

RAPE causes.. ..cures?

BY an extraordinary series of coincidences, the subject of rape was dragged through the headlines on an almost unprecedented scale throughout nearly the whole of January.

It began with some of the most stupid remarks made by a Judge — and we have a fairly long record of those — who, in fining a convicted rapist £2000, said that he was refraining from sending the offender to prison since the victim was herself guilty of 'contributory negligence' because she was hitch-hiking late at night and had accepted a lift from this young man in his Jaguar. He didn't actually use the words 'she was asking for it' — but he might as well have.

This was rapidly followed by the now infamous TV programme in the series called 'Police' — one of several programmes purporting to be typical days (or nights) in the life of the Thames Valley police force. Anybody who has been to the various Reading Pop Festivals or the Windsor Free Festivals of '74-'75 can have no illusions about the goon-like characters who are rounded up to serve in this particular police force, but the three who appeared in this were really idiots.

It is extremely difficult to know in a series of programmes like this whether what we are seeing is typical behaviour or not, for the technique is the so-called 'fly-on-the-wall' practice of having a camera and sound crew in the room, in a police car, on the street, alongside the police at their everyday work, and trying to be as self-effacing as possible, so that all the performers in the everyday dramas that unfold can forget they are there.

Clive James, the Observer's TV critic and himself a mean performer in front of the cameras, claims (because this is what he does himself) that *anybody* knowing they are being filmed, proceeds to 'ham it up'. This surely tells us more about him than he guesses, since those of us who have appeared before cameras or microphones usually find it quite easy to forget the machinery if we are concerned with what we are saying.

The point about this Police series is that *all the programmes were shown to the police before they were broadcast — and were passed by them for showing to the public!*

Only after the outcry following the episode dealing with alleged rape did the police authorities begin to realise the enormity of their men's behaviour.

What actually happened? We were treated to an exhibition of how policemen interrogate a woman who comes into the police station saying that she has been raped. Now you might think, in this day and age, that the first procedure would be to have some women police officers on hand to take over such a case — speedily followed, automatically, by a medical examination, since the first step in determining the facts, is to establish the fact of penetration, if possible.

None of this was done in this case, quite apart from the fact that it is not standard procedure. Sadly, the woman was not a typical rape victim — if there is such a thing. She was not unknown to the police as a 'trouble-maker', and they knew she had a history of 'nervous disorder' and had spent time in a mental hospital. She herself volunteered the information that

she had had ECT ('Wassat?' asked one copper). She was, not to put too fine a point on it, a poor inadequate person of low intelligence who had little idea of how to protect herself, either against rapists or police. And — the crux of the matter, perhaps — she had been persuaded (bullied?) by her boyfriend to go along to the police to complain of having been raped by three men who had 'persuaded' her to come with them in a car, after the pub closed, to an empty house....

The woman was on a hiding to nothing. Thoroughly conditioned to do as she was told (could that be why she had a mental breakdown?) she related how she had gone with the men, made no fuss when ordered out of the car, into the empty house, and submitted to their rapes — two out of the three anyway; the third couldn't manage it — and had then accepted fifteen pence to catch a bus home.

The coppers had a field day. 'When did you last have your period?' was one searching question. 'Did he ejaculate — you know come?' was another. 'Why didn't you resist?' yet a third. 'You didn't really want to bring this charge, didyer?'

No she didn't. Yet when she offered the police information about where the house was that she had been taken to, house furnishings and even the pattern of the towel she'd been given to wipe herself with, all she got was an outburst from one of the pigs: 'I've never 'eard such a load of bollocks in me life! This is more fairy tales than Gretel, this is. All this rubbish about the colour of the towel. Look, why don't you just sign a statement withdrawing all this and then we can all go home'. Which is just what she did.

And so the month marched on. At the Old Bailey, on the 19th, a rapist was sent to Broadmoor for 11 rapes, plus one more attempted. It took the police 15 months of this, all within a small area of Tottenham, North London, within the Metropolitan Police area, to launch the full-scale hunt which finally brought results.

Meanwhile, up in Glasgow a case was withdrawn by the prosecution because the rape victim was unfit to give evidence. Three youths had not only all raped her, but had played noughts and crosses on her skin with their knives — so much so that she needed 168 stitches. Not surprisingly, the poor woman was, shall we say, disturbed, and still was, more than somewhat, by the time the case trundled to court. So much so, that she was declared unfit to give evidence, which in the

circumstances made it more than difficult for the prosecution to continue with the case, and the Scottish Solicitor General, Nicholas Fairbairn, decided to withdraw the prosecution! We are left with our mind boggling, once again, wondering how they ever get a prosecution for *murder* together!

To his credit, once the shit hit the fan in this instance, Fairbairn resigned. But apparently the law says the case cannot be re-opened as a Crown prosecution, so it is going ahead as a private prosecution. We shall be more than a little surprised if, somehow, the victim's evidence cannot be presented after all!

A week later, also at the Old Bailey, another victim broke down while giving evidence against a rapist whose trick was knocking at ladies' doors clad only in a mask and a pair of socks. This was going on in London's stockbroker belt — the Oxted and Lipsfield area of Surrey, which shows that it's not only working girls and prostitutes and hitch-hikers who are at risk. This witness began to falter in giving evidence whilst describing her attacker's 'cold, dead, look of viciousness in his eyes.' The judge said he saw no point in inflicting further suffering upon her in forcing her to give evidence in court (compare Glasgow...!) and the case continued in her absence.

And so it went on — with repercussions bringing other tragedies. One 18 year old youth held in Canterbury Prison on a rape charge hanged himself in his cell, while a 20-year-old student in Liverpool killed himself on hearing of his ex-girl friend's death by falling from a tower block. She had been raped two years ago by four men who broke into her flat and held down her boyfriend in an adjoining room while doing it.

With all this spotlighting the problems, various authorities rushed in with their solutions. To justify the police in 'Police', it was pointed out that their behaviour in the interview room was regarded by them as a sort of rehearsal for what the girl would have to face if she had gone into

court, where it would have been the defence counsel's duty to discredit her evidence. But at no time, to my knowledge, did anybody 'in authority' affirm that the weak, the stupid and the inadequate should be entitled to *more* protection, *more* considerate handling and *more* help from the law than the strong and articulate who can usually stand up to sneers and innuendo in court.

But, after the event, it was hurriedly announced that the Thames Valley police were going to change their ways and bring in special teams of women police (ironically 'integrated' with men after the Sex Discrimination Act of 1976, when special women's units were disbanded!) with special responsibilities for sexual offences involving women, child abuses, etc.

Judge Bertrand Richards was ticked off by no less than Lord Hailsham (the present Lord Chancellor) for his stupid remarks about the girl hitch-hiker being guilty of 'contributory negligence', while demands for him to be sacked came from many quarters, including MPs and women's groups demonstrating outside the High Court where he continues to sit and, no doubt, pontificate.

Demands for a prison sentence to become a statutory penalty on conviction for rape came in thick and fast from the Prime Minister herself downwards. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop MP wants to introduce a Private Members' Bill laying down a minimum of two years and confiscation of any vehicle used with the crime.

Undoubtedly, the one factor in all these that has really grabbed the public's attention has been the TV programme — and oddly enough in all the calls for greater penalties, little has been said about the police procedures. Nor has a great deal been said about the possibility of the jury's attitude being affected by higher statutory penalties.

Nor as far as we have been able to see, has anything been said about attacking the *causes* of rape. What are it's motivations? What planted the *hate* in the eyes of the masked Surrey rapist? What links

not only the violent invasion of the woman's body but the mutilation that so often goes with it?

It is clearly too simplistic to put it all down to unbridled lust, for the amount of sexual satisfaction to be got out of such an encounter must be minimal. Added to the sex drive must be anger, hate and a power lust that, typically, tramples over all consideration for the person within the body to be used for the exercise of domination.

Should we not try to understand the frustrations that drive persons (often described as 'good husbands' back home!) into actions that verge on the criminally insane? We are forced to believe that very little is done about this in any public sense because it may uncover the sort of motivations that make our society tick. Governmental societies in all their variations are based on force; they only work through the continual subjugation of individuals to the needs of what passes for society but which in reality is the state.

Pyramidal societies — the few at the top and the many below — are essentially irresponsible. The few can take or buy what they want without concern for its social cost, while the many are deprived of any responsibility for their own lives, day-to-day decisions or long-term plans. Women complain that they are at the mercy of men — but most men are also at the mercy of men — the few with the power over them. Most men are deprived of responsibility at their work (if any) and at their homes as well — the 'woman's realm.'

Dissatisfaction is a necessary ingredient in a competitive society. Ambition to have is a respectable capitalist motivation 'Screwing' is an acceptable euphemism for fraud and swindle, landlordism, asset-stripping, out-smarting the competition, the strong taking the weak. Conservatives talk about 'the rape of the land'. It's all the same.

Let's get this straight: this is not to excuse rape, which in our book is a foul and disgusting denial of individual freedom — exacerbated by all the undertones of Christian morality which devalue even to this day the single girl who is not a virgin — plus, in so many cases, appalling cruelty and deliberately degrading assault.

Of course all this must be stopped. But will prison sentences stop it? They don't stop any other forms of crime. They don't stop subversive and revolutionary activity. Heavier sentences may even lead to more murders, following rape.

We have to remove the causes. Anarchists believe the causes of anti-social behaviour lie in our anti-social governmental society — but what we could be doing, on the here and now, is playing a much more active part in groups to combat chauvinism, to teach more responsible attitudes, to break down sexism in many of its facets. And we mean anarchist men as well as anarchist women — for it is men who commit rape.

On wetness and dryness.

IN some parts of the country they are sufferint from an acute attack of wetness. The weather in England is often a subject of conversation although in other parts of the British Isles they often suffer more extreme forms. There is no doubt that when the weather ventures south it causes much mayhem and trouble. Although most of man's ills are self-inflicted not all of them are. However, not all the consequences of our present bout of wetness can be put down to the weather. I am willing to bet that in a few months time we will be suffering from a bout of extreme dryness.

Now owing to the crazy market oriented way capitalist (state and private) miss-

manages our agricultural drainage system and has entirely denuded our uplands and hills and robbed the soil of its sponge-like organic matter, water runs to the sea as quickly as possible and in extreme times flooding the lowlands on the way. I am told that in Glasgow there are 60,000 burst pipes. Bully for the plumbing firms who left them probably vulnerable in the first place, private enterprise is marvelously efficient at making money.

So much disastrous flooding has been caused by the creation of a barren hinterland when we look at the banned hose-pipes and empty reservoirs in the summer don't let us blame mother nature too much.

Alan Albon

SUSSEX

Follow-up to Report about Sussex A Group and "David Owen Incident"

AS we have said in a previous report, the first Student Disciplinary hearing was successfully disrupted. The hearing had been called to discipline four students for disrupting a show starring David Owen MP at the University.

Over the Christmas break, the Disciplinary Panel expelled one of these students in his absence, for disrupting the previous trial.

Preoccupation with this continuing saga led to a disappointing conference held by Sussex A group. We simply failed to organise and publicise it properly.

On Friday, 22nd of January, the remaining three students were due to be tried again, but a large and solid picket prevented them from entering the Administrative building and the trial was abandoned. The three were ordered to phone the Registrar in the afternoon to get further instructions. They found that the Registrar was not yet available and were stalled and stalled. Eventually, a large group which had congregated swept over to the Administrative building and occupied part of it, surrounded by Administrators and Security men. We demanded to see the Registrar to present our demands that the Disciplinary Court be abolished, previous sentences quashed and the present case dropped. He eventually appeared, but refused to discuss the demands.

Press photographers have been hassling people and taking photos without permission. Newspapers have also printed names without permission. The "Daily Mail" seems to have taken a special interest. Reading reports about events you have participated in show clearly the incredible distortions and factual errors which get printed in the papers.

Now the Administration apparently intend to make a third attempt at trying the three, by isolating them into individ-

ual hearings. They are also threatening to discipline disrupters of the last hearing.

The Student Union officials are worried that the growing movement against the Disciplinary Panel is damaging their hopeless and bureaucratic battle against "the cuts". What we can see clearly is that to defend people who are being victimised is a basic task. If we allowed other students to be disciplined, not only would we be deserting them, but would confirm the idea that students are powerless, and make the motivation necessary for a fight against "the cuts" or anything else impossible.

The Sussex A group have a great internal solidarity but feel somewhat isolated, and want as many contacts as possible. We emphasise that we are not just interested in student issues, although believe that they have a role to play. College or other Anarchist groups — please contact us.

Brighton Anarchist Group has recently been formed, mainly composed of unemployed people. The first issue of a hopefully fortnightly paper is available (called "Anarchist Express") — free but send stamp for postage if possible. Contact through Sussex A Group which has the safest address — the Student Union!

SOCIALIST SOCIETY

On the founding of the 'Socialist Society' I must admit to having been more than a little apprehensive about the 'Socialist Society' as soon as I read of its planned launching in the *New Statesman*. Bakunin's warnings against the elitism of the intellectuals whose attitude to the ordinary person is one of 'You know nothing, you understand nothing, you are a blockhead, and a man of intelligence must put a harness on you and lead you' seemed dangerously apposite, and I was extremely sceptical of the declared anti-sectarianism of the project, having learnt from bitter experience that this device is usually employed as a means of effectively limiting discussion to 'safe' topics — 'safe', that is, for those with most to lose, which in the context of the 'Socialist Society' means the Labour Party.

Perhaps I was unwittingly seduced by the celebrities who had lent their names to the pre-conference publicity, however, for come 23rd January I forced myself out of bed painfully early so as to arrive at the *Institute of Education* in Bloomsbury for the start of proceedings at 10 am., and after a brief and typically unsuccessful stint of 'selling the paper' outside, dutifully took my seat in the packed lecture theatre.

It would be pleasant to be able to report that my initial reservations were proved ill-founded by the events that sub-

sequently took place. Unfortunately, I would be misleading you if I gave the impression that the founding conference of the 'Socialist Society' was other than a thousand times worse than my least optimistic expectations. In spite of a formal decision not to affiliate at once with the Labour Party, the entire charade was little more than a bad commercial for the Labour left, and the dominant mood of the gathering was identifiable from the start as the evangelical zeal of the bourgeois guardians of 'the socialist myth'. In the opening plenary session, speaker after speaker urged the (for the most part sympathetic) audience to join the 'party of the people', while extolling the virtues of the Fabians. Not one contributor raised more than slight doubts as to the desirability of 'anti-sectarianism', and no one even murmured about the dangers of elitism inherent in the 'Socialist Society' idea. This was partly the result of Tariq Ali's fixing of the debate before anyone else in the hall had found their pens, the only contribution I was able to make was a brief cry of 'Bollocks!' during a gap in Eric Heffer's five minutes of self-praise. Of course, I fully realise that I deserve little else. After all, I am neither famous nor a self-appointed voice of the people, and it is only right, nay socialist, that my opinions should be passed over so those

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Greece

DURING the last quarter of 1981, three events took place, important for the Anarchist Movement in Greece. The socialist government, the review of the case of the imprisoned anarchists and the first squatting in Greek history.

The socialist government, was elected at the recent elections, last October. The people, bored and fed up, with a party, which ruled the country practically since the second world war with various unpopular methods, not excluding the recent dictatorship, voted for the "change", "allagi". This change for the people meant, apart from some economical changes, mainly, freedom of speech and the stopping of recognizing people as A, B or C category citizens. For this change, the only strong party to bring it, was the socialists. People, as usual, prefer parliamentary changes to more radical ones, so, it must kept in mind, that the majority of the people who voted for the socialists, voted for the change. The voting system in Greece, is such, that everybody, over 18 has to vote. This, in some way, gives more representing and real results.

The results of the new economic policy, are not yet known, or how far, the recognition of citizens in categories is finished, but, one thing that is obvious, is the freedom of speech. Never before, in the recent history of Greece, was such freedom. Simply, there is no censorship in books, films or newspapers. I can easily say, that freedom of speech in Greece today, is far more than in Britain. This is a good chance for anarchists to spread their ideas and I hope, they will take advantage of it.

As a show of the goodwill of the government, was the review of the case of the anarchists imprisoned from the previous government, for crimes they have not committed, eg. preparation of terrorism, explosives etc. The jury took place in their absence, since they were too weak, from their hunger strike, to be present, and since nothing was found against them, they were freed.

The third event, was the squatting of three buildings in Athens. Anarchists occupied them, their having been empty for some time. Here, I have to make a point. These occupations were not done from homeless people, for the necessity

SOCIALIST SOCIETY

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who are both these things can tell us what we should and should not do....

But this is a personal gripe, for the reality is that no amount of effective intervention could have saved *this* day. If over a thousand people decide to spend a weekend at the feet of their idols, before

to live, but mainly for publicity reasons or as an imitation of the squatting in Germany, Holland, Britain and elsewhere. The occupation lasted for about a month. Finally, disintegrated from the original scope, mainly from elements infiltrated there. Greek anarchism, has no long history like in Spain or Italy, but has grown only in the last decade, mainly, and took a lot from the French May 68 and elements from elsewhere. Since, there is not much information, no organization or paper worth mentioning, a lot of the so-called anarchists have nothing to do with real anarchism or actually know what it is about. These "anarchoids", mainly, come from middle or upper middle class families who, after some "heroic" years, when they are students or young, return back to their social position, being, in the best case, libertarians of some sort. As evidence of this, is that even though in Athens alone, there are thousands of anarchists of some sort, there is no organisation or group worth mentioning.

Anyway, by middle of January 81, police special units, stormed the buildings, with the explanation that they had become centres of distribution of drugs etc. and a number of people have been arrested. From them, five up to now, have been punished with imprisonment. These are: Th Pisimitis with 27 months, charged with squatting and resistance to arrest, and N Malis, D Merakos, L Zotos and I Parnaras, charged with squatting, to 10 months each. Squatting is illegal under Greek law.

The Greek anarchists denied that the squats were centres for distribution of heroin, as it was the official point, they called it police propaganda and organized a protest march in Athens on 19th of January. Police in Greece is still controlled by ultra-right elements.

That was the end of the first anarchist squatting in Greece and who knows if it will have a continuation or not. The bright point of the present situation in Greece, is that the area is open for "legal activities", like promotion of ideas, publishing, organising and everything else necessary is to isolate and reject all these "anarchoid" elements and what they bring, because only harm they can do to the movement.

USSR

MANY readers will remember a review called 'Psychiatry and the State' (FREEDOM 16/2/80) which mentioned a number of Anarchist prisoners in the USSR. The review highlighted the experiences of Alexander SKOBOV who, being active in a group known as the 'New Left Opposition', was arrested and sentenced to an indeterminate period in a psychiatric hospital. Others of this group arrested and sentenced include Arkadiy TSURKOV (5 years labour camp) Alvetina KOTCHNEVA (1 year 3 months labour camp). Since this information became available to the west a number of Anarchists felt that a campaign for their release should be mounted. We have now been informed

Miscalculat

HOW'S this for a rehabilitation programme? Doug Wakefield has been in solitary confinement for over three years. During this time he has occupied himself as best he can by reading, writing and listening to the radio. He may also have the occasional philosophical discussion with his hosts about the nature of justice, but I gather that the transaction is a bit one sided. Recently he discovered an interest in maths. At his request, a friend sent him a pocket calculator for Xmas. Nothing grand, you understand. Not the sort of thing he could use to design an H bomb or a supersonic hang glider. Just a little old Casio M1 from W H Smith. It was returned, along with a letter from Doug which is short enough to quote in full:

I'm afraid that I have bad news concerning the calculator. It isn't easy to explain the idiocy of their ways but I'll do my best. When I came from Long Lartin I brought with me a privilege list on which it says that we can have calculators sent in. I am now told that this system has been 'revised' and that in order to make the prison system more progressive the privilege has been taken away. Prisoners can now have calculators but have to buy these through their own resources. I'm now sending this one back and we shall have to start again. This is what I am informed you must do to get it to me. You have to return the calculator to the shop, get a refund, send me the money along with the name of the supplier and I will then send out the money. If that sounds rather screwed up and like the workings of a senile system then that isn't my doing. Sorry about all this but at least it will give you an idea of the kind of system that they want to exist in and how they

agreeing to a Charter of 'principles' which Stalin or Pol Pot could easily support, there is little the isolated libertarian can do but vote with his or her feet. Which is precisely what I did after the announcement that the Saturday evening social was to be held in Belgravia. Watch out, the 'Socialist Society' has a lot more to do with 'society' than with 'socialism'.

L ERIZO

IN BRIEF

that Alexander Skobov (after being adopted by Amnesty International) was released last July. But it must be stressed that the other prisoners still await their turn. Any campaign can only succeed with help from as many sympathisers as possible. If you or the group you are involved with would like to help please contact Tyne & Wear Anarchist Group, c/o 8 Thomas Street Ryhope, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear. We are also in the process of making other contacts in Eastern Europe. If you are interested in supporting this work also write to us at the above address.

PAUL LAWRENCE

Tyne & Wear Anarchists

THE autonomous youth centre in Zurich, only acquired after months of street protests, has been raided by police. Various drugs were found. The users of the centre have been trying themselves to combat heroin addiction. It is thought that the raid will strengthen the right wing opposition to the centre. Grants have been withdrawn.

3,000 British doctors have formed a 'Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons'. They intend to take out advertising space to publish an open letter on the topic.

TWO prominent Soviet leaders have died. Mikhail Suslov was the picture of a grey power broker. He was a member of the Politbureau from the 1940's. He was involved in the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Soviet bloc, probably in the invasion and the planning of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and in both the making and the breaking of Khrushchev. Semyon Tsvigun was the deputy head of the KGB and was heavily involved in the clampdown on dissidents in the 1970's. Neither will be missed.

MALE Pakistani diplomats must marry before going abroad. President Zia ul Haq produced the rule after hearing that bachelor diplomats abroad were falling into sinful ways and also running up debts. Pakistani women do not become diplomats.

PRIME Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore says that he intends to pass a law to compel young people to take care of aged parents.

NORTH Korea has turned down South Korea's latest proposal for reunification under a common constitution. The Vice President said 'To our regret, it cannot be considered as a proposal worthy of any significance.' Incidentally, Kim U Sung has stopped sending us New Year cards.

'THE OBSERVER' has a leader (31/1/82) startled that Norman Tebbit's new bill does not make it lawful for a company to stop paying workers laid off because of a dispute that is no fault of theirs. They are distressed that he 'is missing a chance of strengthening the strategic position of employers' and hopeful that 'there is still time to see the wisdom of action over layoffs during the committee stage'. As if he hasn't got enough ideas of his own.

A new police bill is planned for the next parliamentary session. It will deal with the powers of the police and their role in the community. It is expected to accept some recommendations of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure and the Scarman Report. The complaints procedure is to be changed. It is suggested that there should be a statutory responsibility for an officer from another force to conduct an inquiry. Some form of consultation with local communities will be extended.

THE campaign against Baha'is in Iran is growing. They are regarded as heretics, as they accept another prophet after Mohammed. There are about 300,000 in the country. They have been forced out of their jobs and businesses (many run small businesses, hence some of the resentment) They are banned from government jobs, voting and sending their children to school. Baha'i marriages are not recognised, so the women are open to prosecution as prostitutes. There have been over 100 deaths and many imprisonments. Now, Iranians are to register for identity cards, which will be necessary for buying food. Baha'is are to be excluded. Most food distribution is now through the mosques anyway, which is a handy way of keeping people in order, spying etc.

THE Catholic church is gearing up for commercial exploitation of the pope's visit. They expect to raise over £1 million. A company called Papal Visit Ltd has been set up. There is an effort to maintain taste 'Some suggestions have been most inappropriate. Busts and wall plaques, fluorescent shining three D effect things....a little bit over the top.' It is to be hoped that his holiness appreciates this concern. After all, his palace is completely surrounded by the sale of such tat. The merchandising agents are worried about unauthorised souvenirs so posters are being dispatched to parishes urging people to buy the official product. There has been no public statement as to the level of sin involved in supporting the heretical opposition.

MEANWHILE, John Eden, Conservative chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, is against independent investigators with wide powers of search and inquiry into public complaints against the police. He thinks that there would be a danger of them becoming 'a second police force', ie. outside the pressures on the present one.

CONFIDENCE in the Thames Valley police fell after the recent TV programme showing their rape investigation procedures. A survey indicated that 27% of women and 15% of men said that their confidence in the local force had fallen.

BOB GREEN

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTER FOR the Bomb?

1

Dear FREEDOM,

I had waited eagerly for the last edition (23/1/81) of FREEDOM due to the break, but was left feeling sick and angry having read it.

The source of my anger was the letter 'For the Bomb' by J W. How could anyone with views like that pretend to have anything to do with libertarians/Anarchists.

I suppose if I had been a little 'cooler' when reading it, I would have understood immediately. It seems obvious to me now that this is to be expected, long term, from moral pacifists who are, after all, authoritarian in their outlook.

To imply that we are protected by the Bomb is incredible. People die at the hands of the State now and in this country. It won't be long before this situation is escalated, whether under Marxism or the Techno-Fascism of Capitalism.

To accept defeat anyway, in the face of 'Communist Rule' is to deny bravery by the Polish Working Class and other examples of resistance to State oppression.

How dare J W deny us the right to resist oppression, whether current or after some 'invasion'. How dare J W hold over our heads mass destruction just because his/her own 'moral principles' prevent him/her from offering resistance.

If J W wishes to hold us all hostage for his/her own authoritarian morals then I offer this promise: Should the invasion take place I will gladly (on request) assist him/her, and anyone else of similar intent with a bullet through the brain. This then would save these people from having to resist oppression and would allow the rest of us to live and get on with the task in hand.

Crewe

2

Dear FREEDOM,

I read with interest J W's letter in the last edition of FREEDOM. The view s/he put forward I can very much sympathise, although not agree with. J W says that the fact of 'mutually assured destruction' guarantees a fragile peace, because neither the soviet or U S state will risk a nuclear war that could destroy them as well as their subject peoples. J W also makes the very worthy point that if the soviets took control of the British state, then, as Anarchists would have nothing to look forward to but a soulless existence in a concentration camp. When I look at groups such as the 'Sparticist League' or the 'New Communist Party' it is quite plain that these people if they ever con-

trolled the the State would unleash a totalitarian regime more brutal and more statist than even the National Front would wish to initiate. (Anyone on the CND march in 1980 will be well aware of what happens when members of Worthing Anarchist Group come into contact with the Spartacist League)

However in spite of this I still feel that J W's conclusions are wrong.

Firstly the issue of 'The Bomb' has wider implication than whether or not nuclear weapons are good or bad — there is also the consideration of Imperialism. By not opposing nuclear weapons Anarchists would be condoning the USA using Britain as 'Airstrip one'. Once the cruise missiles arrive in this country, then this island of ours will be no more than a buffer for America. As an Anarchist I can see no reason whatsoever for giving my support to the American state, a state that has caused the deaths of thousands in third world countries, and a state that has murdered many an Anarchist (from the Chicago Martyrs to Carl Harp). If as J W suggests we 'take our stand with those who wish to keep the bomb', then we cease to be Anarchists and instead become no more than concerned liberals.

I am not an Anarchist because I believe an Anarchist society is likely to be achieved in Britain. I am an Anarchist because I despise the concept of the State. The State creates war, armies, starvation, nuclear weapons and many deaths. The State is the enemy: there can be no compromise.

Sussex

3

Dear FREEDOM,

To take up the thread so ably spun by Esther Symonds — you let another non-Anarchist into the paper in the shape of J W (For the Bomb).

The balance of terror works not by maintaining 'peace' but by maintaining terror. We may in the North have a semblance of peace but the balance of terror has allowed the superpowers to dominate and destroy whole populations of the Southern hemisphere. War still goes and J W's smugness in believing we should preserve our peace is sickening. Our poverty of existence is won at the expense of the lives of millions who have died since the making of the bomb. Hegel was right when he showed that war was the means by which modern states achieve a sense of community. We have been at war for years against Korea, Cambodia, Vietnam, Congo, Zimbabwe etc.

To talk of enjoying 'the modicum of civilised life' we have is to talk with a

corpse in your mouth. The balance of terror allows states to terrorise their own citizens (USSR) in the name of that balance.

The spectacle (in the situationist sense of the word) of death which CND has helped to promote has obscured the real battle which is between life and being part of the living dead. To use the phrase 'Better Red than Dead' is to take part in a debate that society has already pre-planned because it wishes to hide the fact that life is hardly worth preserving. Survival is not the same as life. A man in a truly free society lives.

What it boils down to is that J W has more faith in the bomb than he does in people. Of course character structure, imposed by society, is the obstacle to a non-hierarchical society and the argument is circular: one must change society to change character. How do we get out of this? Simple. One revolts, pays heed to our true desires. Weren't the people of the commune, of Spain, even Solidarity 'new' people, their humanity at last shown. Did not the people who took part in the riots in Brixton, Bristol show a perverse pride in coming from those places. For having broken out of the resignation and conformity that haunts us all.

I place my faith not in CND, the balance of terror, peace but in the everyday struggle of people for a new world. It is either suicide or revolution.

STEVE DORRIL

Huddersfield

4

Dear FREEDOM,

I've just read the letter from J W (23 Jan), most of which makes me feel not only sick but sad, and angry. How the fuck can s/he just sit there and hide their own failure to DO anything behind empty words and easy, but ultimately irrelevant, intellectual gymnastics? To talk of paradox and claim that deterrence has worked overlooks the fact that the one thing which DOES unite what is, by its very nature, a diverse anarchist movement is the belief common-to-all that whether or not any particular "anarchist vision of a stateless society" is realisable, it is nonetheless desirable and IS something worth striving towards.

No doubt I lack the experience and subsequent disillusionment of people like J W but (and I may be wrong but somehow, I don't think so), I feel that such people, when they talk of anarchy being impracticable, fail to see that it is their own narrow self-interest which makes such an ideal seem to them so remote a possibility. For example, J W argues that "to maintain one's own life and/or the lives of those we love shows a respect for life, even if it requires the destruction of another life". In other words, 'I'm alright

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

Jack!' This is the very attitude which anarchists supposedly reject, and has nothing to do with either love or a respect for life but reflects the most selfish form of individualism.

As regards CND, J W in his/her ivory tower is obviously unaware that M A D no longer holds true and that even if it did, in no way would it excuse her/his acceptance of a system which squanders the world's resources on arms while billions starve. J W, I suspect, has made his/her decision to close their eyes and to 'live their own life'. If so, how can s/he accuse those of us involved within the Anti-Bomb Campaign of being dishonest when s/he does nothing but perpetuate that system s/he says s/he is against? Unlike him/her, I wouldn't dream of claiming to speak for anyone else but myself, but, *if there really is no other choice between being red or dead, I know which I would choose.

Love, Anger and Anarchy,

JOHN

* To say that there is NO choice at all between being red or dead, ie. that they're the same, surely has more to do with fortune-telling than any genuine awareness of what anarchism actually is; no one can say with any real certainty what will happen in the future, only what might or probably will happen.

Shocked

Dear Editor,

I was shocked to read your Editorial ("Anarchy and the Welfare State", FREEDOM No 24) espousing Anarchist support for the untenable pseudo-'principle of the lesser evil.' You base your support for the reformist aims and methods of CND et al on the proposition that 'we think there is more point getting something than nothing', and uncritically assume that 'if nuclear weapons are dismantled it will be done by nation states'.

In truth, Anarchist principles — in particular, unconditional opposition to all forms of acceptance of or collaboration with existing economic and State institutions — can only be (uncompromisingly) practiced, not compromised. The 'principle' which provides specious 'justification' for collaboration and compromise — that something is better than nothing — is pie-in-the-sky wishful thinking. What sort of quarter or half a slice of what kind of pie are we trying to quantify and accept? Surely Anarchists should have drawn and undersood the radical lesson concerning such 'lesser evil' collaboration and compromise of libertarian revolutionary principles after the tragic bloodbath of the Spanish civil war (See Vernon Richards, "Lessons of the Spanish Revolution", FREEDOM Press, 1972)

The only principled (revolutionary) Anarchist attitude to the CND's policies of collaborationist acceptance of the

prevailing economic and State institutions, I believe, is one of join and support CND, END et al's reformist efforts, while providing honest, uncompromising principled criticism of their insufficiency to solve the root (institutional) causes of the nuclear problem by these reformist means. In short, we must insist that reforms, while necessary, are never sufficient, and that — only by attempting to practice the principles of radical libertarian change can we hope to win others to an understanding and support of its necessity, if real peace, freedom, justice and equality are to be achieved.

Only by these means, I suggest, can we hope to practice realistic (non-illusory) principled politics. If nuclear weapons are dismantled, it most assuredly won't be done by nation states.

yours fraternally,

RUTH FREUND

London

Negative

Dear FREEDOM,

I am in full agreement with the correspondents, SUBVERSIVE GRAFFITI and PETE GRAFTON (FREEDOM Vol 43 No 1). Rather than just giving sympathy and raising negative responses like—"We can do little more than wish them well" (Editorial FREEDOM Vol 42 No 25), there is a hell of a lot we can do to support the heroic struggle of the Polish working class.

In Paris, there exists an exiled group of Eastern European anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists. (If you didn't know you should have) Involved in the group are a large number of Poles. The group, Iztok, produces a wide range of anarchist literature in a variety of languages. Including Polish, Roumanian and Bulgarian. Publications smuggled into and distributed in the relevant states.

Iztok are short of funds. Finances and resources are stretched to the limit. Hardly surprising in view of current events in Eastern Europe. Therefore, I suggest that further positive action can be initiated, in addition to the previous suggestions. Practical financial support for Iztok. We cannot afford to lose the invaluable service provided by these comrades.

Contact Iztok at:

c/o Les Amities Franco-Bulgares,
26 Rue Piat, 75020 Paris, France

Yours fraternally,

ADRIAN N DIMMICK

Tyne & Wear

Brixton Seven Multiply!

Dear FREEDOM,

The word hadn't gone out until a few days before the SDP meeting itself. Shirley Williams and a host of other worthies were going to come to Brixton to tell us about our problems and the 'Scarface' Report and our riots. About 15 — 20 got into the hall; we took one side of the hall and the SDP stewards were kind enough to assemble behind us. We had thought that we'd be searched on on the way in (after all David Owen was tomatoed recently), so we only had a single bottle of Scotch for ourselves and a few eggs and stink bombs for the platform. We listened for a couple of minutes but the first speaker was patronising and talking crap, so our heckling went on from there. Someone in the audience told us to go back to Russia, which we cheered. We were the only mass hecklers, but there were other isolated hecklers around the hall, including the majority of the black people in the audience (the audience was about 95% white and middle class). Our heckling got better and louder, and speaker after speaker gave up; they called us pseudo-revolutionaries (so the SDP are real revolutionaries?) extremists etc, etc. When Shirley took the stage she had to scream down the microphone. Like all the speakers she couldn't make herself heard and addressed us and not the audience. She challenged us to shout her down or get up and speak but she was getting hysterical. Anyway, some of us preferred to do a little dance for the masses of cameras. It was getting a bit boring, the stewards had surrounded us but wouldn't start anything (they were weak-arsed shits who would have scurped at the first sign of aggro). We decided to walk out, letting off dozens of stink bombs and eggs were thrown, (as the papers faithfully recorded).

Whatever people say about what we achieved it was a good laugh, and that's very important. Also, we made the point that we were Anarchists, even Shirley said so, and whilst the massed ranks of the Left kept quiet all the black people in the audience will know who we are. It was a good night out. Next time we'll have more than just eggs. And seeing that the SDP will be our next leaders Anarchists everywhere should be giving them a hard time.

A VANDAL

We thank readers for their letters, which we try to print without cutting — but we do reserve the right to cut them unless specifically requested not to. In which case they might not get in first time round!

FREEDOM CONTACTS

INTERNATIONAL

AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Research and Resources Centre for Libertarian Politics and Alternative Life-Styles, 7/355 Northmore Ave, Lyneham, ACT 2602.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Sydney Anarcho-Syndicalists, Jura Books Collective, 417 King St, Newtown, NSW 2042.

QUEENSLAND

Libertarian Socialist Organisation, PO Box 268, Mount Gravatt, Central 4122.
Self-Management Organisation, PO Box 332, North Quay.

VICTORIA

La Trobe Libertarian Socialists, c/o SRG, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic 3083.
Monash Anarchist Society, c/o Monash University, Clayton, 3168 Melbourne.
Libertarian Workers for a Self Managed Society, PO Box 20, Parkville 3052.
Treason, Box 37, Brunswick East, Victoria, 3057.
Chummy Fleming Bookshop, 26 Regent Arcade, 210 Toorak Rd, South Yarra (Libertarian Workers shop).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Freedom Collective, PO Box 14, Mount Hawthorn 6016.
Libertarian Resource Centre, PO Box 203, Fremantle 6160.

TASMANIA

c/o 34 Kennedy St, Launceston 5250.

NEW ZEALAND

PO Box 2042, Auckland.
PO Box 22, 607 Christchurch.
Daybreak Bookshop, PO Box 5424, Dunedin.

CANADA

Open Road, Box 6135, Station 3, Vancouver BC.
Wintergreen/AR, PO Box 1294, Kitchener, Ontario, N2G 4G8.
Black Cat Press, PO Box 11261, Edmonton, Alberta.

USA

ARIZONA

Milicious Hooligans (anti-nuclear) 1110 W 2nd St, Tempe, AZ 85281.

CALIFORNIA

Autonomia, PO Box 1751, San Francisco, CA 94101.
Libertarian Anarchist Coffeehouse, meets last Sunday each month at Cafe Commons, 3161 Mission St, San Francisco.

MISSOURI

Columbia Anarchist League, PO Box 380, Columbia, Missouri 65201.

NEW YORK

Libertarian Book Club, Box 842, GPO New York, NY 10012.
SRAF/Freespace Alternative U, 339 Lafayette St, New York City, NY 10012.

TEXAS

Houston SRAF, South Post Oak Station, PO Box 35253, Houston TX 77035.

MINNESOTA

Soil of Liberty, Box 7056 Powderhorn Station, Minneapolis, Minn 55407.

OREGON

Portland Anarchist Centre, 313 East Burnside, Portland, Oregon 97205, USA.

WESTERN EUROPE

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Schwarzer Gockler (Black Cock-ere), c/o A Muller, Postfach 4528, 7500 Karlsruhe.
Graswurzel (Grass roots) c/o W Hertle, Grozerschippsee 28, 21 Hamburg 90.
Schwarzer Faden (Black Thread) Obere Wiebermarktstr 3, 741 Reutlingen Libertad Verlag, 6br Schmuck, Postfach 153, 1000 Berlin 44.

AUSTRIA

Liberte, Postfach 86, 1033 Wien.
Monte Verita, Neustiftgasse 33, 1070 Wien.

FRANCE

Federation anarchiste francaise, 3 Ternaux, 75011, Paris (Groups throughout France).
Union Anarchiste, 9 rue de l'Ange, 63000 Clermont Ferrand.

ITALY

Autogestione, Casella Postale 17127, 1-20100 Milano.
Gruppo Hem Day, Giovanni Trapani, CP6130, Roma-Prati.

BELGIUM

Revolutionair Anarchisties Kollektief (RAK), Oudborg 47, 9000 Gent.

HOLLAND

De Vrije, Postbus 6103, Groningen.
Anarchistische Boekhandel Slagerzicht (Anarchist Bookshop), Folk-ingestraat 10, Groningen.

DENMARK

Aarhus: Regnbuen Anarkist Bog- cafe, Meiljgade 48, 8000 Aarhus.
Rainbow Anarchists of the Free City of Christiana, c/o Allan Anarchos, Tringhuset, Fristaden Christiana, 1407 Copenhagen.
Anarkistisk Bogcage, Rosenborg- gade 12, 1130 Kobenhavn K.
Tel (01) - 12 26 82.

NORWAY

ANORG, Hoxtvedt, 31B, 1431 As. (Publish 'Folkeblad' 4 times a year.)

SWEDEN

Syndikalist Forum, Tenstiernas Gata 51, 11631-Stockholm.
Syndikalistiskt Forum (anarcho- synd bookshop), Husagatans 5, 41302 Gothenburg (tel 031 132504).

FINLAND

Anarkistiryhma, c/o Terttu Pesonen, Neljas Linja 14 D 83, 00530 Helsinki 53.

I would like to thank all comrades who contributed so generously to Miguel Garcia's funeral. We not only have paid all funeral expenses but have £100 in hand, with more coming in, from people who desired to be associated with this tribute.

The balance, with anything else that has still to come in, will be used to produce a memorial pamphlet to which a number of his friends have contributed.

A Meltzer

DESIRES

I'm a 17-year-old student and I'd like to keep up a correspondence with Anarchists, Anti-militarists or Ecologists for changing ideas and experiences. I'll keep waiting. Bye now,
All my best Anarchic Salutations
Mario Cruz
Address: AL. DR. Antonio Sergio, 6-10-B, 1700 Lisboa, Portugal.

A local syndicate CNT in Barcelona is going to do an article for Solidaridad Obrero on the situation in England and would appreciate any information or insights on this topic, especially if they concern industrial struggles. If you send anything you consider relevant to me I will forward it to their address: Jack Frost, c/o 108 Bookshop, Salisbury Road, Cardiff, Cymru.

COULD Keele Anarchists get in touch with comrades in the South Cheshire area via FREEDOM

Dear Comrades,
During the Spanish Revolution 1936-1937, some Japanese took part in the actual battles. Only one person's identity has already been recognized. He was Jack Shirai (alias Sirai or Jacky) a communist, who died at the Blunete front, July 11, 1936. About him see the following:
Volunteers for Liberty (Madrid) October 4, 1937
Le Livre de la Quinzieme Brigade (Madrid, 1937)
The Volunteers by Steve Nelson (New York, 1952)
According to a certain Japanese journalist, who visited Spain during those times, several Japanese joined both the Republican and Nationalist camps at the Aragon front. Neither their names nor activities are known to us to date. If anybody has information, document or testimony concerning the above mentioned or any other Japanese involved in the Spanish civil war, please let me know. Even though trivial, uncertain or anecdotal, they would be greatly appreciated.
Hopefully, I will obtain information from overseas in the near future.
Write to:
ISOYA Takero, c/o Tokiwa-so, Miname-kase 2516, Saiwai-ku, Kawasaki-shi, 211 Japan.

FRIDAY 12th Feb, 8pm. at 121 Film Soc.
The Free Voice of Labour
— the Jewish Anarchist Video film from US.
50p/Donation, Cafe/meal 6pm.

SUNDAY 7th Feb,
Technology
Liberating or Enslaving?
1pm discussion following meal.

At 121 Anarchist Centre, 121 Raitlon Rd, Brixton.
(includes cooked meal —approx £1)

EAST MIDLANDS CND
Conference 6th Feb
Queens Walk Community Centre Nottingham.
Contact your local CND group for details.
Is there any East Midlands Anarchist willing to lead an anarchist workshop?

ANY libertarians living in the Ipswich area? Contact Paul Anderson, 53 Dorchester Rd, Ipswich, and maybe we could form a group?



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MEETINGS

SURREY

Anyone interested in a meeting to talk about introducing the citizens to Revolutionary Anarchism, Please phone: 01-399-3197 for details of time & place.

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Anarchist Review Freedom

6th February, 1982. Vol 43, No 2.

DESPITE her fame Louise Michel remains a little known figure in this country, for practically nothing by or about her has ever been translated into English. Now, at last, an English translation of Edith Thomas' biography, first published in 1971 has appeared. Published by Black Rose Books of Montreal, *Louise Michel* is available from FREEDOM Bookshop, price £5.50.

This Review is an attempt to throw some light on parts of her life or on elements of her thought which have received much less attention than her role in the Paris Commune - in particular the influences of her childhood, her views on the liberation of women - and of animals - and the artistic nature of her attitude to revolution. A summary of her life is followed by two extracts from her *Memoirs*, first published in 1886, to which I have given my own titles, and her article 'How I Became an Anarchist' which first appeared in the *Libertaire* on 15 January 1896.

In these three pieces of translation I have tried to remain as faithful as possible to the words and rhythms of the original French, and in so doing to preserve the peculiarities of the style, but this is not easy and I by no means claim to have made a good job of it. It is meanwhile to be hoped that an English translation of both her *Memoirs* and her *Histoire de la Commune* will not be long in following upon that of Edith Thomas' biography.

GILLIAN FLEMING

LOUISE MICHEL

LOUISE MICHEL was born on 29 May 1830 at the chateau of Vroncourt in the Haute-Marne. She was an only and illegitimate child. Her mother, Marianne Michel, was a servant of peasant origin; her father was probably the owner of the chateau, or the owner's son, a family of liberal lawyers with noble rank.

Her childhood was unusually free for a girl. She describes herself in those days as 'tall, thin, prickly, wild and reckless, burned with the sun and often bedecked with rags fastened with pine needles'. Her impressions of the bloody mindedness of rural life were to have a deep effect on the development of her republicanism, just as her experience of the Commune was to move her on towards anarchism.

She rejected two offers of marriage from 'old crocodiles', as she calls them, and after the death of her grandmother she and her mother were turned out of the chateau. She trained as a schoolteacher, gaining her diploma in 1852, the year Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* brought in the Second Empire. She opened a girls' school, got into trouble with the local *prefet* for her republican activities and settled later in Paris.

In 1868, towards the end of the Empire, she established her school at 24 rue Oudot. 'I cannot say', remarked a cautious Clemenceau, 'that this school was absolutely correct, in the sense in which it is understood at the Sorbonne New methods were taught there randomly but at any rate it was teaching.' Indeed, Louise Michel's methods were new and well ahead of her time. The school in rue Oudot was not only republican in spirit but, at least where her own classes were concerned, libertarian also, with little or no enforced discipline. There were animals, there was a moss garden, and an emphasis on visual techniques. She believed it was possible to teach the most backward children, and that 'idiocy' or madness did not, or need not, exist.

Schoolteaching was then about the only pursuit open to young women of independent spirit and ambition, and in her writings Louise describes with feeling the hunger for knowledge and the unrecognised talents of those 'obscure bluestockings' who were her companions at that time.

Her own inexhaustible intellectual curiosity drew her to the study of mathematics (particularly algebra), music and science, the writing of poetry and novels and even the occasional opera. She kept up a regular correspondence with Victor Hugo and also took an active part in republican and women's rights groups.

The major turning point in the life of Louise Michel came with the Paris Commune of 1871. The greatest urban insurrection of the nineteenth century, it managed to keep the Versailles-based National Government of Thiers at bay

for 72 days, between 18 March and 28 May, and though this was too short a time to allow the *communards* to carry out any lasting measures of social reform, its ideals and achievements were to inspire successive generations of socialists, communists and anarchists.

One of the most striking features of the Commune was the active role taken in it by the women of Paris. Louise's interest in feminism had already been awakened by her experience of the cultural oppression of her fellow schoolteachers, as well as by her wide-ranging studies and rejection of religion. In her history of the Commune she dedicates a chapter to 'the women of 70', seeing in them some of 'the most implacable fighters who fought the invasion and defended the Republic'.

However, although she took part in and influenced them, her own role in women's activities during the Commune was not as prominent as that of contemporaries such as Elisabeth Dmitrieff, Nathalie Lemel, Elisabeth Retiffe, Beatrix Excoffon or many others in the Union of Women for the Defence of Paris and Care of the Wounded and similar groups. Louise saw herself primarily as a soldier, and she fought with the men of the 61st battalion of Montmartre. The Commune press saw her as a Joan of Arc figure, a warrior of exceptional strength and energy who had a 'strange influence' over her brothers in arms. Watching her one day, Clemenceau did not understand how she managed to survive even for a few hours.

During this time Louise became closely associated with the Blanquist and deputy police chief of the Commune, Theophile Ferre, who was to be executed after its fall. The details of the relationship between them remain obscure. She herself, unlike the police files of the time, was silent about it. The only really clear thing about her feelings for Ferre was their sublimation in her love of Revolution itself - a love which many saw as fanatic and mad, but which she interpreted herself as an aesthetic, almost sensual love of danger and adventure as well as of the ideals with which they were connected.

This intense romanticism can at least in part explain the extraordinary *anti* defence which she conducted at her trial on 16 December 1871 before the Versailles war council. She had given herself up to the authorities in order to secure the release of her mother, who had been taken hostage. Despite her continual taunting of the judges and passionate demands to die, as Ferre had done, her life was spared and she was sentenced to deportation in 'a fortified place', in other words, to the island of New Caledonia in the South Pacific. With a number of other deportees, Louise set sail on an old wreck of a frigate called the

Virginie, and her long conversations during the voyage with her fellow *communards*, Nathalie Lemel and Henri Rochefort in particular, were crucial to her political development as an anarchist. In New Caledonia a small anarchist group was formed and it was only among the members of this group, to which Louise belonged, that any real sympathy was shown for the rising of the native Kanaks against the French colonists which took place during this time.

Ever passionately curious, Louise began to study the Kanak language, their legends and music, and gave them lessons not only in algebra, which she felt more suited to them than arithmetic, but in direct action and sabotage.

Despite her openly agitational activities, Louise Michel's sentence was commuted to *deportation simple* (10 years' banishment) in May 1879. Campaigning in France led to the granting of a pardon, but she refused to return until the declaration of a total amnesty of deportees in July 1880.

With five of her oldest cats — her Caledonian strays — she sailed home at last, eight years later, a convinced anarchist, something of a natural historian and an expert on Kanak culture. She returned to a rapturous welcome and, much to the chagrin of the government, at once began addressing political and feminist meetings. For the rest of her life she was under constant police surveillance. On 9 March 1883, less than three years after her return from the South Pacific, she was arrested for taking part in a demonstration of unemployed workers, some of whom had en route pillaged a bakery, crying 'Bread, work or lead!' Louise Michel was charged with instigating the looting, and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Though torn apart with grief and anxiety over the imminent death of her mother, to whom she was devoted, she refused to appeal. She was pardoned in 1886 — against her will, because others remained in prison.

Prison itself, she commented, was less hard to bear than the efforts of her friends to release her, in the sense that 'a male prisoner has but to fight against his situation; a female prisoner not only has to bear the same situation, but also the complications (caused by) the intervention of friends who ascribe to her every weakness, stupidity and folly'. Virtually forced out of prison, she resumed her subversive activities and in 1890 escaped further harassment by departing for London, where she remained for five years. During this time she set up a libertarian International School for the children of political refugees and, among others, met Peter Kropotkin, Errico Malatesta and Emma Goldman. On leaving England she embarked upon an unceasing round of European capitals, preaching the social revolution. On 22 January 1888 at la Havre she was several times shot by a Breton named Pierre Lucas, for whose acquittal she worked as generously as Voltairine de Cleyre would later do for her would-be assassin. On 10 January 1905, at Marseille, while in the midst of a speaking tour, she died. Her funeral was attended by 100,000 people. It happened to take place on the same day as the massacre of St Petersburg, which marked the beginning of the first Russian Revolution.

.....

It has been said of Louise Michel (as of Emma Goldman) that her life was a work of art. Yet, if this is meant as a compliment — and both Hugo and Verlaine wrote poems about her — it could also be taken to imply a lack of intellectual substance. Few people, when they mention Louise Michel, refer to anything beyond the image of the exalted mystic, the 'transcendant' revolutionary, the fiery 'petroleuse with the heart of a forget-me-not' (to quote *Le Monde*). Has her contribution to the anarchist and feminist movements been unjustly neglected or simplified, or was she too romantic, too melodramatic even, to be taken seriously?

Louise Michel, it is true, lacked an analytical mind, a critical intelligence. She never really shed all trace of Blanquism. Her history of the Commune is disappointing

from an anarchist viewpoint in that it makes no attempt to grapple with the development and implications of the conflict between the Jacobin/Blanquist 'majority' and the more libertarian socialist 'minority' within the Commune, or to describe in any detail the social experiments which the Commune carried out. Her conversion to anarchism is described in terms of poetry, and tends to mystification. While in later life she gave unqualified support to the classic principles of anarchist communism (as outlined in the Anarchist Manifesto of Lyon, which she reproduces in her memoirs) she is also drawn both to nihilism and to syndicalism, while her writings lack coherence, being above all the product of impulse and veering between the prosaic and the surreal.

But if she is not a theorist, she is most certainly the exponent of one single and supreme idea: that freedom is the most important aim of revolution, and that it is indivisible, 'The fact is', she said, 'that everything goes together'. And if this is hardly an original thought, rarely can anyone have lived or expressed this conviction more thoroughly, or with such integrity. It meant that as a revolutionary Louise Michel was what most *communards* were not — an anti-racist and a feminist; and it also meant that as an anti-racist and a feminist she was (unlike most of us still) an animal liberationist too. These various vanguard positions were linked to her quite extraordinary imaginative powers.

Louise Michel was, in all probability, the first woman of any significance to link women's liberation with anarchism. In the declining days of the Second Empire she took the name of Enjolras to join with other women in fighting the anti-feminism of Proudhon, Michelet and other progressives of the age. In later years, after becoming an anarchist, she was able not only to challenge the Proudhonian view of woman as domestic animal, but to stress the danger of the belief that liberation would come to women through the conquest of political, cultural and economic rights, as opposed to the achievement of libertarian communist revolution.

Louise Michel had long been concerned with the problems of working women and with the aim of helping them live by the fruits of their own labour. The feminist struggle against prostitution (which she believed that women were forced into, but from which they alone could deliver themselves) was a particular concern of hers and her 'heart bled' for the many prostitutes who not only fought (and died) on the barricades of Paris but had to fight for the *right* to fight because of their 'uncleanness' in the eyes of the male revolutionaries.

She was full of admiration for the women of the Commune who 'did not ask whether something was possible, but whether it was useful, then succeeded in doing it' — in contrast to the interminable wrangling of the men. She refers to the women's ambulance work, their vigilance committees, their workshops and soup kitchens, as well as to their fighting on the barricades. On her return from exile she continued her feminist work, involving herself in the League of Women, advocating women's strikes for equal pay and a shorter working day, while at the same time warning of the danger of believing that the right to work in a factory instead of a home would of itself free women more than it had freed men. Her anarchism came in, on one hand, in her intention of arousing awareness of feminist ideas through a structure of federated but autonomous women's groups throughout France, and on the other, in her insistence that such ideas could not be separated from the wider context of antimilitarism and anti-state revolution.

Louise Michel saw women as a 'caste', the word conveying perhaps a more radical and more profoundly cultural separateness than the word 'class'. 'Man, whoever he is', she writes, 'is master; we are the intermediary beings between man and beast whom Proudhon classed as housewife or courtesan. I admit, always with sorrow, that we are a caste set apart, rendered such through the ages'. But, though man is master, he is basically as much a slave as woman. And since he cannot give what he himself lacks, how is it possible for woman to demand it of him? Woman has to



bring about her own freedom, even though, in the circumstances it requires a hundred times more courage of her than of him; even though 'Today, when men weep, women must remain dry-eyed'. And if she can't obtain it from man because man is a slave too, the only solution is to overthrow the main instrument of slavery itself: the state.

As an anarchist and feminist, Louise Michel refused to stand as a woman's candidate in the elections, although nominated. 'Politics', she writes, 'is a form of stupidity'. Universal suffrage is a 'prayer to the deaf gods of all mythologies'. She continues, 'I cannot oppose the women's candidates in that they are an affirmation of the equality of men and women. But I must ... repeat to you that women must not separate their cause from that of humanity, but take a militant part in the great revolutionary army.'

Thus it is clear that, like Emma Goldman, Louise Michel was no separatist and I think that she would have been appalled at Marian Leighton's statement that '... anarcho-feminism's primary commitment is and should be to the radical feminist movement with only marginal participation in anarchist movement politics ...' (see her *Anarcho-Feminism and Louise Michel*). But beyond the rejection of the separateness of these movements, and beyond her espousal of anarchist communism in general, what is the Revolution for Louise Michel? What is the uniqueness, if any, of her view of it?

Louise the charismatic firebrand is only one aspect, for, just as importantly, she is the aesthete and the (albeit desultory) scholar.

Seek in her work what revolution means for her, and time and again it is to be found expressed in terms of art and science or science fantasy; a revolutionary artistic and scientific experience which, freed from the shackles of State power and political and economic exploitation, stripped of its contemporary inessentials and abuses, will develop and multiply forms which we can barely comprehend.

Today only her autobiography and her history of the Commune can be easily obtained (and these are still untranslated into English). Most of her novels and plays, if not lost entirely to the four winds, are buried in the depths of the *Bibliothèque nationale* and other libraries and museums; her musical compositions have undergone a separate fate; her poems express a passion and romanticism

long out of fashion. Yet it is in this lost work that one finds a part of her rarely mentioned, a very dark side, a pervasive sense of violence and cruelty which is at least as important an element of her attitude to revolution as her millenarian optimism; and which is an essential part of the liberating process.

Her opera, *Le Reve des Sabbats*, provides an example. It is no less than the story of the destruction of the earth in an infernal war between Satan and Don Juan for the love of a druidess. In the process the planet crumbles, and mind is assimilated into matter to the orchestral accompaniment of harmonicas, flutes, lyres, horns, guitars and a devils' choir of 20 violins! Placed on the valley floor, surrounded by mountains, the audience is a part of this cosmic experience.

Louise Michel was well aware of the 'monstrosity' (her word) of this and similar works and she describes them in her memoirs with obvious humour, yet it is in terms of such an opera that she sees the Revolution — a whole, terrible, exhilarating and aesthetic experience, brought out of the concert halls and theatres into real life. She herself always acted to the full, to the point of Dadaism, and not without amusement and self-mockery, a role in one of these bizarre, fantastical creations. She is, yes the mystic, but also and above all the artist, because of the power of her imagination, because of the sudden flashes of sheer beauty in the tangled undergrowth of her work, because these are what are most important to her. Far more in fact than the mystic, Louise Michel is the *aesthete* of Revolution. 'They say I'm brave', she writes, 'the fact is, that in the idea, the setting of danger, my artist's senses are entrapped and charmed ...' Or, 'It was beautiful, that's all; my eyes serve me like my heart, like my ears charmed by the cannon ...' Or again, 'I loved the incense as I loved the smell of hemp; the smell of gunpowder as I loved the smell of the lianas in the Caledonian forests'.

She is always gambling, playing games with the danger from which she draws nourishment. Just as, one night, she had turned on the man who was following her (she describes his shadow in the light of the street lamps as that of a "fantastic bird" perched on tall heron legs) and terrified him into flight by chanting, like swearwords, the letters of the "Danel method of notation" -(D,B,L,S,F,N,R,D) so too, during the Commune, she plays a symphony of revolution on some half-broken organ in some half-ruined church in the midst of bursting shells, terrifying and angering her companions.

Everything for Louise is an experience with its own poetry - even the procession to likely death at Satory, even the voyage of deportation - as important for the beauty of its images as for the fact of her conversion to anarchism, or the distinct probability that she would never again have seen those she loved: her mother, Marie Ferre. The passages on the New Caledonia are sheer prose poetry - among the most splendid and memorable of their kind that exist about the place. It is from this time that her concept of the new, anarchic world began to form, a concept inseparable from her physical experience of the world of the South Pacific. It is a world of living poetry, of science fiction turned fact, when fleets cross the sky and seabed, among submarine and sky-cities like the severed space-cities of late 20th century futurology. Even if it's only a legend that it was Louise Michel who gave Jules Verne the idea for the *Nautilus*, the legend itself is significant!

In the following extracts from her writings I have tried within narrow confine to give as broad a view as possible of an extremely rich and complex personality. None of these pieces has the usual character of the political tract because, inevitably, the rambling, urgent, lyrical style characteristic of her does not allow it. But I have tried to show the main facets - the feminist, the anarchist, the poet, prophetess and artist of revolution - Louise whose most important contribution to our movement was, I think, both to unite it with the women's and animals' liberation, and to remind us that politics, science and technology should never be separated from the poetic imagination.

New world Marseillaise

Marseillaise of the New World

(An extract from the first chapter of the second part of the Memoirs)

.....Regrettably, the thought that is secreted by the brain cannot survive the person who produces it.

Yet it is possible to see that the dominant ideas of a particular life have their material origins in such and such an impression, or in the phenomena of hereditary or other things, I come across a strong sensation, the strength of which I still feel after all these years.

The sight, for instance, of a decapitated goose, walking with bloody neck raised, stiff with the red wound where the head had been; a white goose with drops of blood on its feathers, walking as if drunk while its head lay on the ground, eyes shut, thrown in a corner, had multiple consequences for me.

It was impossible for me then to reason out this impression, but I find it at the depths of my compassion for animals, and then at the depths of my horrors of the death penalty.

Some years later, a parricide was executed in a nearby village; at the hour of his death the sensation of horror that I felt for the agony of the man mingled with my memory of the agony of the goose.

Another effect of this child's impression was that until the age of eight or ten years, the sight of meat made me want to vomit; to overcome this disgust required great will power, and the reasoning of my grandmother, along the lines that I would suffer from too much emotion in my life if left to indulge such a peculiarity.

The stories of sufferings which we heard at the *ecregne** of Vroncourt those rare evenings when Nanette and I got permission to go there, perhaps contributed to my keeping vividly alive the image of the goose.

.....

I liked to listen to those stories accompanied by the sound of the spinning wheel; the knitting needles cutting through the drone with a small, dry noise; and the snow, the great white snowfall, stretched like a shroud upon the earth, now and again lashing the face.

We had to go home at ten o'clock, but we always went back later, that was the best time! Marie Verdet laid her knitting on her knees; her eyes dilated beneath her coiffe, which overhung her like a roof, and the ghost stories: the will o' the wisp, the white washerwomen, the dell of witches, told in her broken, almost-centenarian voice, had just the right setting; her sister Fanchette had seen everything, she nodded in confirmation.

We left reluctantly, Nanette and I, skirting the cemetery wall where we have only ever seen snow and heard only the winter wind.

From my evenings at the women's house dates a feeling of rebellion which I have very often rediscovered.

The peasants make the wheat grow, but they do not always have bread! An old woman told how with her four children, during the bad year (I think that's what they called those years when the monopolists brought famine to the land) neither she nor her husband nor her children were able to eat every day; they had nothing more to sell; they owned only the clothes on their backs; two of their children

*In her Memoirs Louise explains that this is 'in our villages the house where, on winter evenings, the women and young girls meet together to sew, knit and especially to tell old tales....'

had died, they thought from hunger! Those who had wheat would no longer give them credit, *not even a handful of oats to make a little bread with. But you have to resign yourself!* she said. Not every one can eat bread every day. She had stopped her husband from killing the man who had refused them credit *by making them pay back double in a year*, while his children were dying. But the two brothers had held back, they worked for the very man her husband wanted to destroy. The usurer got off scot free, but there you are, the *poor people must put up with what they can't do anything about!*....

When she said all that, in her calm way, my eyes went hot with anger, and I said to her: You should have let your husband do it! He was right!

I imagined the little children dying of hunger, the whole picture of misery, which she made so harrowing that you felt it right inside you; I saw the husband with his torn shirt and his bare feet in his clogs, on his way to plead with the wicked usurer and wandering sad and empty-handed home again. I saw him, threatening, with the little children stretched out cold on the handful of straw which remained to them, and the wife preventing the arbiter of justice who wanted to avenge his family and the others, and the two brothers, growing up with this memory, going to work for that man; the cowards!

It seemed to me that had he entered, I should have sprung at his neck to bite it, and I said so; I was angry that they could accept that not everyone could have bread every day; such herd-like stupidity frightened me.

'You *mustn't* speak like that, little one!' said the woman. *'It makes the good Lord cry.'*

Have you seen sheep offering their throat to the knife? That woman had the head of a sheep.

It was of this story I was thinking one day when, at catechism, I argued fervently against the famous proverb: Charity begins at home. The old cure (who believed it) called me over; I feared a punishment, but it was to give me a book.

Well, that book was all I needed to provide me with a horror of conquerors equal to my horror of the other human vampires.

It was a sort of paraphrasing of the psalms of exile.

'The harp hangs from the willows of the riverside.

Captive Jerusalem has seen her streets lament'.

And I cursed those who crush peoples as I did those who starve them, without however suspecting the extent to which, one day, I should see such crimes multiply.

A detail in passing, a confession even. This book was bound in the same way as M. Laumont the elder's little encyclopedia, and I must admit that from the moment the cure laid it beside him, I was engrossed by the thought of what the brown skin cover could contain; it couldn't be a children's book; perhaps my preoccupation didn't escape him.

Since I have spoken of the little volume of M. Laumont; since I have said that each of us is, I believe, capable of all the good and evil in the fibres of our being, I will also confess that as a child I took from the house remorselessly, anything from money, if there was any, to fruit, vegetables and so on..I gave them all away in my family's name, and this made for some good rows when certain people thought to thank them. Incurable as I was, I laughed.

One year my grandfather offered me twenty sous a week if I'd stop stealing, but I found that I lost too much on the deal.

I had filed some keys to open a cupboard of pears and other things where I left little notes in place of what I took;

for instance there was this: You have the lock, but I have the key.

Over the years the land returned so little that neither my uncle, who cultivated one half of it, nor ourselves, no-one could make ends meet; I felt there were many successive such years, often; that one lot of people couldn't always help the other and that something other than charity was necessary to provide everyone with bread.

As for the rich, believe me, I had little respect for them. Then the idea of communism came to me.

I saw the rough work on the land for what it is, bowing men like oxen over the furrows, keeping the slaughter-houses for the beasts when they are worn out; and the beggars' sacks for the men who can no longer work; the *fusil de toile* as they call it in the Haute-Marne.

People can't make an income from working the land; the income goes to those who already have too much of it.

The flowers of the field, the beautiful fresh grass, do you think they are there for the little children who tend the animals to play in? They want the grass only to lie down on and sleep a little at midday; I have seen them.

The shade of the woods, the blond harvests through which the wind sighs like waves, is the peasant not too tired to find them beautiful? The work is hard, the day is long; but he is resigned; has his will not been broken? Man is overworked as a beast.

Then the feeling of injustice in him goes to sleep; he is half dead and works unthinkingly, for the exploiter. Many men have said to me, like the old woman of the *ecregne*: Mustn't say that, little one; it offends God!

Yes, they said that when I told them that everyone has the right to everything that there is on earth.

My pity for all that suffers, for the dumb beast, more perhaps than for man, went far; my revolt against social inequalities went further still; it has grown, always grown with the struggle, with the hecatomb; it has returned from across the ocean, it overshadows my pain and my life.

I return to the callousness of man for animal.

In summer, all the streams of the Haute-Marne, all the damp meadows in the shade of the willows are filled with frogs; you can hear them on fine evenings, sometimes one, sometimes the whole choir. Who knows whether they did not hitherto inspire the monotone choruses of ancient theatre!

It is during this season that the cruelties I have mentioned take place; the poor animals, able neither to live nor die, try to bury themselves in the dust or in the corners of dung heaps; in broad sunlight you can see their eyes, become enormous, and always soft, shining as in reproach.

The hatches of birds are left to the children who torture them; if they escape, traps are laid for them in autumn, along the woodland paths; there to die, caught by a claw and fluttering in desperation to the end.

And the old dogs, the old cats, I have seen them thrown to the lobsters. If the woman who threw the animals had fallen into the hole, I should not have offered her my hand.

I have, since then, seen the workers of the fields treated like beasts and those of the town die of hunger; I have seen bullets rain on unarmed crowds.

I have seen cavalymen break into crowds with the breasts of their horses; better than the men, the beasts raised their hooves from fear of causing injury, they advanced reluctantly under the whip.

Oh! How the Georgics and Eclogues deceive on the happiness of the fields! The descriptions of nature are true, the happiness of the workers of the fields is a lie.

The earth! This word lies at the very roots of my life, in the fat illustrated Roman history, from which M. Laumont (the younger) taught the whole family, on both sides, to read.

My grandmother taught me to read from it, indicating the letters with her big knitting needles.

The book was laid on the same desk where she made me practice the solfa, according to the great old solfas of Italy where she herself had learned.

In looking back to the cradle or to certain circumstances which have impressed the brain, one finds the living source of the rivers which sweep life along, the departure point of successive comparisons.

At certain times an idea emerges suddenly, while others disappear; it is time which arouses volcanoes from under the old continents and gives rise in people to new senses in preparation for the future cataclysm.

Thought, as it runs through life, changes and develops, involving a thousand unknown forces.

Yes, surely the man of the future will have new senses! You can feel them germinating in the very essence of our epoch.

The arts will be for everyone; the power of the harmony of colours, the sculptural grandeur marble, all that will belong to the human race. Encouraging genius, instead of extinguishing it, even those artists now fastened to the past will slip anchor; from everywhere the anchor must be raised.

Allons, allons, art for everyone, science for everyone, bread for everyone; has ignorance not wrought enough evil and is the privilege of knowledge not more terrible than that of gold! The arts form a part of the demands of humanity; they must be for everyone; only then will the human flock become the human race.

Who then will sing this *Marseillaise* of art, so loud and proud? Who will tell of the thirst for knowledge, the intoxication of the harmonies of marble made flesh, the instruments that render the human voice, the canvasses that palpitate with life? Marble perhaps! Marble significant and voiceless, could well be the terrible poem of human protest.

No, neither marble, nor colour, nor song, can on their own tell the *Marseillaise* of the new world! All, everything must be liberated, all living creatures and the world, the worlds perhaps, who knows? Savages that we are!

What, do you propose that we give crumbs of bread to the crowd of disinherited? That we give bread without art, without science, without freedom?

Allons, allons, let each hand take a torch and let the coming epoch walk in light!

Arise each one of you, great hunters of stars!

Bold sailors, unfurl your sails, you who know how to die!

Allons, arise, heroes of the legends of times to come!

We speak of atavism! Yonder, fallen with the red roses of the fields, dead with the bees, there are family legends. Those who told me them will never tell them again.

Like sphinx they lean engulfed in shadow, upon me. With their green mer-eyes, they watch under the waters of the sea; their witch-figures tall and lean, they roam the *maquis*, or the moors.

This remote legend runs from the wild gorges of Corsica to the haunted menhirs of Brittany; from the red gul of Flogof, where storms the sea wind of the north west, to the dark lake of Creno.

How many things around a wretched being to widen his horizon, to make him feel and see so that he suffers more, so that he better understands the wilderness of life where everything is fallen around him!

But, without that, could he be useful? Perhaps no.

Even where there has not been a little atavism in my leanings, one becomes a poet in solitude, whether or not the verse is rhymed.

There the winds blow a poetry wilder than that of the north, softer than that of the *trouverses* * following the great snows of winter, or the spring breezes that stir in the hedges of our hollow pathways so many hawthorns and roses.

Nanette and Josephine, those two daughters of the fields, were they not poets?

Have I not told their song? *L'Age nu deu bos*, *The Dark Bird of the Woods*, the air of which I rediscovered on the sea's edge, across the years and the ocean.

Yes, it was certainly the dark bird of the wild fields that I rediscovered on the edge of the sea, singing the brutal stanzas of wild nature.

How I became an anarchist

I became an anarchist when we were sent to Caledonia in the galleys, convicted of grievous and infamous crimes to which we were completely indifferent; since our consciences told us that it would have been criminal to act in any other way than we had done; rather we reproached ourselves for not having torn our hearts out; under certain circumstances pity is treason.

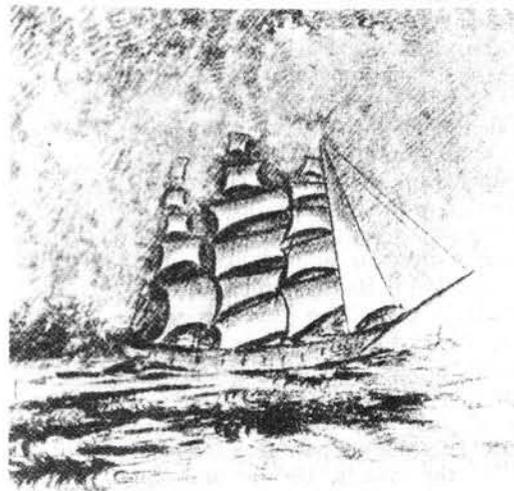
All the same, to make us repent for having fought for liberty, and as a precautionary measure against such evil-doers, we were kept in cages like tigers or lions.

For four months we saw nothing but sky and water and sometimes, on the horizon, the white sail of a ship like a bird's wing - the vastness made a striking impression. We had all the time in the world for thinking, rocked by the gentle rhythm of the waves, which sometimes rose up as if two immense arms had lifted them and then thrown them down into the bottom of the sea again, it was like dough being kneaded, and the wind in the sails sung its scales at infinitely small intervals, suddenly leaping into great depths or into shrill whistling; the vessel creaked under the swell, we were at the mercy of the elements, and the Idea grew.

Well, by dint of comparing things, events and men, having seen our brave friends of the Commune behave in such a way that, fearing to be terrible, they were active only in throwing away their lives, I came rapidly to the conclusion that honourable people in power would be as incapable as dishonourable people in power are harmful, and that it is impossible for liberty ever to be allied with any form of power.

I felt that a revolution which seized power of any kind was nothing but an illusion, able merely to mark time and not to open all doors to progress; and that the institutions of the past, which seemed to disappear, remained by changing their names, and that everything in the old world was fastened together by chains, and that it thus formed a single system, fated to give way entirely to a new world, free and happy under the sky.

I saw that the laws of attraction, whereby innumerable spheres are unceasingly drawn toward new suns between the two eternities of past and future, must also govern the destiny of individual beings in the eternal progress that draws them towards a new and ever-developing ideal. So I am an anarchist, because only anarchy can bring happiness to humanity, and because it is the noblest idea that the human intelligence can grasp, until the dawning of perfection.



For as the ages pass, forms of progress yet unknown will succeed one another. Is it not common knowledge that what seems utopia for one or two generations becomes reality for the third?

Only anarchy can make man aware, because only anarchy can set him free; thus it means complete separation between a herd of slaves on one hand and humanity on the other. For any man coming to power, *l'Etat c'est lui*, he sees it as a dog sees the bone he gnaws, and it is for himself that he protects it.

If power makes us ferocious, egoistic and cruel, servitude degrades us; anarchy thus means an end to the wretched misery in which the human race has always lain; anarchy alone will not lead to a renewal of suffering; and increasingly it attracts hearts tempered in the battle for justice and truth.

Humanity wants to live, and in the desperate struggle to emerge from the abyss, to begin the bitter ascent of the rocks it will attach itself to anarchy; any other idea is comparable to the crumbling stone or clump of grass that one seizes while falling to yet further depths; we must fight with courage, but with logic; it is time that the real ideal, greater and finer than all the fiction which has preceded it, should be made so widely known that it prevents the disinherited masses from spilling any more of their blood upon deceptive dreams. This is why I am an anarchist.

Speaking on women

(An extract from the ninth chapter of the first part of the Memoirs. The text is dotted with New Caledonian words, *keule*, *pikinnini*, *nemo*, *tayo* etc., which I have left as in the original).

....Over there, in the Caledonian forests, I have seen collapsing suddenly with a soft cracking of rotted trunk, old niaulis which had lived their quasi-eternity as trees.

When the whirlwind of dust has disappeared, there remains only a heap of ashes on which green branches lie like funeral wreaths: the last growths of the old trees, swept away with the rest.

Myriads of insects, which have been multiplying there for centuries, are buried in the collapse.

Some, painfully stirring the ashes, look anxious and astonished at the day that kills them; their species, born in darkness, will not survive the light.

This is how we live in the old social tree, which people obstinately believe to be alive and well, yet the least breath

will annihilate it and disperse its ashes.

No creature can escape the transformations which, with time, will have altered them to the last atom. Then comes the Revolution, taking everything by storm.

This is the point at which we have arrived! Peoples, races and within the races the two parts of humanity: man and woman who should walk hand in hand; but the antagonism between them will last for as long as the stronger commands or believes he commands the other, reduced to ruse and to ruling in secret, to using the weapons of slaves. Everywhere the struggle has been taken up.

To recognise the equality of the sexes would be to make a great breach in the wall of human stupidity.

Meanwhile, to quote old Moliere, woman is still man's pottage (*le potage de l'homme*).

The strong sex condescends to the level of flattering the other by calling her the fair sex.

It's a hell of a long time since we began to reject that sort of strength, there are a good many of us rebels quite simply



taking our part in the struggle, without asking permission to. You can carry on arguing to the end of the world!

For my part, comrades, I haven't withed to be *man's pot-tage*, I've spent my life with the vile multitude and have not given Caesar slaves.

That too, the vile multitude, is flattered at times, called the sovereign people.

Let us speak a few truths to the strong part of the human race, we shall never be able to say too much.

And first, let us speak of the strength that is made from our own cowardice; it isn't nearly as great as it may seem.

Were the Devil to exist, he would know that if man rules with much noise, woman rules quietly. But what is done in darkness is worth nothing; once this mysterious power is changed into equality, the petty little vanities and great deceptions will cease; the brutality of the master and the treachery of the slave will cease to exist.

The cult of force goes back to the caves; it is general in savage cultures, as among the peoples of the first world.

Over there, in Caledonia, I have seen *tayos* loading their *popinee*, their *nemo*, as mules are laden*; they walked proudly, wearing only the assegai of the warrior, wherever they were likely to meet someone. But if the path were deserted, if the mountain gorges narrowed, then moved to pity the *tayo* would unburden the *popinee*, by this time, sweating blood and water, of the fishing net, the *keule* or one of the *pikinninis*.

She would sigh with relief, only the smallest child still hanging from her back, and one or two others (not attached to her skirts, she had none), their little arms slung by a garter to the maternal knee, trotting along on agile little partridge feet.

If a shadow appeared on the horizon - were it only that of an ox or horse - the sling stones, the fishing net, the little children were quickly loaded back again onto the woman's back, the *tayo* seeming to consolidate the burden.

Supposing he had been seen? Not *lele*, a warrior who valued *nemos*. They would hardly be content to be treated like nothing any more!

Is it not everywhere the same? Does the stupid vanity of strength not maintain, among the number of arguments for the inferiority of women, that motherhood and other circumstances get in the way of their ability to fight?

Even so, will they always be so daft as to cut their own throats?

.....

And besides, women, when a thing is worth fighting for, are not the last to do so; the old yeast of revolt at the depths of the heart of all women ferments quickly enough where the struggle opens up wider paths, where there is less of the smell of the charnel house and the squalor of human stupidity. They are disgusted, the women! Cruelty sickens them....

It's a long time since the stupid old attitudes to sex were overturned by the Americans and the Russians. Women began to get the same education as men, and men weren't jealous of them, feeling themselves capable of the same zeal and not understanding that sex should be a greater concern than skin colour.

But among the first people of the world, it would be no more *lele* than among the tribes of Caledonia for women to have the same education as men. Supposing they wanted to govern!

Don't worry! We're not stupid enough for that! That would mean the continuance of authority: keep it for yourselves, that it may come to a swifter end!

Alas! That swifter end is still far off. Human stupidity throws over us, doesn't it, all the veils of all the old prejudices?

Don't dismay! There are enough to last some time yet. But you'll never halt the tide, nor prevent the raising of ideas, like banners, before the crowds.

Never have I understood that there should be a sex whose intelligence one should try to stifle, as if there were already too much of it in the species.

Girls, raised in fatuity, are deliberately disarmed, the better to be deceived: that is the requirement.

It's just as if you were thrown into the water after having been forbidden to learn to swim, as if your limbs were bound, even.

Under the pretext of preserving the innocence of a young girl, she's left to dream, in profound ignorance, of things which wouldn't make the slightest impression on her were they known to her through simple questions of botany or natural history.

She'd be a thousand times more innocent if they were, since she'd take coolly the thousand things which now trouble her: questions of science or nature don't trouble the senses.

Does a corpse trouble those who go regularly to the amphitheatre?

Alive or dead, nature doesn't make you blush. The mystery is destroyed, the corpse is offered to the scalpel.

Nature and science are clean, the veils thrown over them are not. Those vine leaves fallen from the loins of old Silenus serve only to draw attention to what would otherwise pass unheeded.

The English breed races of animals for slaughter; civilised peoples prepare young girls for deception; yet, for the girls, they make deception a crime, and for their seducers a virtual honour.

What a scandal when black sheep are found among the flock! What would become of us if lambs were no longer content to be slaughtered?

No doubt they'd be slaughtered just the same, whether they offered their necks or not. No matter! Better not to offer them.

continued over

**Tayo* would appear to mean roughly man, *popinee* or *nemo*, to mean woman or wife, *lele* the done thing - but I confess I'm no expert! (*Trans*).

Sometimes lambs turn into lionesses, tigresses, octopi.

And that's all to the good! The caste of women should never have been cut off from humanity. Aren't there markets where the beautiful daughters of the people are sold in the street, at street stalls? And aren't the daughters of the rich sold for their dowries?

The former are taken by whoever wants them; the latter are given to whoever happens to be chosen.

It's the same with prostitution, and the Oceanian morality is widely practised among us. Not *lele*, the *tayos* who value their *nemos*!

The proletarian is a slave, but slave of all is the proletarian's wife.

And women's wages? Let us speak of them a little; they are nothing but a bait, since, being illusory, they're worse than if they didn't exist at all.

Why do so many women not work?

There are two reasons: some can't find work; others prefer to die of hunger, in a hole if they can find one, at the corner of some boundary wall or road if they have no shelter, than to labour at a job which only just repays them for the yarn they invest, but brings in a great deal to the boss. There are some who hold on to life. Then, driven by hunger, cold, misery, drawn towards the villains of both sexes whose living it is - there are worms in all manner of putrefaction - the unhappy women allow themselves to be recruited into that lugubrious army which trails from Saint-Lazare to the Morgue.

I mean, when shivering in the mire, a wretch takes from some fool's pocket more than he gives her, so much the better! Why did he go there? Were there not so many buyers, such merchandise wouldn't exist.

And when a decent woman, calumniated or pursued, kills the scoundrel who pursues her, then bravo! She's ridding the others of a danger; she's avenging them; there aren't enough of us who do.

If women, those accursed beings who, even for Proudhon, can be only housewives or courtesans - in the old world they can be nothing more - if women are often *fatale*, whose fault is it? Who for his pleasure has cultivated their coquetry and all the other vices agreeable to men? Through the ages a selection of such vices has been made. It could not have been otherwise.

They are weapons now, the weapons of slaves, dumb and terrible; they shouldn't have been given them! It's well done!

Everywhere in this accursed society man suffers; but no suffering is comparable with that of woman.

In the street she is a commodity.

In the convent where she hides as in a tomb ignorance embraces her, the rules enmesh her, pulverise her heart and brain.

In the outside world she is subjected to humiliation; in her home the burden crushes her; man wants it to stay that way, to be sure she won't encroach on his territory and rights.

Don't worry, gentlemen! We've no need of your rights to take over your functions when it suits us!

Your rights? Never! We don't like your rags; do with them what you will; they're too worn, too tight-fitting for us.

What we desire are science and liberty.

Your rights? The time isn't far off when you'll come and offer them to us, in an attempt, by sharing them, to recover them a little.

Keep your cast-offs, we don't want them.

Our rights, we have them. Aren't we beside you in the great fight, the supreme struggle? Would you dare make an allowance for the *rights of women*, when men and women have won the rights of humanity?

This chapter is no digression. A woman, I have the right to speak of women.

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