

## A UTOPIAN STATE ?

ANARCHY, STATE AND UTOPIA,  
by Robert Nozick (Basil Blackwell,  
£5.50).

IF THE STATE did not exist, would  
it be necessary to invent it? If so,  
what kind of State would it be ?

In answer to the individualist anarchist who repudiates the state because of its violation of the rights of the individual, Harvard's philosophy professor, Robert Nozick, argues that a minimal state is morally legitimate and necessary but that anything more than a minimal state cannot be justified, and that all present states are immoral because they infringe individual rights.

Professor Nozick's position is one of a truly Anglo-Saxon *laissez faire* libertarianism, which assumes that natural rights exist but which finds socialism as it is being practised both repugnant and punitive. However, the widespread notion that he has put forward a cogent argument against the anarchist is quite wrong and simply irrelevant, given that most anarchists do not believe a Lockean state of nature to be the only morally justifiable situation. In fact Nozick is not interested in examining the formulae put forward by the serious mainstream of the anarchist movement. He uses the stateless state-of-nature theory attributed to anarchism simply to demonstrate that by a natural evolutionary process (the Invisible Hand of classic liberal theory) the need for protection against injustice would lead to the rise of protective agencies (one is tempted to imagine Mafia-type "cosche") that would protect their clients against the clients of other agencies. From these - frequently conflicting - agencies would emerge a dominating agency or ultraminimal state whose moral obligation to protect the individual would lead, in turn, to the formation of a minimal state or state-like entity. This, however, would be "limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of controls". While it would and could not receive cooperation from unwilling individuals, could not impose edicts, taxes or wars, it would have the moral obligation to prevent or compensate for the violation of the individual's rights, including those of dependents who chose not to pay or were unable to pay an agency for protection!

Nozick's spirit and method are derived from Locke but his discussion is far more complex and sophisticated. He is also obviously enjoying himself and a streak of irony runs through the book. But parts of it are extremely arbitrary. A multitude of moral issues

are raised but left unanswered, while the bland supposition that capitalism does not necessarily perpetuate an unjust system of distribution ignores all its most glaring and unjustifiable inequalities. In fact, the most unsatisfactory sections are precisely those where Nozick argues against egalitarian entitlement theories (like Rawls' or Bernard Williams') according to which natural liberty does not take into account inequalities of social background, prior distinctions of wealth, etc., and that the more well-off can only be justified where they contribute to the well-being of the less well-off. For Nozick strict egalitarianism would have the effect of blocking individual choice, free will and responsibility for one's own actions and suppress natural talent (and "Why must differences between people be justified?"), but while this is a serious point Nozick makes no attempt to find a valid remedy for the obvious failings and abuses of capitalism but relies on a vague theory of distributive justice that, too vulnerably in this age of fierce competition and scarcity of resources, depends on a "proper generation of holdings" rectifying injustices where they exist.

The final position of the book, which proposes a libertarian model for Utopia, is more stimulating. At a time of increasing fear - at least in this country - about the approach of a fascist corporate state or potentially totalitarian symbiosis of government, industry and unions, Nozick's suggestion of a free society working by voluntary action, in which many differently organised and autonomous communities could put their notions into practice, is attractive and logical. (It would also solve the problem of forcing people to belong to a community they did not like!) In this libertarian and empirical framework no community would itself have to be *laissez faire* since "it could turn out that though they are permitted, there are no actually practising 'capitalist' institutions".

Nozick's premise is based on the conviction that a stable association, or community, must contain a "diversity of excellences and talents" but that "no one should attempt to decide a utopia unless he's recently read, for example, the works of Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Jane Austen, Rabelais and Dostoevski, to remind himself of how different people are." Thus "Visionaries and crackpots, maniacs and saints, monks and libertines, capitalists and communists and participatory democrats, proponents of phalanxes (Fourier), palaces of labor (Flora Tristan), villages of unity and cooperation (Owen), mutualist communities (Proudhon), time stores (Josiah Warren), Bruderhof, Kibbutzim. Kundalini yoga

ashrams and so forth, may all have their try at building their visions and setting an alluring example."

Nozick surmises there would be three broad types of association, the imperialistic, the missionary and the existential (which does not terribly mind if it is not universal). Conflict could be resolved, if not peaceably, through the adjudication of the minimal state. But in any case the problem now becomes one of federation and decentralisation in general and is left there.

The faults and difficulties of this book are many and phrases like "protective agency" and "minimal state" are ambiguous and can be misleading. (If, for instance, an anarchist were to replace the unashamedly competitive and specialised protective agency with a directly democratic community council or anarcho-syndicate with their different, more profoundly social and complex functions the Invisible Hand growth of the minimal state, with all its problems in keeping minimal, might not seem so inevitable, even if some form of centralised body were still to exist for purposes, say, of technical coordination).

Nevertheless, once one sees the irrelevancies of the argument against the anarchist's supposed state-of-nature ideal, this complicated and subtle philosophical attack on all dominant ideologies, with its belief that a better and freer organisation "itself tends to make people better and more ideal", is both amusing (if one has the time to unravel its intricacies) and worthy of serious consideration - if not acceptance - by anyone preoccupied with the question of freedom and concerned to loosen the pernicious hold of government and state on our society.

G. F.

### F.P. Publications

A B C of Anarchism, by Alexander Berkman 25p (post 8p) USA 80c.  
About Anarchism, by Nicolas Walter.

15p (post 5½p) USA 45c  
Anarchy, by Errico Malatesta, in a new translation from the Italian original. 25p (post 8p) USA 80c  
Bakunin and Nechaev, by Paul Avrich. 20p (post 8p) USA 70c  
Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism, by Rudolf Rocker. 20p (post 8p) USA 70c  
The State, Its Historic Role, by Peter Kropotkin. 20p (post 8p) USA 70c  
Lessons of the Spanish Revolution 1936-39, by Vernon Richards.  
Cloth £1.50 (post 24p) (\$4.25)  
Paper £0.75 (post 24p) (\$2.25)



# WHO PROFITS?

OUR EXCELLENT American contemporary, *The Match!*, features a department called 'Anarchist Anti-Defamation League' which is 'dedicated to protesting [against] slurs - (ignorant or otherwise) on Anarchism'. *Freedom* has been contemplating starting such a department but there is so much ignorant usage of the words "anarchy" and "anarchism" that we should have been swamped with material, and as for malicious or semi-informed interpretations of "anarchism" these are scarce and we should welcome such material.

In a perverse way one can take such slurs as a compliment or as a testimony that anarchism as a philosophy is making some impact. Therefore it was not surprising to find that readers of *The Match!* had discovered from *Granma*, the official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba (Feb. 2, 1975) an attack on anarchism, entitled "Who Profits from a 'revival' of anarchism?" It so happens that *Granma* is one of the many (mainly unreadable) publications from Communist countries such as North Korea, East Germany, Yugoslavia and Cuba which, unsolicited, litter the editorial desk and one was able to salvage this copy from the files. Comfort could be taken from the fact that a corresponding article on the same page is entitled "Who Profits from the 'critical theory' of Herbert Marcuse?"

The article attacking anarchism starts out with the usual Communist premise that the world is lining up into two camps with a shift in the balance of power in favour of socialism. This has led (says *Granma*) a group of bourgeois ideologists and sociologists, reformists and revisionists at the service of imperialism and 'the theorist of the so-called fourth international' such as -- and the paper inaccurately names Garcia Pradas, Herbert Read, Alex Comfort, A. Lefebvre and Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit/ 'of Germany' is gratuitously added -- to revive and publicise the anarchist ideology of Proudhon, Bakunin [and here comes the absolutely Freudian or deliberate misprint] and 'Erotkin'. One cannot, living in a glass house, blame a compositor in a foreign language for misprints, but this is obviously (as *Match* notes) to suppress even the correct name and carries overtones of the Puritanism which is the prevailing tone of most 'Communist' countries.

The author revives the attack by Marx and Engels on the vulnerable Proudhon, but wisely does not go into the more salutary conflict between Marx and Bakunin with its clear lessons for today on the dangers of the centralised state.

The article goes on "By reviving an-

archist ideology or the so-called 'Left Communism' the enemies of socialism seek to have one sector of the workers oppose the others, to pit the anti-imperialist proletarian sectors against the working class in general, young people against adults, and workers who are not members of the Communist Party against those who are. And they even claim that 'you can be a revolutionary and still have anti-communist positions'." (No source given.)

There is nothing fresh in these accusations. The article is in short an appeal not to rock the boat. To bolster up these accusations, as was inevitable, the author quotes from Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder* (1920). He wisely ignores *The State and Revolution* (1917).

There are wild passages on "Imperialist agents infiltrated in the ranks of the workers movement are used to promote anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist trends. In order to accomplish these objectives the imperialists frequently use politically and ideologically backward elements which they bribe [see Press Fund] and which the bourgeois press presents as 'genuine defenders of the proletariat'." [see *Daily Telegraph*] There is a further Leninist quote: "The anarchists have an inverted bourgeois concept of the world. They [sic] are individualist theories and their individualist ideal is absolutely contrary to socialism."

Then: "Anarchist ideology - historically defeated by Marxism-Leninism - is based on the following principles (1) Negation of the state (2) Negation of the Party of the working class and the dictatorship of the proletariat (3) Replacing the State by trade unions (4) The instruments of production must be the pro-

-perty of the producers and labor councils and must be run by the unions (5) Unlimited individual freedom, negation of all forms of authority (6) No subordination of the individual to the collective no discipline in the social, productive or service sectors (7) Subjectivism and voluntarism, as the basis for the anarchist philosophical concept of the world! (These principles, or the final one - the article is unclear - are attributed to A. Kosichev in *Marxism and Anarchism*.)

In a well-known Marxist tactic of 'guilt by association' or 'amalgamism', the author, Tony Fernandez, links Proudhon with Kautsky, Hilferding and Bernstein "who seek to negate the revolutionary processes, the class-struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the emancipation of the working class and all oppressed peoples everywhere." This cliché-ridden formula rounds off the attack.

\*

It would take too long and be superogatory to answer all this farrago of half-truths and lies. It is obviously impossible, even if it were desirable from their point of view, for official Communists - of any state - to understand the pluralist nature of anarchism with its anarcho-communist, anarcho-syndicalist and individualist strands. The ready substitution of 'trade unions' for syndicates' (a mistranslation?); the raising of the old bogey 'unlimited individual freedom'; the ignoring of 'Erotkin's' concept of mutual aid, co-operation, responsibility and self-discipline are points which come readily to mind.

It is more interesting to examine briefly the source from which such criticism comes -- Cuba. It was pointed out at the time that after Castro's achievement of power - with the aid of

continued on Page 3

## LITTLE LIBERTY...

LESS EQUALITY \* NO FRATERNITY

IN FREEDOM of 1st March we gave a brief account of the French Minister of the Interior, Michel Poniatowski's latest declaration on greater powers for the police. One of the ways in which these powers have taken concrete form is in the appearance on French boulevards of the by now notorious "anti-gang" brigade which last week broke into a Paris bar and beat up a group of Algerians, one of whom, a lawyer, was severely injured. The affair has excited a lot of protest, though hardly a murmur from official quarters. Prince Poniatowski's answer has been to state that the antigang's powers must be increased still further, but he has given assurances that its personnel will be "improved" and has reminded them not to be racist!

Three Tahitians have also been the victims of French justice and racialism, as two lawyers reminded readers of *Le Monde* the other week. In 1972 these Tahitians, with four of their friends, made a symbolic protest against the nuclear tests at Muratua (rather too close for comfort) by stealing 19 cases of unusable munitions, and thereby pouring ridicule on the so-called invulnerability of the French army. They were arrested and sentenced to five years' imprisonment, 22,000 francs fine, and ten years

exile!!

The lawyers protest that a sentence of such severity has never been passed in France itself, and certainly not for a symbolic act. Apart from this they were judged without a lawyer to defend them.

In June 1972 they managed to escape from their bamboo prison with the complicity of the Tahitian people. But they were quickly recaptured and sent to prison in France where "ill and shivering" say the lawyers, "they managed at last to contact us." But despite general surprise at the harshness of the sentence, the Tahitians were transferred from the prison of Fresnes to Les Baumettes, and it was decided that they must serve their punishment to the bitter end. In fact, not only were they not granted an amnesty when the new President was elected - which is the custom - but six months extra were added on to their sentence!

"Are we going to let them rot in their cell?" the lawyers ask, "these three men wounded through love of their land, ravaged by the moral and economic fallout of the bomb; these men devoted to the freedom of their people and to whom France has found no other answer but prison and banishment?"

G. F.



# A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE APES

IT HAS long been held that popular culture is the summation of human desires; that the vox pop is indeed the voice of the popular gods. On another level, so much popular culture is mass produced and packaged by teams of widely assorted experts that the collective result is the product of the collective unconscious of the producing group. Such is the variant nature of the compounded work and the role played by chance that the popular leftist myth of deliberately created consciously contrived opiates for the masses is impossible of fulfilment.

'But seeing what they'll unbribed do...' it isn't really necessary. The bulk of pop culture is artistically negligible; morally and ethically reprehensible; socially harmful or at best neutral; politically unconscious; commercially successful; skilful in craftsmanship and technique and widely acceptable.

Such is the fostered consumer-demand of the twenty-four day, seven days a week insatiable demand of the media of television, newspapers, periodicals, records and cassettes (not to mention the minor channels of cinema, theatre and books) that the demand is in danger of outstripping supply. Given the capitalistic competitive set-up of the media the constant aim of the producers is a block-buster, a best-seller or top-rating which will corner the market for an appreciable length of time and dominate channels of communication, at the same time perpetuating itself by its feedback of the book of the film of the play of the TV serial.

This has created what is known as a 'property' and the key production is tied in to all sorts of products (not confined to the media) which publicize and cash in on the current vogues. For example T-shirts, children's games, confectionary (there is a 'Kojack' lollipop). In doing this exploitation (their term) the publicists often remove the concept far away from any intellectual or artistic roots or qualities which the original property may have had.

Two television examples that spring to mind are the deplorable M.A.S.H. series based on the excellent film M.A.S.H. and a series based on 'Paper Moon'. A different and more widely exploited case (or cult) is Kung-Fu with wide repercussions - even including an English-based Maoist claim that Kung-Fu is a proletarian form of fighting!

A further example, worthy of more detailed examination, is the 'Planet of the Apes' series. At least two of the original films were scripted by Paul Dehn from the novel (or novels) of Pierre Boulle: 1968 'Planet of the Apes', 1970 'Beneath the Planet of the Apes', 1971 'Escape from the Planet of the Apes', 1972 'Conquest of the Planet of the Apes', 1973 'Battle of the Planet of the Apes', followed by a TV series which, true to pattern, has deteriorated. Inevitably they have produced their quota of games, T-shirts, a comic book, etc., which have exploited the 'Ape' market for all its worth.

An interview with Mark Lenard (Urko of CBS-TV 'Planet of the Apes' series) appeared in the March 22nd 'Planet' comic. To the interviewer's comment that the 'Planet' was one of the most popular magazines they'd ever published, they averaged (sic) three to four hundred letters a week, Lenard replied with disarming candour: "I am sure there are a lot of things...well, you know, they do have a tremendous potential-merchandising. They

expect that to be enormous." Interviewer: "I know. It's hard to say whether this is like the Kung Fu thing, which seem to last a year and then peter out, or whether 'Apes' will last." Lenard: "Well, I think it will depend on the series continuing. It will not be the same without the series. In the series 'Here Comes the Bride' there was somebody on it - a singer, Bobby Sherman - who had been popular before and then faded, but because of the series he became tremendously popular again for quite a while. I know that he wasn't making too much on the series, but it didn't make any difference; it was the thing that brought him the huge exposure that made him a... star." \* \* \*

The 'Apes' series is basically science fiction fantasy. The gimmick is a planet entirely colonized by 'apes' (i.e. chimpanzees and gorillas), the roles played by actors in superb 'ape' make-up which merges with their natural features and enables them a variety of near-human expression which is not usually attained by actors portraying animals.

The Dehn scripts ('Beneath' and 'Conquest') bear the imprint of their author, who was a known supporter of CND and wrote several impressive anti-bomb verses and the script of 'Ten Days to Noon'. It is not surprising that 'Beneath...' is severely critical of the folly of humans who have practically wiped themselves out by use of the atomic bomb. A few survivors have elevated the cobalt-bomb (which they possess) into a religious symbol, almost a god, and they are prepared to use it to wipe out the Apes who are invading through the 'forbidden zone'. The 'Apes' themselves are deeply divided into the warlike gorillas and the protesting, demonstrating, peace-loving chimpanzees. The social satire of warring mankind, the almost blasphemous canonization

WHO PROFITS? (continued from P. 2)  
libertarian guerillas - he set about getting rid of the libertarians, many of whom were imprisoned and others exiled. Castro moved towards Communist ideas with the help of Communists who had worked under Batista, the former dictator.

Under Castro, Cuba has moved along a familiar Communist path, financial dependence on the Soviet Union; encouragement of the worth-ethic and concentration on the sugar cash-crop; growth of puritanism, suppression of 'hippies' and persecution of homosexuals and a decline in civil liberties. This is no new discovery for anarchists. The London anarchists demonstrated at the Cuban Embassy against the regime nearly ten years ago. The same process as in Cuba took place in Soviet Russia, in Spain during the Civil War, in China, and will doubtless take place in 'liberated' Vietnam.

Wherever the Communists seize power and erect a State the 'bourgeois concept' (as they call it) of freedom is the first thing to go. It is undoubtedly the case that much social hardship is eliminated, health and education improved, in the 'Communist' states but any totalitarian state (or even social-democratic states with

(If the word may be permitted) of the cobalt-bomb and the final (but not quite) pessimistic end all show the committal and concern of at least one of the original authors.

The 1972 'Conquest' is based on the idea of slavery. The 'Apes' have been enslaved and trained to work for humans. A descendant of the original planet-apes (intelligent and speaking) leads a successful (?) revolt against the humans; he is counselled to moderation and mercy by (symbolic, this) a negro. Underneath it again, runs a vein of social comment and humanitarian feeling, but one guesses that the violent scenes of insurrection are dwelt upon for their own sake and are probably symptomatic of a decay in the original, almost Swiftian idea of a world inhabited by apes who, rightly, despise mankind.

Probably, judging from evidence in the comic, the TV series has suffered the same degrading fate. Strangely enough in the current (March 22) number of the Comic although there are scenes of the usual violence between man and ape (gorilla) it ends with a reconciliation between man and ape, having failed to connect punches. However, with the cartoonist's "Whokt I" of a stone hitting the ape's head and sundry "smuksh's" they are killed in a stone-battle between mutants (ape-men) and apes, with the sententious caption: "The forbidden zone; a dreadful place shunned by the living ever since all life was burned from its face in a hellish instant of searing war...a place now inimically populated again...permanently by war...permanently by indigenous residents spawned and mutated in that hellish instant to perpetuate the battleground of war. Circles they repeat themselves. Circles...they stink."

As long as the media are in the hands of those whose sole criteria of value are ratings, profit, "potential merchandizing", so long will we have the debasing of artistic, moral, ethical, social and political standards, and the absolute negation of all of any value that the artist has conceived.

J. R.

parliamentary majorities) can bring in such improvements yet the power-relationships are not changed.

Indeed, by virtue of the extent of the 'Communist' state's powers such power tends to corrupt. It is significant that among the late unlamented Josef Stalin's works is a criticism of anarchism. It is not listed in Tony Fernandez's bibliography.

Jack Robinson.

A GREAT number of the inhabitants of the cities will have to become agriculturists. Not in the same manner as the present peasants, who wear themselves out ploughing for a wage that barely provides them with sufficient food for the year, but by following the principles of intensive agriculture of the market gardeners, applied on a large scale by means of the best machinery that man has invented or can invent... They will organize cultivation on better principles and not in the future but at once, during the revolutionary struggles, for fear of being worsted by the enemy.

--Peter Kropotkin



NESTOR MAKHNO, the anarchist partisan leader, was among the most colourful and heroic figures of the Russian Revolution and Civil War. His movement in the Ukraine represents one of the few occasions in history where anarchists controlled a large territory for an extended period of time. For more than a year he was a greater power on the steppe than either Trotsky or Denikin. A born military leader, he fought simultaneously on several fronts, opposing Whites as well as Reds, Austrian invaders as well as Ukrainian nationalists, not to speak of countless bands of irregulars who crossed and recrossed the steppe in search of plunder and booty. According to Victor Serge, he was a "strategist of unsurpassed ability" whose peasant army possessed a "truly epic capacity for organization and battle". Emma Goldman called him "the most picturesque and vital figure brought to the fore by the Revolution in the South".

For all his importance, however, Makhno has been seriously neglected by historians. Existing accounts of his movement, with very few exceptions, consist of mixtures of fact and fiction, of hostile, sometimes vicious polemics, sensationalist journalism, or uncritical, romanticized portraits verging on hagiography. Perhaps it is inevitable that a glamorous and controversial figure of Makhno's stamp should lend himself to such treatment. Yet it is nonetheless deplorable. Professional scholars, moreover, have tended to rely on the early histories of Voline and Arshinov for their information, rather than examining the original sources. (This is true even for the most elementary data, so that David Footman, George Woodcock, and James Joll, repeating Voline's error, all give the year of Makhno's death as 1935 rather than 1934.)

It is true that the journals and manifestos of the Makhno movement are hard to come by, having been in great part lost or destroyed in the turmoil of the Civil War. It is true also that the relevant documents in Soviet archives remain closed to Western specialists. Nor, to my knowledge, have the archives of Voline (held by his sons in Paris) been made available to the scholar, though they are bound to include important materials. Yet, for all these limitations, the sources are nevertheless considerable and remain to be thoroughly tapped.

What do they include? To begin with, we have Makhno's personal memoirs through December 1918, published in a three-volume Russian edition in Paris between 1929 and 1937, the last two volumes edited with valuable prefaces and notes by Voline. Volume One was translated into French (Paris, 1929; reprinted in 1970) and also Italian (Ragusa, 1972); and a French translation of the remainder is now in preparation. In addition, eleven Makhnovist proclamations were preserved by Ugo Fedeli; a well-known Italian anarchist who obtained them in the 1920's during visits to Moscow, Berlin, and Paris, where he became personally acquainted with Makhno. These proclamations were published in the original Russian in the *International Review of Social History* in 1968 and are included in the new English edition of Arshinov discussed below. (Fedeli, incidentally, was himself the author of a short but useful study of the Makhno movement, *Dalla insurrezione dei contadini in Ucraina alla rivolta di Cronstadt*, published in Milan in 1950).

Further archival materials, which will be mentioned again later, are to be found in the Tcherikower Collection of YIVO (the Jewish Scientific Institute) in New York City. Moreover, Soviet histories and documentary collections, while invariably hostile and of limited worth, contain some useful information, as do recent articles on Makhno in Soviet academic journals, such as "The Makhno Movement and Its Downfall" by S. N. Semanova, which appeared in *Voprosy istorii* (Problems of History) in 1966. Beyond all this, additional documents and photographs no doubt remain in the hands of Makhno's surviving comrades in France and other Western countries. Furthermore, Michael Palij, a Ukrainian immigrant who is now a librarian in an American university, has produced an unpublished doctoral thesis on "The Partisan Movement of the Anarchist Nestor Makhno, 1918-1921" (University of Kansas, 1971), and another thesis has been in preparation for several years at the London School of Economics by Michael Malet, who published a bibliographical essay on Makhno in Number 21 of the *C.I.R.A. Bulletin* (Autumn 1970).

It is from such materials as these that the story of the Makhno movement will eventually be reconstructed, as well as from the scattered files of Makhnovist newspapers in Western libraries, interviews with surviving participants in the Insurgent Army and with people who knew Makhno in exile, the eyewitness histories of Arshinov and Voline, and the secondary accounts of the *Makhnovshchina* by David Footman, Max Nemad, and others.

Until now, however, there has been no careful and up-to-date study of Makhno based on the whole range of available sources. As a result, a number of nagging questions persist. Was Makhno a military dictator, as his enemies maintain? A "bandit and counter-revolutionary", as the Soviets describe him? A "primitive rebel", in Eric Hobsbawm's phrase? Was he an incurable drunkard? An anti-intellectual? An anti-Semite? A pogromist? How critical were his military efforts in saving the Revolution from the Whites? Did his unsophisticated equipment and tactics

# MAKHNO

doom him to defeat before a centralized professional army? How successful were his attempts to establish local self-management in the villages and towns of the Ukraine? What do we really know about him? How much is myth and fantasy, and how much is incontrovertible fact?

§

So far none of the books about Makhno provide wholly satisfying answers. The work that comes closest to doing so, Peter Arshinov's *History of the Makhnovist Movement*, was the first (and for a long time the only) full-length chronicle in any language. It has been the starting point for all other accounts. Later writers, including Nemad and Footman, have added little of substance to what Arshinov told us more than fifty years ago, and his book remains the best general history of the subject. How surprising, then, that we have had to wait so long for an English translation.

Arshinov was on intimate terms with Makhno long before the latter launched his movement in the Ukraine. They had been fellow inmates in the Butyrki prison in Moscow, after being convicted of separate terrorist acts in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution. While in jail, it was Arshinov who taught Makhno the elements of anarchist theory. Afterwards he became the head of the Cultural-Educational Section of Makhno's Insurgent Army and editor of its newspaper, *Put' k svobode* (The Road to Freedom). As a result, he was thoroughly familiar with the documents of the movement, many of which were subsequently lost.

Between battles Arshinov worked on his manuscript, which was destroyed four times, twice at the front and twice during searches. Each time it had to be rewritten from scratch, and it was finally completed in June 1921, a year before Arshinov's deportation by the Bolsheviks. The original Russian edition was published in Berlin in 1923 by the Group of Russian Anarchists in Germany with a valuable preface by Voline, who also translated the book into German, in which it was published the same year. (It has also appeared in French, Italian and Spanish.) Voline's thoughtful preface (included in the new English edition) presents an interesting biographical sketch of Arshinov as well as a cogent overall analysis of the *Makhnovshchina*.

Arshinov's book, as Voline points out, was written by a committed anarchist who was personally involved in the events that he recounts. Yet its interest reaches beyond the history of a single political group, for it throws considerable light on the Revolution and Civil War and the emergence of the Soviet dictatorship. The present English translation, by Lorraine and Fredy Perlman, is workmanlike if a trifle dry and literal. It is followed by a new appendix consisting of the eleven Makhno proclamations from the Ugo Fedeli Collection, translated from the Russian by Ann Allen. (The appendix to the Russian edition, a protest against Makhno's detention in Poland, has been omitted.) There is also a map of the Makhnovist region as well as six good illustrations, among them the handsome photograph of Makhno from which a widely distributed Anarchist Black Cross poster was made a few years ago. Unfortunately there is no index. Although the book leaves certain questions unanswered and suffers from an uncritical approach to its subject, it is a pioneering effort and should be read by anyone interested in the libertarian aspects of the Russian Revolution.

The recent biography by Victor Peters, the first book on Makhno in English, takes a completely different approach. It is the work of an American professor, the son of a Mennonite farmer from the Gulyai-Polye region and author of a previous book on the Hutterites that is one of the standard works on the subject. By comparison, however, his book on Makhno is disappointing. It is much too short to provide an adequate narrative and analysis, and it contains little that is new, apart from some anecdotal details obtained from correspondence and interviews with Ukrainian émigrés in North America and Western Europe. Peters, unaccountably, has neglected some of the most basic sources on Makhno, such as the journals and proclamations of his movement. On the other hand, his narrative is easy to follow (though the writing is undistinguished) and the book is worth reading even if it does not make a substantial contribution to scholarship, let alone provide the definitive biography of Makhno that we need.

The third book, by contrast, possesses the literary qualities of a novel or adventure story. Its author, Malcolm Menzies, writes in the clear and vivid style of a good popular biographer. He is more readable than either Peters or Arshinov, and his book deserves a wider audience than it has so far received. It is certainly worthy of publication in the original English from which the present French edition has been translated.



# AND HIS BIOGRAPHERS

It provides an interesting psychological portrait of Makhno, with fresh insights into his personality; and apart from some minor errors (that can easily be corrected) it is factually accurate. Moreover, it contains new material both on his youth in Gulyai-Polye and on his last years in Paris (Menziès has looked up Makhno's reminiscences in Sébastien Faure's journal *Le Libéraire*, as well as talking to everyone he could find in Paris who knew Makhno).

But Menziès's interpretations of Makhno's character do not always ring true. He exaggerates Makhno's peasant primitiveness, his jealousy and dislike of intellectuals, his despotism and lust for power and glory. Detailed research into the Russian and Ukrainian as well as Yiddish sources is essential to clarify these and other controversial aspects of Makhno's personality and career. Menziès's lack of these languages presents a serious handicap in this respect, though he has gone to the trouble of having some of the more important materials translated for him. His book, while it does contain new insights and information, makes no pretence of being an original work of scholarship. It lacks a proper bibliography and proper documentation. To a considerable extent it is a synthesis - an able and well-written synthesis - of Arshinov, Voline, Footman, and a few other works. For all its virtues, a longer and more exhaustive study, based on a thorough examination of the sources, is what is needed most at this time.

## §

What might a definitive biography of Makhno contain that has been inadequately dealt with in previous works? The present essay can provide only a few hints. In the first place, it would have to come to grips with the very question of Makhno's anarchism. According to Emma Goldman, Makhno's objective was to establish libertarian society in the south that would serve as a model for the whole of Russia. Interestingly enough, Trotsky once noted that he and Lenin had toyed with the idea of allotting a piece of territory to Makhno for this purpose, but the project foundered when fighting broke out between the anarchist guerrillas and the Bolshevik forces in the Ukraine. But was Makhno in fact a true anarchist or merely another "primitive rebel" from the southern frontier, harking back to Stenka Razin and Emelian Pugachev with their vision of Cossack federalism and rough-and-ready democracy? The answer is that he was both. Nor is there any contradiction, for the Cossack-peasant rebellions of the 17th and 18th centuries possessed a strong egalitarian and anti-statist character, their participants mounting an all-out attack upon the nobility and bureaucracy and regarding the state as an evil tyranny which trampled upon popular freedoms. Makhno's anarchism was entirely compatible with these sentiments and with peasant aspirations in general. The peasants wanted the land and then to be left alone by gentry, officials, tax-collectors, recruiting-sergeants, and all external agents of authority, replacing them with a society of "free toilers" who, as the villagers put it, would "set to work to the tune of free and joyous song".

In this sense, Makhno was the very incarnation of peasant anarchism, the partisan leader in closest touch with the most cherished hopes and feelings of the village. He was, in George Woodcock's description, "an anarchist Robin Hood", a familiar figure in other peasant and artisan societies, notably Spain and Italy, where anarchism also struck lasting roots and won a sizeable following. (In Mexico, too, he had his counterparts in Emiliano Zapata and Ricardo Flores Magón.) He was a modern Razin or Pugachev come to rescue the poor from their oppressors and to grant them land and liberty. As in the past, his movement arose in the southern borderlands and was directed against the wealthy and powerful. Makhno, wrote Alexander Berkman, "became the avenging angel of the lowly, and presently he was looked upon as the great liberator, whose coming had been prophesied by Pugachev in his dying moments".

Following the example of his predecessors, Makhno expropriated the landlords, removed the officials, established a Cossack-style "republic" in the steppe, and was revered by his followers as their *barko*, their good father. He called on the peasants to rise against the "golden epaulettes" of Wrangel and Denikin and to fight for free soviets and communes. At the same time he opposed the "Communists and commissars" just as Razin and Pugachev had opposed the "boyars and officials". The Bolsheviks, for their part, denounced him as a "bandit", the epithet with which Moscow had maligned its guerrilla opponents since the seventeenth century. Furthermore, the same legends arose about Makhno as about Razin and Pugachev. As his wife told Emma Goldman, "there grew up among the country folk the belief that Makhno was invincible because he had never been wounded during all the years of warfare in

spite of his practice of always personally leading every charge".

There was, however, an important difference. Unlike Razin and Pugachev, and unlike his contemporary "atamans" in the Ukraine, Makhno was motivated by a specific anarchist ideology. Throughout his life he proudly wore the anarchist label as a mark of his unmitigated opposition to authority. As early as 1906, as a lad of 17, he joined an Anarchist-Communist group in his native town of Gulyai-Polye. His understanding of anarchism matured during his nine years in Butyrki prison, under the tutelage of Peter Arshinov, and was further deepened by his contact with Voline, Aaron Baron, and other anarchist intellectuals who joined his movement during the Civil War. Of the older theorists, his main source of inspiration was Kropotkin, to whom he made a pilgrimage in 1918 after helping to distribute *The Conquest of Bread* in Moscow, an encounter movingly described in his memoirs. He also strongly admired Bakunin, and the stream of leaflets and proclamations which issued from his camp often bore a Bakuninist flavour.

Makhno's anarchism, however, was not confined to propaganda, important though this was to win new adherents. On the contrary, Makhno was a man of action who, even while preoccupied with military campaigns, sought to put his anarchist theories into practice. His first act on entering a town (after throwing open the prisons) was to dispel any impression that he had come to introduce a new form of political rule. Announcements were posted informing the local inhabitants that they were now free to organize their lives as they saw fit, that his Insurgent Army would not "dictate to them or order them to do anything". Free speech, press, and assembly were proclaimed, although Makhno would not countenance organizations that sought to impose political authority, and he therefore dissolved the Bolshevik revolutionary committees, instructing their members to "take up some honest trade".

Makhno's aim was to throw off domination of every type and to encourage economic and social self-determination. "It is up to the workers and peasants," said one of his proclamations in 1919, "to organize themselves and reach mutual understandings in all areas of their lives and in whatever manner they think right." With his active support, anarchistic communes were organized, each with about a dozen households totalling a hundred to three hundred members; and if few of the participants considered themselves outright anarchists, they nevertheless operated the communes on the basis of full equality and accepted Kropotkin's principle of mutual aid as their fundamental tenet. Regional congresses of peasants and workers allotted each commune tools and livestock confiscated from the nobility and as much land as its members were able to cultivate without hiring additional labour. That the first such commune should have been named in honour of Rosa Luxemburg, an anti-authoritarian Marxist and recent martyr in the German Revolution, is a reflection of Makhno's undogmatic approach to revolutionary theory and practice.

In his attempts to reconstruct society along libertarian lines, Makhno also encouraged experiments in workers' self-management whenever the occasion offered. For example, when the railway workers of Aleksandrovsk complained that they had not been paid for many weeks, he advised them to take control of the railroad and charge the users what seemed a fair price for their services. Such projects, however, were of limited success, though they call for a closer examination by historians. For Makhno found little time to implement his economic programmes. He was forever on the move. His army was a "republic on peasant-carts", as Voline described it, and "as always, the instability of the situation prevented positive work".

In the Ukraine in 1918/20, as in Spain in 1936/39, the libertarian experiment was conducted amid conditions of civil strife, economic dislocation, and political and military repression, and was thus unable to endure. But not for want of trying, nor from any lack of devotion to anarchism. Through all Makhno's campaigns a large black flag, the classic symbol of anarchy, floated at the head of his army, embroidered with the slogans "Liberty or Death" and "The Land to the Peasants, the Factories to the Workers". Makhno and his advisers even made plans to establish anarchist schools modelled on Ferrer's experiments in Spain, and would have carried them out had the situation permitted.

In one area, however, Makhno made significant compromises with his libertarian principles. As a military leader he was compelled to inaugurate a form of conscription in order to replenish his forces, and he is known on occasion to have imposed strict measures of military discipline,

Continued on Page 6



including summary executions. His violent tendencies, some maintain, were accentuated by bouts with alcohol. Voline emphasizes Makhno's drinking and carousing nature, and Victor Serge describes him as "boozing, swashbuckling, disorderly and idealistic". Hostile observers have even compared him to a Chinese warlord, insisting that his army was libertarian only in name. This, however, is not a true picture. For while military considerations inevitably clashed with Makhno's anarchist doctrines, his army was more popular both in organization and social composition than any other fighting force of his day.

By all accounts Makhno was a military leader of outstanding ability and courage. His achievement in organizing an army and conducting an effective and prolonged campaign is, apart from some of the successes of the Spanish anarchists in 1936/39, unique in the history of anarchism. He inherited a good deal of the Cossack tradition of independent military communities in the South and of their resentment of government encroachments. His guerrilla tactics of ambush and surprise were both a throwback to the Russian rebels of the past and an anticipation of the methods of combat lately employed in China, Cuba, and Vietnam. But how critical were his efforts in saving the Revolution from the Whites? Voline flatly asserts that "the honour of having annihilated the Denikinist counter-revolution in the autumn of 1919 belongs entirely to the Makhnovist Insurgent Army". David Footman writes more modestly that "there is some justification for the claim that Peregonovka was one of the decisive battles of the Civil War in the south". In any case, the importance of the battle is clearly beyond dispute.

Makhno, in short, was a thoroughgoing anarchist who practised what he preached in so far as conditions permitted. A down-to-earth peasant, he was not a man of words, not a phrase-maker or orator, but a lover of action who rejected metaphysical systems and abstract social theorizing. When he came to Moscow in June 1918, he was disturbed by the atmosphere of "paper revolution" among the anarchists as well as the Bolsheviks. Anarchist intellectuals like Borovoi, Roshchin, and Gordin struck him as men of books rather than deeds, mesmerized by their own words and lacking the will to fight for their ideals. Nevertheless, he respected them for their learning and idealism and later sought their assistance in teaching his peasant followers the fundamentals of anarchist doctrine.

Makhno's anti-intellectual streak was shared by his mentor Arshinov, a self-educated workman from the Ukraine like his pupil. Arshinov, however, went further. In his *History of the Makhnovist Movement* he not only criticizes the Bolsheviks as a new ruling class of intellectuals, a theory first put forward by Bakunin, developed by Machajski, and restated during the Revolution by Maximoff and other anarchist writers, but he expresses contempt for anarchist intellectuals as well, calling them mere theorists who never took affirmative action but who "slept through" events of unparalleled historical significance, abandoning the field to the authoritarians. This goes far to explain his *Organizational Platform of 1926*, which criticizes do-nothing intellectuals and calls for effective organization and action.

This brings us to the vexed question of Makhno's alleged anti-Semitism, which future biographers must subject to careful scrutiny. Charges of Jew-baiting and of anti-Jewish pogroms have come from every quarter, Left, Right and Centre. Without exception, however, they are based on hearsay, rumour, or intentional slander, and remain undocumented and unproved. The Soviet propaganda machine was at particular pains to malign Makhno as an ordinary bandit and pogromist. But after pains-taking research, Elias Tcherikower, an eminent Jewish historian and authority on anti-Semitism in the Ukraine, concludes that the number of anti-Jewish acts committed by the Makhnovists was "negligible" in comparison with those committed by other combatants in the Civil War, the Red Army not excepted.

To verify this, I recently examined several hundred photographs in the Tcherikower Collection (housed in the YIVO Library in New York) depicting anti-Jewish atrocities in the Ukraine during the Civil War. While a great many of them document acts perpetrated by the adherents of Denikin, Petliura, Grigoriev, and other self-styled "atamans", only one is labelled as having been the work of the Makhnovists, though even here neither Makhno himself nor any of his recognizable subordinates are to be seen, nor is there any indication that Makhno had authorized the raid or, indeed, that the band involved was in fact affiliated with his Insurgent Army.

On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence that Makhno did all in his power to counteract any anti-Semitic tendencies among his followers. Moreover, a considerable number of Jews took part in the Makhnovist movement. Some, like Voline and Baron, were intellectuals who served on the Cultural-Educational Commission, wrote his manifestos and edited his journals, but the great majority fought in the ranks of the Insurgent Army, either in special detachments of Jewish artillery or infantry or else within the regular partisan units, alongside peasants and workers of Ukrainian, Russian, and other national origin. Makhno personally con-

demned discrimination of any sort, and punishments for anti-Semitic acts were swift and severe: one troop commander was summarily shot after raiding a Jewish town, and a soldier met the same fate merely for displaying a poster with the stock anti-Semitic formula, "Beat the Jews, Save Russia!" Makhno denounced Ataman Grigoriev for his pogroms and had him shot. Had Makhno been guilty of the accusations against him, surely the Jewish anarchists in his camp would have broken with his movement and raised their voices in protest. The same is true of Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, and others who were in Russia at the time or of Sholem Schwartzbard, Voline, Ida Mett, Senya Fleshin, and Mollie Steiner in Paris during the 1920s. Far from criticizing Makhno as an anti-Semite, they defended him against the campaign of slander which persisted from all sides.

Finally, the last years of Makhno's life deserve fuller treatment than they have so far received from the historians. Of all the writers to date, Malcolm Menzies has provided the most satisfactory account of this period, yet even he has not told the full and dramatic story of Makhno's escape across the Dniester, his internment in Russia, his escape to Poland, his arrest, trial, and acquittal, his flight to Danzig, renewed imprisonment and final escape (aided by Alexander Berkman and other comrades in Europe), and his ultimate sanctuary in Paris, where he lived out the last ten years of his life in obscurity, poverty, and disease, an Antaeus cut off from the soil which might have replenished his strength. He had always hated the "poison" of big cities, cherishing the natural environment in which he was born. How ironic that he should be destined to end his days in a great foreign capital, working in an automobile factory, a restless consumptive for whom drink provided meagre relief.

Yet he never lost his passion for anarchism, never abandoned the movement to which he had dedicated his life. He attended anarchist meetings (frequenting the Jewish "Autodidact" Club -- strange behaviour for a pogromist!), defended the *Organizational Platform* of his old comrade Arshinov, and mingled with anarchists from all over the world, including a group of Chinese students and also Durruti and Ascaso, whom he regaled with his adventures in the Ukraine and offered his help when the moment for their own struggle should arrive. While death intervened to prevent this, it is of great interest that a number of veterans of his Insurgent Army did in fact go to fight in the Durruti column in 1936. How fitting, then, that the Spanish comrades should have provided financial assistance when Makhno lay mortally ill with tuberculosis.

Makhno's final moments are movingly imagined in Malcolm Menzies's book. In July 1934 Makhno, 44 years old, is lying at death's door in a Paris hospital. Overcome by fever, he lapses into semi-consciousness and dreams his last dream, a dream of his beloved countryside, of the open steppe covered with snow, crisp and white, a bright sun in an azure sky, and Nestor Ivanovich seated on his horse, moving in slow motion towards a cluster of mounted comrades waiting in the distance, who touch their caps in greeting at his approach. Time passes, the seasons change, spring arrives, *Germinal*, the rebirth of hope, a landscape of green, the smell of fresh earth, a murmuring stream, and a fleeting, all too fleeting, glimpse of freedom. And then eternal silence. Makhno's body was cremated and the ashes interred in the Père-Lachaise Cemetery, not far from the mass grave of the Paris Communards who were massacred there in 1871.

Paul Avrich.

#### WORKS REFERRED TO IN THIS ARTICLE:

- Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941* (London, 1963)  
 Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (London, 1925)  
 Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement (1918-1921)* (Detroit and Chicago, 1970)  
 Victor Peters, *Nestor Makhno: The Life of an Anarchist* (Winnipeg, 1970)  
 Malcolm Menzies, *Makhno: une épopée* (Paris, 1972)  
 Alexander Berkman, *The Bolshevik Myth* (New York, 1925)  
 Voline, *The Unknown Revolution, 1917-1921* (new edition, Detroit and Chicago, 1974)  
 Max Nomad, *Apostles of Revolution* (Boston, 1939)  
 David Footman, *Civil War in Russia* (London, 1961)  
 George Woodcock, *Anarchism* (Cleveland, 1962)

#### IN PREPARATION:

*The Spanish Collectives*, a complete translation of Gaston Leval's latest book *L'Espagne Libertaire* (publ. 1972), recording his observations and information gathered in Spain during the Revolution and Civil War 1936-39.



# If We Were Under Siege

A SUBSTANTIAL degree of self-sufficiency is something a politically and economically libertarian society, especially if under siege, would find eminently desirable and the ways in which it could be achieved deserve careful study.

The New Scientist's 19 March conference on the possibility of self-sufficiency in Britain was therefore to be welcomed even though participants seemed anxious to stress their adherence to the (somewhat obscure) high principles of international trade, as though a heavily trading nation were in itself something to rejoice over; while a Cambridge economist went out of his way to emphasise that he saw "no economic argument at all for recommending the voluntary adoption of a policy of maximal self-reliance".

There are, though, plenty of political, social and environmental ones (conservation of energy and avoidance of waste would be essential to greater self-sufficiency) and the conclusions of the conference were pleasantly optimistic. Among them were that self-sufficiency in food could be attained by reducing the pure beef herd to a third (good news for the anti-carniverous if not the strictly vegetarian) and increasing the

dairy herd for milk by 30 per cent; by releasing two million acres of permanent pasture for use of soft wheats for flour, etc.; by massive concentration on sugar beet factories, creameries, oil seed and potato processing plants, etc., and by increasing cereal crops. Organic refuse and effluents could be recycled by fermentation and other natural processes to produce both food resources (soya for animals!) and energy. Solar heat as well as wind, wave and tidal power could be better exploited while self-sufficiency in construction materials and in many chemical products would also be possible. In short, we might have to go without pâté de foie gras and escargots, ivory and leopard skins, the tea that is so cheaply and diligently provided for us by the starving Ceylonese, the sugar, the spice and all the things nice, but, say the scientists, it could be done even if, you will excuse us for saying so, we find it a rather silly sort of goal to aim at. . .

The strangest argument against self-sufficiency is the frequent one that it would be bad for international relations. Yet a brief look at history (not to mention recent squabbles over butter mountains and wine lakes and potential

genocide over dwindling natural resources) suffices to amply substantiate the opposite argument, apart from the greater moral freedom in international relations that it would allow.

Schumacher has already pointed out the absurdity of much of our present import-export activities and it is, for instance, a fact that live animals are deported from here as far as Egypt simply to be chopped up and sent back in tins. (By the way, it will be remembered that the export of live animals for slaughter was cynically resumed in January after a short ban to appease popular opinion that had been roused on the extreme brutality, and often, length, of journey conditions, when many perish en route; but it is of course a lucrative business and all contributes to the universal brotherhood of man!)

At any rate, although Dr. Walter Marshall, F.R.S., chief scientist at the Department of Energy and director of the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority's Harwell research establishment, may treat self-sufficiency for Britain as "a remote academic dream that I will not bother to think about", a few crackpot anarchists might well agree to differ, and think about it seriously in the context of a not so remote new society.

G. F.

OUR previous issue (29 March, p. 2 of first section) contained an article on squatting in London. People involved in the Corfield Road (East London) squat here give a fuller account of the incidents we reported, introduced with this brief outline of the background:

COUNCILS rather than private landlords figure in Tower Hamlets squatting, as the Greater London Council and Tower Hamlets Council have almost total responsibility for housing in the borough, where less than 20% of it is privately let - compared with more than one-half in other London boroughs. This means that as there is very little housing on the market at any price, people coming into the area are virtually forced to squat while waiting for council housing. The GLC is particularly vulnerable to squatting in other areas also, as most of their stock is concentrated in inner London - Islington, Hackney, Southwark, Lambeth - where housing is scarcest.

There is irony in the GLC's phrase "Smash-and-grab squatters", as council workmen and sub-contractors have needlessly smashed thousands of usable houses.

IN AUGUST, 1974, squatters from the "Faceless Homeless" organization moved into Sumner House in Bow (East London). They had been trying for months to persuade Tower Hamlets Council to give them one of the many near-empty blocks in the borough.

As soon as the council realized what was happening they sent in council workmen to smash up the remaining empty flats in the block. However some were saved and some repaired, so there are now over 50 flats

lived in by squatters.

In February the council took the Sumner House squatters to the High Court and got possession of 53 flats. The council's barrister had not been fully informed of the council's discussions with the Sumner House squatters, and in the confusion when evidence of this was produced, agreed that the council would (1) inform Sumner House well in advance of commencement of the rebuilding, (2) would not evict until the flats were needed for the work, and (3) would rehouse everybody in the best suitable accommodation (not hotels).

As the council have not yet got Department of the Environment planning permission to alter the structure of the building, and as the Department of the Environment is theoretically in favour of housing co-ops, there is some hope for the squat. Already much work has been done by the co-op. The council want to spend £ 645,800 on rebuilding (and their rebuilding budget has been slashed by over 40 per cent!).

This 'failure' in court, coupled with the occupation by squatters of flats in Corfield Street, alarmed and angered the all-Labour council. Faced with the prospect of people taking control of their own lives at great saving to their fellow ratepayers, the council lashed out. Councillor Beasley - leader of the council - said "We are very anxious about the problem of squatting". The majority of councillors in this chamber are Cockneys with hearts of gold. But we are not going to be taken for a ride. We have had enough of it, and we are bloody well not going to have any more." He

also said the council will always use the High Court rather than the County Court in future - despite the expense - and that they would press for a change in the law making squatting a criminal offence. Your friendly local Labour council sees eye to eye with the Tories yet again.

Beasley implied that squatters contributed to the housing problem - this in a borough with 8,000 on the rehousing list, many homeless not on it, and 3,000 houses empty!

## VANDALISM

The council followed up this statement with the actions against the Corfield squat.

Since January 1975 over 30 flats in a 90-flat block have been squatted. This block is one of four blocks (250 flats) in Corfield Street and the next street, Finis Street, that the council have been emptying over the last five years. As soon as the squatters moved in the council rushed through a demolition decision (February 11), and a £ 76,000 demolition contract with Squibbs & Davies, Ltd. Demolition on a block in Finis Street started with unprecedented speed, on February 17th.

About 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 19 February, over 25 demolition men descended on Corfield Street and began smashing up the flats on two staircases (20 flats) that hadn't been squatted yet, and all the next building (80 flats). A squatter who tried to 'phone the press was hauled out of the phonebox by three men. The Bethnal Green police station - 300 yards away - took an hour to send someone. Sinks, win-

Continued on Page 8

# SQUATTERS' OWN STORY



# Through the Anarchist Press

## ECOLOGY

THE February, 1975 issue of the American magazine *Liberation* (once edited by Paul Goodman) contains an important article by Murray Bookchin entitled: "Energy, 'Ecotechnology', and Ecology".

The main thrust of Bookchin's argument is directed against the tendency to envisage the use of 'alternative' technology on a massive scale as a possible way out of the energy/pollution crisis. In his view, the essential and radical content of alternative technology is its diversity and adaptability; the fact that very different techniques and mixes of techniques can be used to suit one particular situation; that the operation can be kept local and on a small scale so long as radical changes are made in the management of everyday life with power being returned to small units with "a direct grasp of a comprehensible ecotechnology".

The philosophical underpinning of this is the development of an "ecological sensibility" in opposition to the Promethean/Faustian spirit which has culminated in the present explosion of technology and growth for their own sakes. It is only by the development of this spirit that present-day "eco-freaks" will be able to prevent themselves from becoming obsessed with technique and thus vulnerable to incorporation in governmental agencies or multinational companies.

## THE MULTINATIONALS

*Crescita Politica*, the anarchist publishing house located in Florence, have recently added to their impressive list (which includes the first volume of Leonardo Bettini's massive "Bibliografia dell' Anarchismo") a discussion-document on the "restructuring of capitalism and the class struggle". This pamphlet, written (in Italian) by six named authors, traces the developments of the international politics of the super-powers, and of multinational corporations in the energy sector, in the post Second World War period. The same theme is taken up by an article in the February 1975 issue of *Front Libertaire* (the monthly of the French O.R.A.), entitled "the comedy of petrol or the manoeuvres of capital".

The growth of massive companies has, of course, been taking place within countries as well as internationally, principally as a result of large-scale state intervention and a further section of the *Crescita Politica* pamphlet deals with such developments in Italy in the past 30 years.

A complementary article appears in the March 1975 issue of *A-Rivista Anarchica*, dealing with the struggle between the potentates of state capitalism and private capitalism in Italy, not so much for profit as for power. The article is concerned with the rise of a new elite, which it calls the "technobureaucracy", who treat economics as

part of a power game. It is a salient characteristic of the protagonists of the article (entitled "Cefis, per esempio") such as Gianni Agnelli, Michele Sindona, Leonardo Pirelli, and Cefis himself, to treat their fellow human beings as so many units of production and consumption (one of the principal occupations of civil services these days seems to be the collection of such managerial statistics) in short, as objects.

## SADISM

And that trait is one indication of the sadistic tendency of our technological society, exposed by Erich Fromm in his book, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. As Mathilde Niel said in her long review of the book in *Le Monde Libertaire* of October 1974 (subsequently translated into Italian in *A-Rivista Anarchica*, December 1974): "...let's not forget that the destruction of the Jews by the Nazis was organised like a production line, with recovery of materials and recycling. 'Cybernetic man' is a kind of schizophrenic enclosed in a universe of objects, a thinking being cut off from affective reality, a man who does not experience beings and things affectively, with the heart, but

## SQUATTERS (continued from P. 7)

dows and lavatories were smashed, but the men left after about an hour.

After they left, forty squatters invaded the Tower Hamlets Council Housing Committee meeting that was going on at the time. The Committee denied any knowledge of the demolition gang's activities. Police arrived within minutes of being called this time. A lady councillor told squatters there wouldn't be such a problem if they didn't have so many babies, and advised them to go to a family planning clinic!

Another try by the demolition men was foiled the next day when three flats in the path of the wreckers were squatted. In the resulting confrontation, and with the press present, the police and council told the demolition men to stay out of the Corfield building.

Relative peace followed, broken by two fires which gutted empty flats in the Corfield squat. However, on March 3rd, the demolition men struck again. They were seen to pace out a distance and smash the water main with a bulldozer. The same day another fire was started. After repair of the main by the Water Board it was smashed again. This time the board told squatters to see the council about it. The council said they would consider the matter at a meeting. Squatters went to the High Court for a writ to order the council to supply water under the 1945 Water Act, but the judge refused to listen to the practical details -- he wanted a barrister type plea with exact quotes of the relevant laws.

By the next court opportunity -- March 18th -- the demolition firm had been forced by the council to repair the mains, although there was continued harassment, with concrete being poured over the main stopcock after it had been turned off.

Stepney Squatter.

In terms of efficiency and productivity."

## SERANTINI

The legalised violence of the state is the same in present-day Western democracies as it was in Nazi Germany, or in the totalitarian states (Hungary '56, the "cultural revolution" in China '67, which is now being revealed to have been a bloodbath), and the sadistic tendencies of the concentration camp guards are repeated by the Italian police today. We know about Pinelli, we know about the judiciary's treatment of Marini and Valpreda (Valpreda's book, *The Valpreda Papers* is to be published in an English translation by Gollancz in July, and Marini's poems, *Noi folli e giusti* will soon be published in Venice by Marsilio Editori), but a lesser known anarchist victim of the Italian police was Franco Serantini. On the 5th May 1972 he took part in a protest against the holding, in Pisa, of a neo-Fascist election meeting. In the course of breaking up the protest, ten policemen savagely beat up Serantini with the stocks & their guns. He was taken to the local police station, refused hospital treatment for his wounds, and died the next day of his injuries. He was only twenty and might quickly have been forgotten had it not been for Corrado Stajano, a left-wing journalist who has researched his life, and brought out a biography entitled *"Il sovversivo"* (The Subversive) which tells his story from an unhappy and lonely childhood to his discovery of a role in political action. There is an interview with Stajano in the March issue of *A-Rivista Anarchica*.

D. L. M.

**FREEDOM BOOKSHOP**  
84B Whitechapel High Street,  
Angel Alley, London, E. 1.

(Aldgate East underground station, Whitechapel Art Gallery exit and turn right - Angel Alley next to Wimpy Bar.)

Leonardo Bettini's *Bibliografia dell' Anarchismo: Vol. 1* Anarchist periodicals 1872-1971 (in Italian) £4.00 (post 46p)

§ A. Skirda (ed.): *Les Anarchistes Russes, Les Soviets et l'Autogestion. Textes de Rocker, Archinov, Valevsky, Yartchouk et Makhno.* £0.95 (9½p)

§ Rudolf Rocker: *Les Soviets trahis par les Bolcheviks (avec Victor Serge: Le Destin de Boris Pilniak, réponse à Leon Trotsky).* £1.25 (9½p)

## LIMITED NUMBER ONLY

§ Louise Michel: *La Commune: Histoire et Souvenirs. Vol. 2 only.* £0.75 (11p)

§ Gino Cerrito: *Il ruolo della organizzazione anarchica.* £1.95 (24p)

§ Umberto Postiglione: *Scritti sociali. Vol. 1* £1.50 (18p)

§ *Libertare Blätter* #8. Swiss anarchist mag. £0.20 (9½p)

SEND FOR OUR BOOKLIST (SAE please) or come and see us: -

Bookshop open: Tues.-Fri. 2-6 pm  
(Thursdays to 8 pm)  
Saturdays 10 am - 6pm.