

IS NIXON MAD?

WE ARE SUPPOSED to thank Richard Nixon for not pushing us over a cliff. Allegedly by his diplomatic manoeuvring, national pride and military paranoia it came to the point that the Russians were reputedly sending a major "peace-keeping" force to the Middle East. The National Defence Council decided on an alert.

This meant that Nixon's finger was on the nuclear trigger. America's numerous bases all over Europe were prepared at the drop of a hat - not even of a bomb - to annihilate the indicated target. Kissinger held a Press Conference to explain how necessary this step was, and incidentally to deplore lack of co-operation from the British, the Germans, the Japanese in this proposed lemming-rush. In

fact, in retrospect the only co-operative member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was our oldest ally, Portugal.

It seems that Russia, faced by this situation, decided that she would not contribute to the peace-keeping forces and instead sent a hundred undefined civilians. The whole matter was raised at the United Nations and it was decided to arrange a cease-fire (still pending) and send peace-keeping forces made up from the smaller nations - still stationed in Cyprus.

President Nixon has slowly wound down his 'alert' and if he was hoping for a revival in his fortunes from this snatching



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THE MILITARY THREAT

FOLLOWING THE military coup in Chile information has come to light about the activities of the military in France. Le Monde and Le Figaro have recently carried reports that the French General Staff is collecting intelligence on the "anti-militarist" and "subversive" activities of opposition political groups and trade unions. Information gathered from various sources, including the Renseignements Généraux (the internal intelligence system), military security and the national Gendarmerie is regularly transmitted to regional Army commanders.

From information I gleaned during interrogation by a military policeman when I was leafleting recently it is clear that the Army in Britain is also undertaking extensive intelligence work - independent of Special Branch - on the activities of anti-militarist groups.

It is easy to dismiss the Army in Britain as being fundamentally different from that in a country like Chile but there is serious cause for concern. The notorious Brigadiers Kitson and Calvert have outlined the role of the Army in suppressing social protest and unrest, and

these ideas have been taken up by others like ex-Major-General Clutterbuck (now a lecturer at Exeter University). Northern Ireland has provided a testing-ground for the techniques and weaponry of control and intimidation of a rebellious civilian population. Significantly, these ideas are not confined solely to the highest echelons of the Army and a young, working-class officer in the Parachute Regiment at Aldershot openly threatened me that the Army would "deal with unrest if it got out of hand".

All this underlines how important it is for anarchists to seriously involve themselves in an anti-militarist campaign. The most fruitful activity is to ensure that young workers are not conned into joining the Army. In many areas - particularly those of high unemployment - the Army is now undertaking an intensive recruiting campaign in schools with the co-operation of headmasters. This needs to be countered by school-gate leafleting pointing out that the Army is a dead-end job -- literally!

Trade unionists in South Shields have persuaded the local Trades Council to support

an anti-recruitment campaign and they have produced an excellent leaflet aimed at young people. This kind of activity needs to be taken up by trade unionists everywhere.

The major problem consists of the young workers already in the Army. Some are thoroughly disillusioned with military life and these can be persuaded to leave the Army, by legal means or otherwise. Others are unhappy about their role in N. Ireland but are adamant about remaining in the Army. These are the most significant soldiers because although they will remain in the Army they are amenable to the right kind of reformist approaches. Agitation around soldiers' rights, the formation of a soldiers' union, etc., would serve to strengthen the links between rank-and-file soldiers and the trade union movement. Military training and propaganda do everything possible to cut off a soldier from his working-class roots. We must urgently reinforce the links that exist -- and build bridges where none exist. The success of revolutionary social change in Britain depends upon it.

Terry Phillips

DON'T EXPECT JUSTICE!

OUR PRESENT SOCIETY is full of examples of the perverted sense of value it places on the monetary return people get for their labour. Some of the hardest fought industrial struggles have been those which involved workers whose work by its very nature either was very useful or performed an indispensable service to the community. The coalminers, dustmen and hospital workers spring to mind.

However, no worker should expect justice under the present capitalist system. Governments are always coming up with different schemes to create the impression that they are concerned with the whole community but their priorities will always ensure the continual rule of capital and the exploitation by those who own and control of those who work for wages.

The government's Phase 3 and their Industrial Relations Act are examples of class legislation aimed at defending the interests of the powerful and privileged. The TUC has never seen itself as an organisation to oppose the government's policies. Mr. Murray, the new general secretary, has said that while prices are "shooting up" no power on earth including Congress House could stop people saying that they needed extra money to compensate for the increase in the cost of living. Mr. Murray wants prices pegged before the TUC is willing to co-operate with the government. But if the TUC has not co-operated one would hate to think of what would happen if they did. Instead of standing by any union that has taken on the government they have stood aside and watched them be defeated. This is why the lament of Mr. Bassett, general secretary of the General and Municipal Workers, that only half of the working population belong to unions, is so true. But Mr. Bassett's and his union's lack of militancy and its co-operation with employers are a prime example of why workers are reluctant to join a union. Mr. Bassett sees trade unionism as a well-paid career and a means of obtaining and keeping a Labour government in power.

Only the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and the Transport and General Workers Union have opposed the Industrial Relations Act. The latest sequestration from their funds of £100,000 was money loaned from the political fund to the Hebburn Urban Council. This loan could have helped a depressed area with badly needed funds and certainly could bring



I'D LOVE TO GIVE YOU WORK-
PEOPLE A WAGE RISE BUT THE
GOVERNMENT HAS TIED MY HANDS

far more benefit to working people than handing it over to the Labour Party. This again shows the sort of justice one can expect from the capitalist courts. The engineers' union must be applauded for their stand but it must be pointed out that although they are refusing to co-operate with the Industrial Relations Court the executive are reluctant to promote industrial action against the Act. The one-day strike for November 5 is but a token and will have little or no effect on managements or the government.

The unions are organisations which are supposed to defend the interests of their members and obtain higher wages and better conditions for them. The unofficial strike of Glasgow firemen is another example of workers who have lost confidence in their elected leaders and have taken action for themselves. With men taking home £20.50 for a 48 hour week working in a city which is the most prone to fires in the country, it is only surprising that they had not come out on strike before. No doubt the very nature of the job has kept them at work but this false responsibility has not been respected by the Glasgow Corporation who have moved in troops to replace the firemen. Support from other areas of the country is being given in the form of work-to-rule and refusing to work more than the statutory eight hours a week overtime. Some fire stations are answering only emergency calls.

Such is the treatment given to workers who perform an essential service to the community. It shows how distorted values are under the present system. Firemen who risk their lives are given a mere pittance while others who contribute nothing get tens of thousands a year.

If the present dispute goes on we will be treated to stories of how their action will risk and cause people's death. But their action has been a last resort response to



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The Deputy Director of the Consumers' Association says you may save 15% by 'shopping around' for food (as advocated by members of the Government) but that it took time. "I think," said the director, "it's too much to expect people to work out for themselves. I think it's stupid and futile to suggest people should go shopping around for food. I just don't think it's practical."

the Corporation's pay offer of £2. The firemen's £5 demand and their action should get every support from other workers. Workers and their families should not suffer because of the type of work they do and the misguided attitude sometimes taken by those who perform such essential services to the community. P.T.

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The Chief Engineer in Britain for Autoexport, importer of Moscovitch (sic) cars criticised by the Consumers' Association for extensive faults, says "There can be no question that this is a type of political blackmail." Moscovitch dealers are to be allowed £6.50 by the importers to carry out modifications.

BRIXTON PLOT THICKENS

FREEDOM readers will already be aware of the brutal assaults on prisoners at Brixton Prison following the escape attempt on May 30th and the "special court" held inside the prison to deal with various charges including "riotous assembly" brought against the prisoners. (See FREEDOM October 20th). Since then the plot has thickened even further.

As the special court opened inside Brixton Prison last Friday (October 26th) the police were busy "discovering" a stolen car containing a "gun" and a "bomb" near the prison. The "gun" consisted of no more than a gas pistol and the "bomb" consisted of a fused 5 inch long container of lighter fuel. However, this was enough for the press to hide the significance of the court proceedings behind sensational headlines like the Daily Telegraph's "Arms found in car as prison court hearing starts". The main excuse used by the Home Office for holding the court proceedings inside the prison - rather than at a normal court - was on security grounds and the sensational headlines were a convenient justification for this ominous legal precedent.

As the court hearing started some prisoners on remand attempted to stage a demonstration of solidarity. Inside the court one of the defence lawyers asked for the hearing to be held at Camberwell court but this was refused. After repeated angry protests from the accused the hearing was adjourned until November 5th. On hearing this one prisoner shouted: "It's all right for you to adjourn, but we've got to get back down there and get brutalised by those pigs you call prison officers. You make me fucking sick."

Significant for anarchists is the formation of the Prisoners' Wives Union which aims to act as a medium for mutual aid and solidarity for prisoners' wives and their families. They have produced their first pamphlet Alone Despair -- Together Hope which can be obtained from Margaret Tuttle, c/o 24 The Avenue, London, N. 10 price 5p plus postage. The pamphlet outlines the economic, emotional and sexual stresses placed on prisoners and their wives. The union makes a number of demands including conjugal rights, home visits for prisoners, trade union rates of pay for prison work, uncensored letters, etc. Read and sell the pamphlet. If you feel able to help in the work of the union contact Margaret Tuttle at 01-883-2001.

A picket was mounted outside the prison on Friday and Saturday by members of PROP, the

Letter

"CONFRONTING FASCISM"

Comrades,

I found that the two letters in FREEDOM No. 43 on 'Confronting Fascism' filled me with both despair and hope. There was Bob Borsley's letter - sensible and realistic. And there was Terry Phillips's which produced the opposite reaction in me.

T.P. tries to make out that there is no serious crisis of capitalism in existence at the moment. I am not saying that the collapse of capitalism is inevitable like the S.L.L. (although a drastic change in it to a more corporate form is inevitable at the very least), T.P., but to say that there is no serious crisis is just not true. It would need a full article at least to go into this. From 1964 to 1970 the share of profits in the national income was halved, and the capitalist ruling class's actions since then have been devoted to restoring profitability at the expense of the working class. Only the signs are that they can't succeed in the long run. No serious crisis, T.P.? I will not expand upon this, for the reason stated above. I will though, recommend a Penguin book called 'British Capitalism, Workers and the Profits Squeeze' by A. Glyn and Bob Sutcliffe, to T.P. and anyone else who thinks capitalism is in fine shape. Also, Mandel's article 'Crisis Draws Near' in 'Red Weekly', 21st Sept. 1973 is very good for showing the mess the bosses are in. Please think again T.P. --hard.

As for the 'exaggerated' strength of the National Front. I never said they were as yet a mass organisation like, say, Mussolini's Fascists. But their ideas, not only the size of this or that demonstration of theirs, are spreading. And if we follow the policy laid down by T.P. in FREEDOM No. 41 the chances of the Front gaining mass support, or just their ideas gaining credence in an-

...continued on Page 5

Prisoners' Wives Union and several anarchists. Leaflets were distributed to people visiting the prison to explain the situation in the prison. Despite widespread advance publicity the politicians of the "revolutionary" Left were conspicuous by their absence. PROP and PWU have appealed for support from all groups and individuals for a picket outside the prison when the hearing resumes on November 5th. If you can make it be there, if only for an hour or so.

Terry Phillips

BAKUNIN AND NECHAEV

PART I

THE NECHAEV period of Bakunin's career (1869-1872) was relatively brief. Yet, apart from being a fascinating psychological drama, it forms an important chapter in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, posing fundamental questions of revolutionary tactics and revolutionary morality with which radicals have continued to grapple to this day. It was also a contributing factor in Bakunin's conflict with Marx and his expulsion from the First International. And it led Bakunin to a reexamination of his revolutionary doctrines and a reassertion of his libertarian principles as against what he called the "Jesuitism" and "Machiavellianism" of his young disciple. We are therefore indebted to Arthur Lehning and Michael Confino for making available the relevant materials to permit a reappraisal of the whole Nechaev affair. (Other recent works, such as René Cannac's Netchaiev: du nihilisme au terrorisme (1961) and Jean Barroué's Bakounine et Netchaiev (1971), add little to our knowledge of the subject and need not detain us here.)

Arthur Lehning's volume, Michel Bakounine et ses relations avec Sergej Nečaev, 1870-1872 (Leiden, Brill, 1971), presents a careful documentary record of the relations between Bakunin and Nechaev from 1870 to 1872, as well as of Nechaev's pursuit by the Swiss and tsarist police and his ultimate extradition to Russia. A further instalment in the monumental Archives Bakounine series, it is distinguished by its lavish production (with interesting portraits of Bakunin and Nechaev as well as facsimiles of documents) and meticulous editing, with a solid introduction and copious notes by Lehning, the foremost authority on Bakunin. With the forthcoming publication of a companion volume covering 1869, it will constitute the fullest and most reliable source on the subject, indispensable for libraries and specialists alike.

The smaller and less expensive volume of Michael Confino, Violence dans la violence: le débat Bakounine-Nečaev (Paris, Maspero, 1973), is intended for a wider audience, though it contains nearly all of the most important documents (among them a remarkable letter on the Ivanov murder from German Lopatin to Natalie Herzen that is not in the present Lehning volume) as well as a stimulating introduction that provides a reconstruction of the Nechaev affair, its causes, progress, and consequences. The book's somewhat melodramatic title, Violence in the Violence, was inspired by Albert Camus's observation that with Nechaev violence was justified against one's own revolutionary comrades; but it also carries echoes of Revolution in the Revolution?, a manual of insurrection by Régis Debray, who has himself been described as a "Nechaev in the Andes" by the American sociologist Lewis Coser. Confino, who is Professor of History at Tel Aviv University, writes with both verve and intelligence, and his book is marred only by the lack of an index and by its petty criticisms of Lehning's work, which are unworthy of a scholar of Confino's calibre.

Neither volume, surprisingly, contains the diary of Natalie Herzen, with its revealing portrait of Nechaev, which was first published by Confino in 1969 in the Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique with a subsequent English translation in Encounter. One hopes that it will be included in the English edition of Confino's book that is now in preparation. Nevertheless, both works shed valuable light on what Franco Venturi has described as "the complex and obscure" relationship between Bakunin and Nechaev, and we are very fortunate to have them at our disposal.

* * * *

SERGEI GENNADIEVICH NECHAEV was born on September 20, 1847 at Ivanovo, a growing textile town north-east of Moscow that was beginning to acquire the reputation of a "Russian Manchester". His father was a sign painter, his mother a seamstress, and both were of serf origin, so that Nechaev was one of the first prominent Russian radicals with a thoroughly plebeian background. He was "not a product of our world," wrote Vera Zasulich in her memoirs, but was "a stranger among us." As a son of the people, however, he was all the more impressive in the eyes of his fellow revolutionists, repentant noblemen who yearned to repay their debt to the lower classes. An acquaintance called Nechaev "a real revolutionist, a peasant who has preserved all the serf's hatred against his masters," a hatred that was to be turned even against his own comrades, with their aristocratic birth and education.

In April 1866, at the age of 17, Nechaev left Ivanovo for St. Petersburg, where he taught for a time in a parochial school. In the fall of 1868 he enrolled in the university as a non-matriculating student, and he joined a group of young revolutionaries that included such future anarchists as Z. K. Ralli, V. N. Cherkezov, and F. V. Volkhovsky, as well as such near anarchists or libertarian socialists as Mark Natanson (Alexander Berkman's uncle), German Lopatin, and L. B. Goldenberg. Though Nechaev as yet knew no French, he attended discussions of Buonarroti's history of Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals, a book which helped shape a whole generation of Russian rebels, and his dreams were soon dominated by secret societies and the conspiratorial life. He found himself irresistibly drawn to Jacobinism and Blanquism, and when he later visited Ralli in Switzerland, he was carrying books by Rousseau and Robespierre, and his authoritarian tendencies, his pretence of knowing "the general will" and of "forcing the people to be free", were already well developed.

Nechaev was also attracted by the Jacobin tradition within the Russian revolutionary movement itself, a tradition dating back to the Decembrist leader Pestel in the 1820s and to Nikolai Speshnev in the 1840s, who emphasized the need for conspiratorial tactics and a revolutionary dictatorship based, as he put it, on the "Jesuit" model, a suggestion which led the Fourierist Mikhail Petrashevsky to declare: "I would be the first to raise my hand against the dictator." In 1862, four years before Nechaev's arrival in St. Petersburg, a clandestine leaflet called Young Russia was issued by Peter Zaichnevsky, a leading Russian Jacobin who was influenced by Robespierre and Babeuf and by Mazzini and the Italian Carbonari (the title of his leaflet is derived from Young Italy) with their methods of revolutionary conspiracy. His ultimate goal, however, was inspired by the decentralized socialism of Proudhon, and when the police came to arrest him they found an unfinished Russian translation of What Is Property? among his papers.

In Young Russia Zaichnevsky called for a "bloody and pitiless" revolution on the model of Razin and Pugachev, and for the merciless annihilation of the tsarist family and its supporters: "We will cry 'To your axes' and then we will strike the imperial party without sparing our blows just as they do not spare theirs against us. We will destroy them in the squares, if the cowardly swine dare to go there. We will destroy them in their houses, in the narrow streets of the towns, in the broad avenues of the capital, and in the villages. Remember that, when this happens, anyone who is not with us is against us, and an enemy, and that every method is used to destroy an enemy." Herzen was

repelled by the ruthlessness and crude immoralism of the leaflet, and even Bakunin condemned its author for his "mad and really doctrinaire scorn for the people", yet Young Russia exerted a powerful influence among the youth of Nechaev's generation, the "men of the sixties", who were inspired by its defiant and uncompromising rhetoric.

Another source of inspiration was the character of Rakhmetov in Chernyshevsky's novel, What Is To Be Done?, which appeared in 1864. Rakhmetov was the literary prototype of the new revolutionary, a man possessed and living a pure ascetic life, subjecting himself to intense physical privations in preparation for his revolutionary role. To harden himself he eats raw meat and sleeps on a bed of nails. He has no personal life, no wife, no friends, no family ties that might deflect him from his purpose. He adopts a deliberately brusque manner of conversation and behaviour both to cut himself off from conventional society and to avoid wasting time on empty words and formalities. He uses his money not for personal needs but to help impoverished students and the revolutionary cause.

The figure of Rakhmetov gripped the imagination of young revolutionaries for decades to come (in 1892 Berkman used "Rakhmetov" as his cover name when he went to shoot Frick). During the mid-1860s Rakhmetov served as a model for the Ishutin Circle, whose members (including Kropotkin's future comrade, Varlaam Cherkezov, and Dmitri Karakozov, whose attempt on the tsar in 1866 was hailed by Nechaev as "the beginning of our sacred cause") renounced all personal pleasures and led rigorously ascetic lives, sleeping on floors, giving all their money to the cause, and devoting all their energies to the liberation of the people. They also exhibited a strong anti-intellectual bias, scorning the university for training "generals of culture" rather than helpers of the workers and peasants. Some even abandoned their studies and organized co-operatives. As one member remarked, "the masses are uneducated; therefore we have no right to an education. You don't need much learning to explain to the people that they are being cheated and robbed." Like Zaichnevsky, they rejected reforms or palliatives and despised the older generation of radicals, the "men of the forties" exemplified by Herzen and his circle, as impotent men who, for all their erudition and revolutionary phrases, were powerless to break with the old order or with their own aristocratic roots. They called, again like Zaichnevsky, for the extermination of the tsarist family in order to spark off a social upheaval, a Pugachev revolt which would bring the existing order to dust.

To carry out this task a small group called Hell was organized within the Ishutin Circle, an ascetic cadre of terrorists shrouded in secrecy and leading an anonymous underground existence. Every member of Hell considered himself a doomed man, cut off from normal society and dedicated entirely to the revolution. He must give up his friends, his family, his personal life, even his name in total self-effacement for the cause. In Ishutin's words (later to be echoed by Nechaev) he must "live with one single exclusive aim", the emancipation of the lower classes. To accomplish this end every means was permitted, including theft, blackmail, even murder, not to speak of fraud, deception, the denunciation of innocent people, or the infiltration of rival secret societies to gain control over them--all under strict revolutionary discipline, the violation of which carried a penalty of death. One member even considered poisoning his own father and giving his inheritance to the cause; and plans were made for robberies - later to be called "expropriations" - of commercial and government establishments. The main object, however, was the assassination of the tsar and his officials. The deed once done, the terrorist must carry out the ultimate gesture of self-annihilation by squeezing a pellet of fulmi-

nate of mercury between his teeth - Berkman tried to do this after his attempt on Frick - so that the police would never know his true identity. Ishutin, who was inspired by Orsini's attempt on Napoleon III, spread it about that Hell was merely the Russian section of a European-wide revolutionary organization whose purpose was to eliminate monarchs everywhere, thus pioneering a technique of mystification that Nechaev would develop into a fine art.

* * * *

Still another link in the chain of Russian Jacobinism, a chain which extended from Pestel to Lenin, was Peter Tkachev, who maintained that a successful revolution could be brought about only by a closely knit elite which "must have intellectual and moral power over the majority" and whose organization demanded "centralization, strict discipline, speed, decisiveness, and coordination of activities". Zaichnevsky, it is worth noting, became one of Tkachev's most faithful supporters, remaining faithful to his Jacobin principles to the end of his life: and in 1869 Nechaev collaborated with Tkachev in drafting A Programme of Revolutionary Action that called for an organization of "revolutionary prototypes" who would operate, like the Ishutin Circle, according to the principle that the revolutionary end justifies any and all means. "Those who join the organization," they wrote, "must give up every possession, occupation, or family tie, because families and occupations might distract members from their activities." Again like Ishutin, they envisioned a union of all European revolutionary organizations, with a centre in the West, and it is perhaps with this in mind that Nechaev went to Switzerland in 1869 when he first met Michael Bakunin.

Paul Avrich



TO BE CONTINUED...

Letter... 'Confronting Fascism' cont'd from P. 3

other guise (e.g. Tory party) will only be increased. While capitalism exists you can never call fascism 'impotent'. "It is only prudent to treat fascism as a serious threat at a time of persisting economic crisis" (B.B. No. 43). History does show us this, T.P.

As for calling me and my "ilk" armchair revolutionaries, this is hurtful shit. It has no foundation. Perhaps if T.P. comes to Norwich sometime, where we have incidentally picketed the Army Information Office, local military tattoo, etc. in recent times, he will realise this. And, T.P., I am not trying to belittle your work which is obviously very good in itself, or that of the comrade you say I would dismiss as 'a mere "liberal pacifist"'. What I am trying to do is to point out the real dangerousness of the policies for dealing with fascism set out by you in No. 41. It is no good waiting for the fascists to attack you before you resist - it could well be too late.

Fraternally,
Rupert Williams.

The Lump

It will be a pity if the recent article on 'THE LUMP' published by 'Solidarity Swansea'* has the effect of deterring Libertarian building workers from building up a rank and file movement within the existing trades union structure.

In my experience of the building industry, the lump merchant is a bloody-minded fly-by-night. He gets work by actually undercutting his fellow workers and then proceeds to earn a huge wage through rushing and skimping on simple operations, e.g. footings first floor, and then, when the tasks become harder he pulls-out to repeat the operation at another site, leaving the more stable worker to complete the harder tasks at a slower pace but still at the same low price. If the latter asks for a price increase, management points to the high wages paid to the 'Lumpers'.

Needless to say these 'Lumpers' take no notice of safety or any other regulations and as they stay on sites for only a short space of time, they accept shitty conditions without complaint. The final result being, for most of us that they depress both site conditions and wages.

I would also like to point out that until recently most corpblding (holes for proles?) was built to a far higher standard than houses in private sector, especially those built under 'Direct Labour' system, (mini-nationalisation?) where the closed shop tradition ensured good working conditions and a reasonable wage.

Management haven't been slow to take advantage of the opportunities which the 'Lump' has given them to break down site-organisation. They have introduced a more sophisticated version of it which is really divisive to organisation.

This takes the form of duplicating the work force. One half directly employed, the other either 'Lump' or sub-contract, sometimes both.

The various gangs are given identical tasks but work as separate entities. They have different wage structures and suffer different work-conditions. This situation creates suspicion and misunderstandings and promotes jealousies between the workers, a situation which obviously gives satisfaction to the bosses.

In the 1972 strike the rank and file forced U.C.A.T.T. to take a much harder line than the executive wished.

There is an obvious tendency for U.C.A.T.T. to become an 'Industrial Union' and we should note that it is the 'Industrial Unions' which protect their militants best as witnessed by the wartime miners strike. I believe that it is up to us to build a revolutionary rank and file organisation within UCATT so that in the future when we are the Union an injury to one will be an injury to all and debacles like the 'Shrewsbury 24' will not be allowed to happen.

Willie Allin

(reprinted from Industrial Network Bulletin)

*We have not seen the article mentioned, but the reply it evoked stands on its own as a comment on an injurious practice within the building industry.--Eds.

Letters

PROPOSED ANARCHIST CONFERENCE

We signed the original letter suggesting that an A.F.B. conference be held in Leicester sometime this year because it seems to us that the A.F.B. has (and always has had) a useful - perhaps important - function as a communication link between those of us who consider ourselves to be anarchists. We feel this despite the problems that beset previous conferences because we feel that such problems were rooted in conflicting concepts of the nature of such conferences - concepts which need not divide us now that those among us who feel that anarchists ought to work within forms of organisation that reflect our ideas of an anarchist society have successfully set up such organisations (e.g. O.R.A. and A.F.B.). By the very nature of the anarchist movement as a whole any kind of organisation which tries to bring the various currents together will have to eschew any attempt to lay down policy or in any other way to bind those who decide to get involved with such a communication link.

This might seem to be rather a limited and unambitious objective but it has the advantage of being realistic and, if it is accepted by those individuals and groups who decide to take part, will avoid the potential threat that some of us are bound to feel if any attempt is made to reach decisions, whether they involve matters of principle or tactics. The simple fact is that there are important differences among us on these issues.

It remains to decide whether, in the light of the above comments, it is worth bothering with such a loose and limited Federation (if, indeed, it deserves to be dignified with such a title - and avoid any implications that it represents any kind of decision-making body). We think that it is worth holding such conferences. Despite our differences - which will naturally be reflected in our differing tactics and form of organisation - we are more importantly united by our opposition to all forms of coercive authority and by our concepts of the liberation of people. No doubt we have started an argument already but we'd suggest that it's an argument worth pursuing and that one way of developing it is through participation in the occasional conference. We all like to pretend at times that our differences are so vast as to be irreconcilable - but, if that is the case, why do we spend so much time/energy/emotion writing to that unspeakable rag 'Freedom', and elsewhere, denying each other the right to consider ourselves true anarchists - because we are too violent; not violent enough; middle class; working class chauvinists; organised, unorganised; disorganised; and so on.

Unless we feel that social revolution is so near that we cannot spare an odd weekend away from our revolutionary activity in order to report on and debate the nature/validity/efficacy of such activity with our erstwhile comrades then we suggest that conferences are worth holding/attending. Who knows - it might result in greater understanding of each others' position and perhaps even contribute to making us a more effective movement.

DI + ART

CONFRONTING FASCISM --

Dear Comrades,

As so often when confronted with words used in FREEDOM in apparently incongruous contexts, I was driven to the dictionary on reading that Terry Phillips was at fault in expressing liberal sentiments. In the O.E.D. I read that liberal means: generous, open-handed, not sparing of, ample, abundant, not rigorous or literal, open-minded, candid, unprejudiced. Then light began to dawn, for it is lack of these characteristics that I have found anti-pathetic in too many anarchists.

Perhaps the anarchist movement has failed to capture the imagination of the British working class precisely because it is not sufficiently liberal.

Yours fraternally,
Geoffrey Barfoot.

SABOTAGE THE BOSSES

Sabotage as a tactic is considered by many workers to be alien to the tradition of British trade unionism but, in fact, various techniques of sabotage were first developed by trade unionists in Britain during the 1890's. They later crossed the Channel and in 1897 the Congress of the French General Confederation of Labour (the CGT) accepted and approved this "English invention" as a suitable tactic for French trade unionists. After this, sabotage spread to the rest of Europe and America.

However, trade unionists in Britain today concentrate on the conventional strike as the major weapon against employers. The idea of factory occupations which was neglected for many years has again been used, but sabotage is still neglected. Why? The advantages of sabotage are obvious :-

SABOTAGE can be aimed directly at the employer, not fellow-workers and consumers. Thus it is harder for the press to work up "public opinion" against the workers involved. Indeed, imaginative sabotage which provides a better service than usual to the consumer can gain popular support for the workers' cause. Imagine if bus conductors refused to take fares and allowed people to travel free

SABOTAGE can be used to put machinery out of action temporarily thus making a strike scab-proof. It only requires the removal of a small but vital part of the machine. If there is any legal risk involved a few militants can take the initiative in carrying out an action which their fellow-workers would support but would be too timid to perform.

SABOTAGE can be used to help other groups of workers and the poorly-paid. Workers at a Canadian salmon-canning factory devised an ingenious but simple form of sabotage : they switched labels on the cheapest and most expensive brands of salmon. The result was that the poor people who purchased the cheap salmon had a pleasant surprise, and the factory-owner was inundated with angry complaints from the wealthy about the poor quality of the expensive salmon !

The opportunity for developing sabotage tactics varies from industry to industry. Think about the possibilities in your work-place and discuss them at union meetings. We don't have to fight according to the bosses' and politicians' rules.

USE SABOTAGE -- AND WIN !

Published by Corby Anarchists, 7 Cresswell Walk, Corby, Northants.

In Brief

100 residents who took part in an anti-juggernaut demonstration at Aldridge, Staffordshire, appeared in court, the majority charged with causing obstruction with their cars.

Mr. Geoffrey Martin, dismissed director of 'Shelter', has rejected the offer of a £5,000 'golden handshake'.

More than twenty New York policemen caught taking bribes over the past two years have been persuaded by investigators to gather evidence against fellow officers doing the same thing, in the hope of receiving lenient treatment. As a result criminal or departmental charges have been brought against 130 policemen.

Only 20% of Frenchmen believe there is life after death, says a French weekly. Another 30% believe there is something but are not sure what, but 40% believe there is nothing after death.

The Daily Telegraph reports the death of Sir Roger Henry Hollis, aged 67, "who was said to have been head of M.I.5 (Military Intelligence) from about 1956 to 1963". He retired after the Profumo affair.

Rebel Councillors at Clay Cross who are already defying the Government by refusing to increase rents, intend to ignore a warning from the Pay Board to cut a wage rise given to their 94 manual workers.

Sonia McKay, aged 26, has been sacked from her £21-a-week job as a machine operator with the British Domestic Appliance Co. of Peterborough because her academic qualifications (a Cambridge law degree) are too good.

Dr. Bridget Dugdale was given a two-year suspended sentence for her part in an £80,000 art robbery at her parents' home. Her fellow civil rights worker involved in the robbery was given six years. Dr. Dugdale's comment was "class justice".

Sancho Panza

The Law Grinds On

LIVERPOOL COUNTRY COURT sent out letters on behalf of Kirkby Council ordering tenants on Tower Hill (who have been on total rent strike since the implementation of the Housing Finance Act in October 1972) to appear in court on 22nd October (see FREEDOM 20th October) and warning that any tenant failing to appear in court would face imprisonment for contempt of court. Out of all the tenants who were due to appear at court only two appeared and agreed to start paying their rent plus £1 per week off their arrears. The tenants who refused to appear at court are still at liberty and are still on rent strike. Two other tenants appeared at the court hyst to act as observers and to report back to the other tenants on Tower Hill immediately the court took any decisions against them. At our weekly meeting on Tuesday (23rd October) the meeting was told that the registrar, a Mr. Bryson, asked the two observers if they would have an interview with him in his office. When the two tenants went into Bryson's office it seems that he went to great lengths to assure the tenants that the court was not for one side or the other, that it was a neutral body and would listen to the Tower Hill tenants' case with sympathy if they decided to come to court. It was also reported to the meeting that the registrar went out of his way to point out that he would not be taking any action against any tenant who did not appear in court, this, he explained, was because he was basically a decent chap and he would not like to lock up any tenants for being on rent strike. When the two tenants pointed out the facts of the Housing Finance Act and why the Tower Hill tenants were on rent strike, the registrar said, "I am not interested in political speeches. I am only interested in recovering the rent arrears for Kirkby Council " and ordered the two tenants out of his office. So much for a neutral body.

Anyway, the outcome of the whole thing is that the court is going to arrange another date for court appearances later on. The feeling of the Tower Hill tenants is that the court is scared to jail anyone in case they are faced with the same situation that they were confronted with when the courts jailed the five dockers last year.

A correspondent

NIXON...continued from Page 1

of the world from disaster he was disappointed. He received some congratulations for his handling of the affair - notably from Edward Kennedy, a firm opponent. Also, there is much criticism in the USA of the failure of NATO to function as the United States' gun-dog or lap-dog. This presages the further isolation of the United States towards Kissinger's ideas of macht-politik and away from NATO.

Nevertheless whatever the motive for this extraordinary threat of war between the great powers, it has not served what may have been its purpose, to take the heat off Nixon about Watergate. The capacity of Watergate to bore everybody to tears is dangerously near, and as our American contemporary The Match (October issue) said, Watergate is a ruling class affair and "politics and backstabbing go together". To be surprised or shocked by the constantly unfolding revelations betrays a naivety which is not shared by anarchists.

However, the latest twist of this sordid narrative and its involvement in the Middle East war, and the possible spreading into a global war have raised again a question which now and again arises -- particularly with anarchists. Are our rulers criminal lunatics or, in this specific case, is Richard Nixon mad?

It must be said that the wanton intent to plunge the whole world into a nuclear war (although never actually envisaged) to take the mind of the public off a personal scandal and the likelihood of impeachment does seem near insanity. (It may be that this interpretation, in which we are not alone, is insane) It is possible that a man so consumed with pride and ambition, such as Richard Nixon has shown himself throughout his shifty career, has taken so many buffetings lately that his mind is beginning to crack and he is unable to distinguish between his own personal fate and that of the nation he rules as President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

The stock figure of a crazy man was the man who believed he was Napoleon; but a more frightening figure was Napoleon himself. The personality of Napoleon was reasonable enough but the framework in which he operated was crazy in itself. There is a poem by an English poet of a soliloquy by Napoleon which ends on Napoleon looking at a devastated Moscow from his they are retreating and saying, "Soldiers, this solitude/Is I."

So with Richard Nixon. It is possible that his problem is proving either (a) that he is a peace-loving Quaker or (b) that he is not. Either way America is the loser.

Shakespeare's Hamlet (who had difficulty with proving his sanity) once spoke of great men Witness, this army of such mass and charge, Led by a delicate and tender prince; Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed makes mouths at the invisible event. Exposing what is mortal and unsure, to all that fortune, death and danger dare. Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great is, not to stir without great argument. But greatly to find quarrel in a straw/When honour's at the stake". The quarrel in the straw was almost broached last week.

Richard Nixon may not be mad. But as long as he, or any other man, has the concentrated power for death and destruction, the lunatics have figuratively taken over the asylum and we are all equally mad for believing in such lunatic physicians.

Jack Robinson

PRESS FUND

Contributions 18-24 October

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HALF MOON THEATRE Alie St., E.1. (phone 480 6465) current production GET OFF MY BACK! is an account of the East End's struggle for survival from 14th Century to the current battle with the developers at St. Katherine's Dock. Evenings 7.30, until 11th Nov., Sunday included. Adults 50p, children 30p and they say "brink a drink".

Can anyone offer a tape of the 'Angry Brigade' TV programme, size 1 7/8" or 3 1/4" ips 2 or 4 track up to 5 1/4" reel? R. W. Aldridge, 142 Corporation Road, Grangetown, Cardiff.

A LIMITED SUPPLY of photo-copies of the very first issue of FREEDOM - October 1886 - now available at Freedom Bookshop. Price "at least" 20p inc. post.

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Believing that GUY FAWKES was right, some Camden residents are going to burn the effigy of the Houses of Parliament in a bonfire in the People's Park in Prince of Wales Crescent, Camden, NW5, on Monday 5th November. All those wishing to take part please come to the Park at 7.30 in the evening

AFB Conference will be held at Leicester University television room of the Percy Gee building on Saturday & Sunday 24 & 25 November. Those interested please write Black Flag Bookshop, 1 Wilne Street Leicester.

CORBY ANARCHISTS. Discussion meeting first Friday in every month at 7 Cresswell Walk at 7.30 p.m.

LIVERPOOL ASA contact May Stone, C.32 Summerfield, Tower Hill, Kirkby, near Liverpool.

LONDON ASA for details of meetings phone 226-0817. Black & Red Outlook by post 5p + 4p from 3 Grange House, Highbury Grange, London, N. 5.

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