

The way in which this snowballing movement would overthrow Capitalism would be classically spontaneist - the action of the mob would bring the whole edifice crashing down. Rioting in the streets was the revolutionary road *par excellence*.

"...crowd actions involve the rediscovery of the streets and the effort to liberate them. Ultimately it is in the streets that

power must be dissolved; for the streets, where daily life is endured, suffered and eroded, and where power is confronted and fought, must be turned into the domain where daily life is enjoyed, created and nourished." *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*

It is to Bookchin's credit that, in evolving his views, he has recognised the failures of the intervening years. The fact that a rebellion in terms of values and attitudes did not develop into the generalised opposition he predicted is a sign of his under-estimation of the adaptability of Capitalism, with its goat-like ability to happily digest all sorts of supposedly-unpalatable dishes.

Capitalism can in practise accommodate cries for decentralisation, diversity, etc., indeed subverts such demands by finding ways of drawing them into the commodity system. In the era of the *Cabbage Patch Kid* uniqueness is reduced to a marketing ploy. New technology makes it economically possible to embark upon short production-runs geared towards specific markets, thus increasing the apparent diversity of goods offered to the customer. Ecological values are exploited in the mass marketing of "organic produce" in supermarkets. The giant transnationals Shell and Bayer base advertising campaigns on the supposed ecological benefits of their activities.

Bookchin's shift in emphasis must be attributed in part to his growing awareness of the durability of the monster. In the mid-Seventies he began to hit out at the assimilation of ecological issues. His frustration at the recuperation of ecological ideas by eye-for-the-main-chance entrepreneurs is evident in a piece he wrote for *Co-Evolution Quarterly* in 1977:

"Perhaps I am naive, but I had thought that decentralisation, human scale, self-determination and sharing... enjoyed a certain immunity from

the multi-national mind." Everything but everything is grist to the Capitalist mill; where there's life there's a commodity. Bookchin's disgust seeps out:

"...even terms like decentralisation, human scale, self-determination and sharing can be deftly manipulated - be it corporate-oriented enterprises like the SRI, government monoliths like NASA, cold warriors like Herman Kahn and political hucksters like Jerry Brown - to provide 'the fastest growing consumer market of the coming decade'..."

The optimism of 1968 has been tempered by the bleak intervening years and Bookchin has moved from advocating the seizure of the streets to a less ambitious municipalism. For not only has Capitalism proved itself able to absorb to its benefit apparently oppositional currents, but the modern State has also proved far more effective at containing street-level insurrection than might at one time have been thought. Riots come and go, yet the smile on Leviathan's face remains. The technological mastery of the modern State would quickly end any attempted rerun of, say, the Spanish Revolution, claims Bookchin:

"They'll come out with bazookas and missiles, they'll come out with their Green Berets, their radar and their bombers and wipe out everything in just a matter of days..." (From an interview in *Kick It Over*, Winter 85/86)

The era of Revolution is over. The classical concept of the proletarian-led revolution died in 1936:

"...the larger fact of a greatly expanded capitalism, the extent to which the market-place has deepened its reach into the most intimate aspects of social life, the striking stability of the system as a whole, its chilling technological sophistication that has made meaningless all

images of insurrectionary revolutions in the major centres of Capitalism." (From *Were We Wrong?* in *Telos* 65)

Bookchin's alternative is to strengthen those features of civil society which are antithetical to Capital's total domination. He looks to the possibility of bolstering what remains of the libertarian in everyday life, and to this end has begun advocating municipalism, i.e. participation in electoral politics at the local level only.

In some ways this seems to be a council of desperation, a last anxious stab at preserving a focus for a counter-ethic to the prevailing massification. Bookchin claims that his advocacy of municipalism is not new, but certainly the emphasis which he now places on it represents a distinct shift and is associated with his more pessimistic assessment of the depths of Capital's invasion of everyday life.

The examples which Bookchin offers of the possibilities afforded by municipalism are mostly drawn from American traditions of local government and are rooted in the traditional mistrust of the central State found there. He is fond of citing the New England Town Meeting as the highest form of social organisation (along, it should be said, with the Greek polis - an enthusiasm shared by Hannah Arendt and Cornelius Castoriadis). Closer to home, he is enthusiastic about the work of the German *Grünen* (funds rather than *realos*) at the local level, but would not go along with their national politicking.

Bookchin all but admits that this is a defensive rather than an offensive strategy. The omnipresence of the commodity and the massive power of the State are in danger of making Orwell's totalitarian nightmare - the boot in the human face forever - a reality. Libertarian Municipalism is an attempt to form a bulwark against this, one which will "act as a brake



Danish Squatters Confront Municipal Authorities [1986]

upon the centralisation of the State" (K.I.O. interview)

From our experience it is difficult to share Bookchin's optimism concerning a municipalist strategy. The New England Town Meeting may well be a fine institution but it is fairly unique; there is certainly no equivalent of it here. The realities of local government structure in this country, the subservience of local to national politics, the deep-rooted apathy towards local politics, the lack of any localist libertarian tradition, all combine to make it difficult to see where such a strategy might find a foothold.

Instead we have seen the depressing spectacle of Leftist interventions at the local level, sometimes clothed in libertarian rhetoric, which have merely increased the general level of cynicism about politics in general. Trotskyists have used local councils as a base from which to project themselves onto the national screen. Community projects abound, often staffed by individuals who spout libertarian-speak, but whose major effect on the life of the neighbourhoods in which they operate is to make community a bureaucratic abstraction, something administered by professionals, more a creature of spontaneous collectivity than, for example, schools. The only beneficiaries are the New Class of

professionals parasitical on the collapse of a true local collectivity.

And how can we ensure that involvement in local politics will remain separate from national politics? The distinction between the activities of the *Grünen* at the local and national levels seems a bit contrived. The first step taken, the temptation of *realpolitik* will always prove strong to some - the chimera of "real" change. "real" power. As it is sucked into the mainstream, the movement is weakened and ends up being used to bolster that which it set out to destroy.

The elision of local and national politics is inevitable where the local may have less immediacy than the national. Just as Bookchin at one time underestimated the ability of the Capitalist system to recuperate "oppositional" values, he may be underestimating the extent to which the very idea of the local has already been destroyed.

On the one hand, the physical structure of many city areas makes community difficult if not impossible. Lacking public spaces, isolated, as in Glasgow, from the areas of the city where trade, entertainment, etc. are located, the places where many live are grim dormitories whose very streets make a mockery of the more comfortable connotations of words such as *community*. To control such an area would be to lord it over a dunghheap.

At the same time, Mass Culture pushes national and transnational figures, real and imaginary, into our lives, to the extent that they become almost as familiar and as immediate as our neighbours. In the places where people still come together (bus queues, pubs, schools, workplaces, dole offices) the new common language of celebrity may even predominate over speech about the real doings of known people.

This tendency is at its most pronounced in the political arena. National figures are far

better known than local ones. Everyone knows Thatcher but who can tell you the name of their local councillor?

The question must be asked: is there still a locus for a libertarian Municipalism? Is the power of the *Grünen* at the local level the outcome of genuinely local concerns or a consequence of their national fame? From here, libertarian Municipalism looks like an attempt to piece together the scattered shards of something well and truly blown away.

And this links up with another issue in Bookchin's politics which I have hitherto left unstressed: the abandonment of a revolutionary subject. The consignment of the traditional proletariat to the dustbin of history paves the way for Bookchin's prioritisation of an ethic, the ecological ethic, as the motive force towards revolution. Yet paradoxically this particular attempt to replace the materialist model of revolutionary change with an ethical one, effectively tears the moral heart out of the communist movement *viz* solidarity with and between the wretched of the earth.

It might have been easy, particularly in the Sixties, to feel that the two-car American working class were not exactly the wretched of the earth. But the wretched still exist and the empowerment of the dispossessed has a greater force as a moral motivation than the need for diversity, belief in human-scale communities, or the principle of spontaneity.

It is in the wasted neighbourhoods of our cities that the marginalised and immiserated successors to the old working class live. The ethical spur to revolution is precisely what happens here.

Bookchin is right in seeing the business of revolutionaries as being the creation of community. But this is not the same as revitalisation of the local, which - as we know it - is in itself a creation of Capital.

T.D.

Eco-Politics



West German

Recently the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (equivalent to *The Guardian*) published the following result of a Public Opinion Survey:

80% of all Germans in the Federal Republic like to regularly go *wandern*

This is best translated as a composite of hiking with rucksack and/or simply strolling through the fields and forests of Middle Europe.

This report is intriguing on three counts: firstly, it shows that even so-called "quality" newspapers sometimes reprint primary sources without a word of analysis; secondly, it shows that the organisers of questionnaires sometimes guilelessly regurgitate whatever rubbish their respondents come up with; and thirdly such polls reveal that the respondents themselves will often give an answer they think they should, rather than an answer that is objectively more-or-less correct.

Think about it: 80% of all West Germans regularly go rambling... in effect, since the remaining 20% of the population is either too young or too infirm, this would mean that virtually the entire nation is frequently (let's say at the weekends) to be found roaming through the pine forests. Well as someone who really does penetrate the German forests on her nonsexist, nonracist, nonpollutant bird-of-peace bike just about every weekend, I can tell you that the number of German burghers following in my tracks (whatever they claim in the polls) is approximately zero.

What's this anecdote got to do with Die Grünen in West Germany, you may be asking yourself?

Provisional reply: there's an

enormous element of greenness here, imaginary and real, which is not solely the consequence of political Green consciousness, but possibly its predicate. For example, since I started living in the FRG a few years ago, recycled containers for old paper, glass, batteries, metal cans and even plastic bottles have, yes, mushroomed on street-corners everywhere. A rubbish exchange set up in 1973 by the Bavarian Chamber of Commerce (honestly!) is still flourishing. In any West German supermarket you can obtain toilet paper made of recycled paper, non-phosphate detergents, wholefood products, etc. And - no big deal but instructive nevertheless - all petrol stations offer non-leaded petrol and the even more popular diesel (this because diesel-powered vehicles are exempt from Road Tax on the grounds that their emissions do not attack trees - however it has recently been established that diesel fumes might well be carcinogenic for animals and humans).

West German media give relentless coverage to green themes, Chernobyl still being in the news, as are also the reactors at Chattenom, Brokdorf, Wackersdorf and Kalkar. Similarly highlighted are the topics of:

- Chemical additives in food and drink;
 - Municipal measures, although halfhearted, to combat the tyranny of the car;
 - Save-our-forest campaigns;
 - Activities of ecological groups such as *Greenpeace* and *Robin Hood*;
 - Various Rock-Against-Nukes concerts;
 - The Peace Movement;
 - Police heavy-handedness / incompetence at demos;
- and at the moment in particular, the disgusting state of the

rivers Rhine, Mosel and Saar. Incidentally, the fishmeal produced from the cadavers of the 5 million fish killed by illegal dumping of cyanide in the Saar has already been sold to cosmetics manufacturers.

Of course, media featuring does not necessarily have any effect. That's not quite my point, which is repeating myself, that there's a huge amount of Greenness in West Germany - including Right-wing Greenness. At one pseudo-community Street Festival in a small town on 20,000 citizens, I observed 6 Green stands, of which only 2 were identifiably "Left" - Die Grünen and Greenpeace.

Where then does this greenness come from? And why mainly in West Germany? After all, France also belongs to that gigantic sprawl of Middle Europe which consists of agriculture, mountains and forests scattered occasionally with villages and now cities, but the French don't reveal much of a Green awareness, so it can't merely spring from the geography of imposing scenery. Perhaps German greenness is one delayed aftermath of the postwar devastation and deprivation experienced by the present 40-plus generation whose first childhood years will have been a sort of existential *Waste not, Want not* lesson. Or perhaps, as Murray Bookchin has pointed out elsewhere, this greenness does partly have its intellectual antecedents in 19th century Romantic literature, which was also influential in the founding in 1903 (five years before the British Boy Scouts) of the Wandervogel movement, whose members earnestly biked through the forests singing folk-songs and considering themselves slightly-rebellious and not bourgeois. Indeed the success of the Wandervogel was such that in 1925 the German SPD set up a leftwing version (the Falken), and their present members can still be spotted at most demos in their quaint blue shirts, red neckerchieves and breeches.

And just where do the Party-political Die Grünen come from? To get the answer to this inquiry, I went to their HQ in Bonn naively thinking that they'd be only too pleased to fill-in the details. Far from it! I was given a pleasant-enough welcome, but then fobbed-off

with a one-sheet skeleton history of Die Grünen (which started in 1979!) and the vague but mysterious promise that an official chronicle would be appearing in the next few years. Puzzled, I asked in a Marxist bookshop in Bonn if they could provide me with a short account of Die Grünen. I was treated to a monologue on how - from a Marxist perspective - a satisfactory history of Die Grünen would never be published, because their celebrities were ashamed of the conservative background to Die Grünen. Even more intrigued, I then began to put questions in a Bonn community bookshop, and was provided with roughly the same standpoint, namely, that Die Grünen prominent now are not especially interested in having published how the "Left" Grünen forced out the "Right" Grünen - often in very trying and personality-based circumstances.

Whatever the Authorised Version of the history if Die Grünen in all its one-page length is this: In 1979 various post-1968 groups (feminists, disillusioned communists and Maoists, ecologists and eccentrics) fused together to form Die Grünen - a version which ignores conservative representation and the uncomfortable but true fact that the first parliamentary green grouping was a conservative one (in the state of Schleswig-Holstein in 1975).

You could argue, I suppose, that where Die Grünen emerged from is irrelevant: today they can be safely placed somewhere inconspicuously "Left" in the political spectrum. Indeed, many anarchists would have little difficulty identifying with various contents of the manifestos of Die Grünen: no nukes, no wars, no violence, no growth, no discrimination, grass-roots democracy, decentralisation, redistribution of wealth, etc.

All the same, there are problems, not least the corrosive question of parliamentary, representative democracy: Does the Team Think that an elected parliament with a Green majority is capable of deconstructing itself? It is more or less on this issue that Die Grünen are split bitterly into two all-consuming camps: the *Fundis* and the *Realsos*. Article 2 of the Introduction to Die Grünen's Constitution says:

Die Grünen acknowledge that

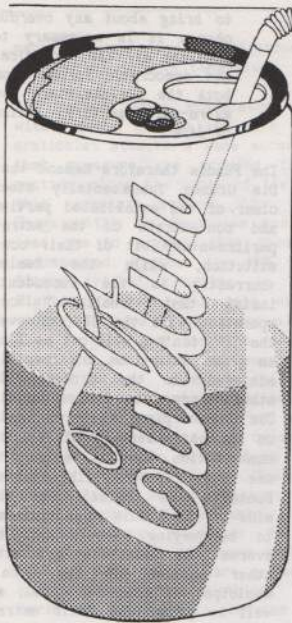
to bring about any overdue change it is necessary to mobilize all the ecological and democratic forces from both the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary walks of life.

The *Fundis* therefore demand that Die Grünen fundamentally steer clear of the established parties and concentrate of the extra-parliamentary bit of their constitution, while the *Realsos* (currently in the ascendant) insist that "realistic" co-operation with the SPD, or even the CDU, isn't a sell-out as long as green objectives are tangibly achieved in the process. In other words, the *Realsos* within Die Grünen place their emphasis on the parliamentary bit of the constitution. Thus it is easy to see why thinkers like Murray Bookchin are basically on the side of the *Fundis* who, he seems to be saying, should not be averse to co-operating with other parties at the local, municipal or communal level, as well as preserving their extra-parliamentary purity. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, on the other hand, is an eminent *Realo*. Remember him? Well-known disc-jockey and published on the Frankfurt magazine *Pflasterstrand* (whose title is an allusion to an aphorism by Feyerabend, the American anarcho-mathematician, but best rendered in this context as *Time Out*).

Although it is unfair to pick on personalities (of course) Cohn-Bendit is a classic illustration of where the *Realo*-wing of Die Grünen could head: hip radicalism, left conscience and vote-catcher for the SPD, ginger-group status, Green politics as consumer goods, parliamentary light-relief, and eventually insignificance. However, in the uneventful of Social Revolution taking place in Europe tomorrow, anarchists should perhaps refrain from smiling disdainfully at the Cohn-Bendits on the scene and get on in there to counter-balance them. In addition, even the *Fundis* have surprisingly little criticism of the state and employment as repressive entities, but would in my opinion be honestly open to any dialogue on such issues. Be warned nevertheless: Die Grünen are very proficient at holding incredibly long debates.

Nephistopheles
August 1986

Politics & Chernobyl



West German

To understand the connection one must remember that there has been a committed and continuous anti-nuclear presence in West Germany for almost 20 years. Thus the effects of Chernobyl were built on the sweat and tears (and often blood and arrests) of hundreds of militants. In France, for example, where such a movement hardly exists, the political effects were thus considerably different.

One part of this movement is *Die Grünen*, originally formed as a parliamentary "umbrella" for extra-parliamentary activities. Due to the electoral success of *Die Grünen* (eg Hessen 12%, Hamburg 17%, Tübingen 20.5% beating the SPD²) some members believe they can collaborate with the Government at a parliamentary level.

This has led to catastrophic policy-making. For example, compromise by *Die Grünen* has led to the building of a new prison in Hessen; the water-cannon which killed a demonstrator in Frankfurt was bought with the explicit allowance of *Die Grünen*; the bringing-in of exhaust gas levels for cars instead of progressive tax on engine size has badly affected basic support for *Die Grünen*, who are exactly those people who drive clapped-out cars, etc.

In the national parliament, the FDP³, with 5-6% of the vote, hold important posts, such as Treasurer, while *Die Grünen*, with 7-10%, hold nothing. Thus, so far this parliamentarism has been an absolute failure. For *Die Grünen*'s successes, they have a new post of Environmental Minister in Hessen, but this is a

post without teeth, mostly to do with land conservation, and nothing particularly important. Useful however as a figurehead, and Fischer used this position to bring in limits for radioactivity in milk (20 Bq per litre) which were realistic (ie the same as in Sweden), in contrast to the CDU/CSU⁴ government-defined limit of 500 Bq per litre.

When the radioactive cloud from Chernobyl hit West Germany the reaction of government politicians ranged from *Nothing happening, it's all OK to it's terrible, those wicked Russians, often changing the same day. It was so contradictory that even opinion polls reported that 90% of the population had ceased to believe what the Government said. (Kohl⁵ said it was a Marxist plot!)*

Citizens flocked to the only public institutions open to them, the Universities, with samples of grass, water, etc., everything imaginable, to measure the radioactive contamination. Technical staff and students organised independently of the professors and made the measurements; they were mostly shocked with the levels they found. The University directors clamped down as soon as they could, stopping measurement and banning the results from being collected or compared and published.

Measurements continued secretly and the results leaked out through staff who were sympathisers with the anti-nuclear movement, through GBAL⁶, *Die Grünen* and FAU⁷. It was these people, especially GBAL, who reproduced the local data with that from other towns in special issues of their various papers,

and distributed them from house to house (in print runs often of hundreds of thousands). This information exchange, often as good as the official channels, was made possible through the network of hardened militants, forged through 20 years of experience, action and hard work.

The effect of this propaganda independent of the Government was so great that even the CDU in Freiburg announced that it was for the immediate halt of the nuclear programme. They and other CDU/CSU groups were brought back into line the next day by CSU chief Strauss, who really gave the impression of running around plugging holes in the foundering ship. The CDU/CSU reaffirmed that they were committed to continued nuclear expansion but had to think up a scheme which would let off internal pressure in the Party and lend the CDU credibility in the elections in Saxony which were only 1-2 weeks away: a National Minister for the Environment!! Good idea: Fischer in Hesse is at least reasonably popular and then the CDU look at least a bit concerned. A CDU yes-man, Wallman, was brought in for the part. (He was extreme-Right mayor of Frankfurt, where he destroyed large parts of the city to make room for multinational companies with tax relief. In the winter demonstrations in Frankfurt last year he stated that police should have the right to shoot unruly demonstrators.) He was, of course, also given jurisdiction over nuclear matters which had been denied to Fischer.

The SPD altered their platform

with respect to atomic power and are now for getting out of the nuclear arena by 1995. This announcement came in time for them to net an extra 6% of the vote from the CDU/CSU in the Saxony elections. Willi Brandt said *We have learnt from the Greens.*

So what was the net effect of Chernobyl? The revolution was nowhere in sight, although many ordinary people were really pissed-off with the Government's lies and in this respect had their eyes opened. The CDU/CSU was shaken and has visibly lost support. Die Grünen came out of Chernobyl looking flat-footed, totally ineffective, out-manoeuvred in the party political arena and cut-off from their grassroot beginnings. The Communist Party, after a pause to ask directions from the Central Committee, aligned itself as usual with the line from East Germany and Moscow, declaring itself unaltered in its past stand for nuclear power, thus moving a little closer to the twilight of extinction.

The SPD has profited electorally from Chernobyl by making a significant step in the direction of de-nuclearisation. Considering that the SPD may well win a majority in the national Parliament in the near future, this can be called a significant step towards realizing the limited demands of the anti-nuclear movement. Where does this limited success come from?

Not in any great measure from Die Grünen themselves, from whom the SPD has learnt to govern a little better. It comes mostly

from the extra-parliamentary movement: from the contacts between public service workers and the anti-nuclear movement first, but mostly due to the ability of the network of autonomous groups to act together quickly and precisely, to organise at local and national level almost overnight, and to possess a propaganda apparatus which can reach the majority of the population independently of official channels.

This was helped by their lack of central, swamping directives, a well-thought-out position, born of years of co-operation and their ability to take their own informed initiatives. In other lands, without this kind of movement, or where it is less developed, the State and Capital retained their equilibrium much better. The anti-nuclear movement here is, however, not only against nuclear power and weapons, but is highly class-conscious and is developing perspectives not only of alternative energy but of alternative society. It will take time and more blood, more sweat, more tears, more money, but we will hear from them again.

A Member of FAU

NOTES:

- 1 Green Party
- 2 Social Democratic Party,
- 3 Free Democrats (liberals),
- 4 Christian Democrats & Christian Social Union,
- 5 CDU/CSU Prime Minister,
- 6 Green Rainbow Alternative (a student movement),
- 7 Anarcho-syndicalists.

Contd. from p.4.

minded "ethic" of *quid-pro-quo* which is the bedrock of commodity society. It follows that it is to the active defence of such relations that radicals should look.

Although it is obvious that the weight of accumulated wealth and power still have their effect on society, popular capitalism exposes the concepts upon which these edifices have built themselves. As more and more are given the opportunity to experience the capitalist condition, more and more are likely to fall for the inhuman "ideals" by which it functions. These include exactly the narrow behaviourist view which Arendt mentions in the quotation introducing this article, a view of humanity trapped in the banality of survival, and one which considers individuals as mere statistics in the arithmetic of the market.

Policy makers are increasingly being asked to

consider the effects of policy solely in terms of its economic consequences, regardless of the violation of common sense or the quality of life. The terrain of the human struggle has to be shifted. For us in the West, it is less and less about the division of the spoils of production and more and more about the existence of the "division" and the "spoils".

Put simply, as we are further immersed in the logic of *equivalence*, we have to decide whether this is the "quality" of life we want. It is around such decisions that the radical voice must be heard, a radical voice clear in its resistance to this latest drive in the invasion of our humanity.

The Pleasure Tendency

R e v i e w s

"SOVIET PEASANTS (or The Peasants' Art of Starving)" by "Lev Timoneev". Published by Telos Press, New York at \$15. A translation of a samizdat study of the fate of the peasantry under the Soviet regime. Its author considers the entire power of the Soviet state to rest upon the exploitation of the peasantry. While Victor Zaslavsky's introduction to the translation goes some way to limit this monolithic view, the author's thesis can be seen as an attempt to persuade Soviet city-dweller that their common belief that peasants are all rich good-for-nothings is wrong. Similar problems arise when people in the West see the "private enterprise" of the private plots as a Good Thing (or Bad for those attached to Statism), failing to see the super-exploitation inherent in that system.

IZTOK: Libertarian Review on the Countries of the East (20F from B.P. 161-09, 75422 Paris Cedex 9, France). A fascinating quarterly magazine covering oppression and oppositional movements, in both workplace and culture, in



"socialist" countries (including Algeria and Cuba). Recent issues have included a country by country examination of the influence of revolutionary Surrealism in pre-war "Eastern" Europe, adding greater emphasis to Milan Kundera's point that these countries should be considered as Central European.

LA BANQUISE no.4 (40F from BP

214, 75623 Paris Cedex 13). Containing more substantial considerations of activities in which the authors have been recently involved, particularly around the question of Law & prisons with the production of a bulletin called *Prisonniers de la Démocratie*. More recently, they have produced a leaflet called *Le Sang, La Mort et Les Blessures*, about the recent bombings in Paris.

The 1984 Polish film *Dignity*, shown recently at the Edinburgh Film Festival, provided an interesting footnote to the articles on Poland in *Here & Now* no.3.

Set in the month preceding the declaration of martial law in December 1981, the film tells the story of one brave worker's stand for reason and decency against the Solidarnosc tyranny in his factory! He and his Party-member son-in-law are almost the only workers left in the old official factory trade union who are prepared to stand up and be counted against the "unreasonable" social and economic demands being made by Solidarnosc, depicted as consisting of honest workers misled by an unpleasant, expensively-dressed Jacek Kuron clone, whose oratory continually pushes them further from the path of reason.

Even our hero's family is not unaffected by the turmoil in the country: the younger members of the three generations in their flat have taken to answering back their

elders! The family is held together by the grandmother / matriarch, whose only wish is that everyone would settle down and work so that she wouldn't have to queue for food all day.

When the Solidarnosc members begin an occupation strike, the factory manager and local Party boss lack the courage to reassert management's right to manage. It's up to our hero to do what a man's gotta do: he, his son-in-law and a few others climb over the fence (echoes of Lech Walesa!), return to their lathes and carry on working. Surprisingly, the other workers dislike this scabbing, put the hero into a wheelbarrow and dump him outside the factory gate (while the satisfied man from KOR lurks in the background, and the factory and Party bosses make themselves scarce).

The film-maker previously worked in newsreels and documentaries: presumably he felt that fantasy would make a change (while the makers of

other recent Polish films, such as *A Looming Shadow*, have managed to deal obliquely with social problems). Obviously the moral of the tale is to demonstrate the failure of all pre-December institutions (Party, management and official unions) and justify the only possible resolution of the situation - a military takeover. The fantasy is underpinned by attention to reality: the sense of crisis, economic hardship, housing shortage, Party fat-cats, etc. are all on display. However, the military and police are absent from view; instead, the only coercive power is Solidarnosc!

It would be interesting to know how the film was received in Poland, where the events whose history was being rewritten are still fresh in people's minds. The film was described as "showing the other side of the Solidarity coin". Unfortunately the coin did not ring true.

A. D.



HYPER»REALITY

BAUDRILLARD AND POLITICS TODAY

AGE OF

Recently a steady flow of translations of texts by the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard have appeared in English, particularly in "radical" arts magazines. However there seem to have been few attempts to come to terms with the content of his writings and the trajectory, validity and implications of his political theories.

As Henri Lefebvre's teaching assistant at Nanterre in the late-50s, Baudrillard was involved in the attempt to develop a "critique of everyday life" more responsive to contemporary developments than traditional Marxism. According to one account¹, other participants included Guy Debord, Raoul Vaneigem and Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Whatever the circumstances of the disputes over authorship of ideas developed in this area, there was an overlapping emphasis on questions of urbanism, leisure and tourism and on the importance of the critique of the nature of the commodity.

The others named were much more prominent in the period leading up to and during the May-June 1968 events, when the critique of everyday life seemed to have burst onto the streets. Nowadays, Cohn-Bendit is deeply involved in the area around *Die Grünen* (on the rebound from his love-affair with the Revolution), and Debord and Vaneigem have lapsed into near-silence, occasionally asserting their own uncompromising radicality². On the one side, immersion in the "practical"; on the other, little contact with the world today: an unfulfilled councilist project simply remains on the agenda, a missed appointment with History.

By contrast, Baudrillard comes to prominence only with the attempt to understand the reflux of that movement. As he says *"That imponderable situation, unanalysable in its breadth, but new and radical, has not ended, nor have the ravages caused by the deconstruction of certain fundamental concepts."*³

Le Système des Objets (published in 1968) investigated the way in which technological "improvement" removed all trace of human symbolic relations from objects leaving a system of connotation without finality, haunted by the robot and the gadget - respectively the final victory and failure of the totally functional.

However, consumption was not represented as just a clogged-up outpique of the production system. Consumption is the "activity of systematic manipulation of signs"⁴, a "resigned" and limitless project, adopted in the absence of any other. "Objects/signs in their ideality equate with one another and can multiply to infinity: they must do so to supplement an absent reality at each moment. It's finally because consumption is based on lack that it's irrepresentable"⁵. The contemporary consumer's "individuality" is induced by advertising (which constantly refers to "nature"), appearing as "the most democratic product", constantly solicitous of our needs and desires, even while recalling "the infantile situation of parental gratification"⁶.

La Société de Consommation and the articles collected in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1970 & 1972) are more explicitly aligned with a radical project:

- Socialists' assumptions regarding the "real" material base were being put into in question⁷. It is likened to the Ego constituted in the Lacanian Mirror Stage: an imaginary order of terms like production, labour and value through which society will recognise itself. So terms like "use value", accepted by Marx as a relatively unproblematic finality of the production system, were to be seen only as the alibi of political economy.
- Drawing on revisionist anthropologists of "primitive" societies (eg Marshall Sahlins and Pierre Clastres) Baudrillard introduced the notion of *symbolic exchange*, firstly to show *surplus value* as meaningless in relation to exchange in "primitive" societies, and secondly as a privileged term to be counterposed to the entire history of "the political economy of the sign".
- This concept of Symbolic Exchange is used to highlight the naiveté in attempts to turn mass media to "socialist" ends: "it is not as vehicles of content, but in their form and very operation that media induce a social relation". This operation is that of "speech without response", without reciprocity. Against (or beyond) Orwell, it is said of TV that "There is no need to imagine it as a State periscope spying on everyone's private life - the

situation as it stands is more efficient than that: it is the certainty that people are no longer speaking to each other". Suspicion of talk of "essences", discovered even in Pop Art (and assumptions about which sank so many Alternativist projects), was leading to reticence about the transcendence of alienation which socialism would supposedly realise.

The Mirror of Production (1973) concentrates on the effect of these criticisms on the radical project:

"A radical questioning of the concept of production begins at the level of needs and products. But this critique attains its full scope in its extension to that other commodity, labour power. It is the concept of production, then, which is submitted to a radical critique." (p23)

This can appear to be Baudrillard's most conservative and radical book: conservative in its utilization of Marxian terminological reference points; radical in the close scrutiny of their relevance and limitations, finding in them a political discourse based on uncritically accepted referents seen in the *Mirror of Production*. Contradictions emerging within a system do not imply any possibility for a break with that system: no revolt can be expected from any group of workers as long as they accept that identity imposed upon them; only "subversion" plays with the excess over pure function.

But curiously, this greater "realism" about the omnipotence of the code ends with the then-obligatory recognition of women, blacks, gays and youth as the carriers of a genuine revolt against the code. Incorporation of these seemingly "subversive" demands now seems to have been largely successful, through the creation of segmented markets within which "identity" can be represented and purchased.

L'échange Symbolique et la Mort (1976) carries out a more detailed examination of "the symbolic", the only positive term emerging from the previous books. Freud's concept of the Death Drive is placed in conjunction with Marx's observation that Capitalism is founded on the domination of Dead Labour over Lived Labour: "(The) possibility of quantitative equivalence... of wage and labour power assumes the worker's death, and that between commodities assumes the symbolic extermination of objects. Death always makes possible calculation of equivalence and regulation by indifference. This isn't violent and physical death, it's the ... respective neutralisation of life and death in survival, or deferred death"⁴.

This book also returns to the question/response digitality of the system (which had been mentioned in *La Société de Consommation*) as the basis of the participation elicited by the system. Public Opinion Polls, etc. are an enormous stimulation of public space, and the ever-increasing reliance upon them indicates the hyper-reality of the system: people are asked not to form opinions, but to reproduce those already framed. Constant appeals to "the social" and "the community" by agencies and

political groups are merely evocation of presence-through-absence. The economy becomes hyper-real, with the constant reference to crisis hiding the loss of any objective standard, whether Gold or Dollar. (This last example related to the post-1971 end of the Dollar Standard and 1970s inflation, but also mentioned the EuroBond market, all the more relevant today, when currency dealing is seen as an extremely profitable area with no finality or discernable Surplus Value creation.)

Although the order of production and its supposed contradictions were no longer privileged, there remained reliance on the "subversion of the code" by subgroups who practise "refusal" and reject representation within the ruling code. With the dissipation of such activity, what remains? "...I believed in a possible subversion of the code of the media and in the possibility of an alternate speech and a radical reciprocity of symbolic exchange. Today all that has changed."⁵

From *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* (1978) onward, symbolic exchange is joined in Baudrillard's analyses by a new positive term, the mass, the absolute negation of meaning. The "mass" always rejected any asceticism: for example, in religion it preferred "the immanence of ritual... to the transcendence of the Idea". "For the masses, the Kingdom of God has always been already here on Earth, in the pagan immanence of images."⁶ The masses' acceptance of power's speech without response and their lack of overt subversion is rotated into a tactical refusal of meaning.

Always suspicious of theories of "alienation", with their privileging of supposed transcendental values: Baudrillard happily negated all such assumptions, saying of the masses that "They are given meanings: they want spectacle."⁷ and that "the desire for a show... is a spontaneous, total resistance to the ultimatum of historical and political reason." Alienation "has probably never been anything but a philosopher's ideal perspective for the use of hypothetical masses. It has probably never expressed anything but the alienation of the philosopher himself - in other words, he who thinks himself other."⁸ Leftists explain the near-constant tiny numbers on demonstrations etc. by numbing about alienation and false consciousness, which amounts to a slander against almost everyone. Baudrillard suggests that the "mass strategy" is far in advance of that of the Leftists, who are incapable of moving beyond outmoded positions based on the age of production.

With the loss of a positive carrier of subversion, he seems to draw attention to the hyper-reality of his own position as, in a strange prose-style based on astronomical analogy (Black Holes, Red Shifts, etc.), he develops and exaggerates the idea of apathy as a form of resistance practised by the "mass" to all meanings which political or all descriptions would impose on them. The "mass" becomes the only term which can describe those who reject meaning and participation: a Black Hole into which politicians shine light but which

absorbs it all and emits none.

This mass strategy is presented as switching between hyper-conformity and demand for subjectivity. It is likened to the child's strategy in relation to the parent's demands: childish behavior when told to "Act your age!" and wanting to be treated as an individual subject when treated like an infant. Opposition becomes just an effect.

In rejecting all imposed meaning in favour of an eternal polyvalency, Baudrillard accepts the label of "nihilist": "If being nihilist is to be obsessed with the mode of disappearance and no longer with the mode of production, then I am a nihilist... Theoretical violence, not truth, is the sole expedient remaining to us. But this is a utopia. For it would be admirable to be a nihilist, if radicality still existed."¹³ The evaporation of meaning and the system's own nihilism swamp everything in indifference and leave all activities deadened, without echo.

In recent essays on French politics over the past 10 years, Baudrillard rightly emphasises that the Socialist Party's 1981 electoral victory was far from their traditional expectations: no popular movement brought the Left to power, merely an electoral simulation. "Seeing their having gained power as deserved recompense and the logical outcome of historical development, they failed to see that they occupied a space left empty by the reflux of historic and political passions."¹⁴ Their fundamental misunderstanding about the basis of their power haunted their whole experience of Government. He asks how ex-Premier Laurent Fabius could be so confused about "the perverse mechanisms of popular indifference, deploring apathy and resistance, the absence of collective myth, etc... in spite of the fact that he is in power precisely thanks to this indifference."¹⁵

The ghost of *gauchisme* lingers, in the stress still laid on mass movements as the source of legitimacy, but with an insistence that no such movement is now possible. Only simulation remains. And the politicians' major error seems to be their naive continued stress on political virtue in ignorance of this fact. Baudrillard's insistence on this "bad side" in politics leave his articles reading like a latter-day rewrite of *The Prince*.

Baudrillard states that "...I do not have relations with the intelligentsia. I am not totally integrated in its networks, cliques and households"¹⁶. Seen from here this seems a surprising statement. The extent to which he is indeed outside the French intelligentsia is that he rejects their traditional rôle, as much because it's historically outmoded as anything else: "...It's not enough to ask (the intellectual) to be a critical conscience or moral guardian of his time - that required an appropriate passion: for Gide it was sincerity; for Sartre, lucidity; for the Situationists and others, radicality. After that, it's over: no more politico-intellectual virtue. After that, there's irony, the fascination of a world dominated by chance processes, by microscopic sequences of events - transhistory, as

dangerous as a minefield to cross."¹⁷

Whatever the extent to which this does describe a situation and the crisis perceived by that class, one rôle seems to remain: that of intellectual pundit commenting on the mode of disappearance - and Baudrillard's recent writing seems designed to fill that rôle.

It would be pleasant to reject Baudrillard's writings as a candyfloss construction invented by someone dragging himself "between the television set and the writing desk". It would be a particular relief if some real movements could be held up to show it as redundant. Baudrillard's writings can be utilised to show how erroneous "is the current pragmatic radicalism which seeks to take refuge in the halls of representation, to defend "our" "gains" during a period of reflux. A politics based on opposition to representation itself has no place there.

As for Baudrillard's own outlook, though, despite displayed more stamina than others in trying to understand recent developments rather than just insisting that things are really going their way, and despite devoting much breath to inflating the immense and perverse figure of the mass, he still founders before the same problem, the dissipation of any real movement.

A.D.

NOTES:

- ¹ The obvious exceptions to this are the introductions to the two *Telos* translations (*The Mirror of Production* and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*) and the articles in *Seduced and Abandoned: The Baudrillard Scene* (Stonehouse Press).
- ² *L'Estetico il Politico* by Mirella Bandini.
- ³ In the filmstrip *In Girum Inus Nocte et Consumitur Igni* Debord revels in a rôle as master-strategist, boasting of having avoided recuperation into the rôle of radical media pundit.
- ⁴ *La Gauche Divine* p87
- ⁵ *Le Système des Objets*, p276-277
- ⁶ *Le Système des Objets*, p283
- ⁷ *Le Système des Objets*, p240
- ⁸ "A spectre haunts the revolutionary imagination: the phantom of production. Everywhere it sustains an unbridled romanticism of productivity." (Preface to *The Mirror of Production*).
- ⁹ This and previous quotation from *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* p169, p172.
- ¹⁰ *L'Échange Symbolique* p.67-68
- ¹¹ *The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media* in *New Literary History*, Spring 1985.
- ¹² *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* pp7-8.
- ¹³ *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* p.10
- ¹⁴ This and previous quotation from *The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media*.
- ¹⁵ From *Sur le Nihilisme*, cited in Paul Foss's *Despero ergo Sum* in *Seduced and Abandoned*.
- ¹⁶ *La Gauche Divine* p87
- ¹⁷ *La Gauche Divine aux Prises avec L'Indifférence in Liberation*, 28/2/86.
- ¹⁸ *Intellectuals Commitment and Political Power in Thesis II* no.10/11.
- ¹⁹ *La Gauche Divine* p86

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