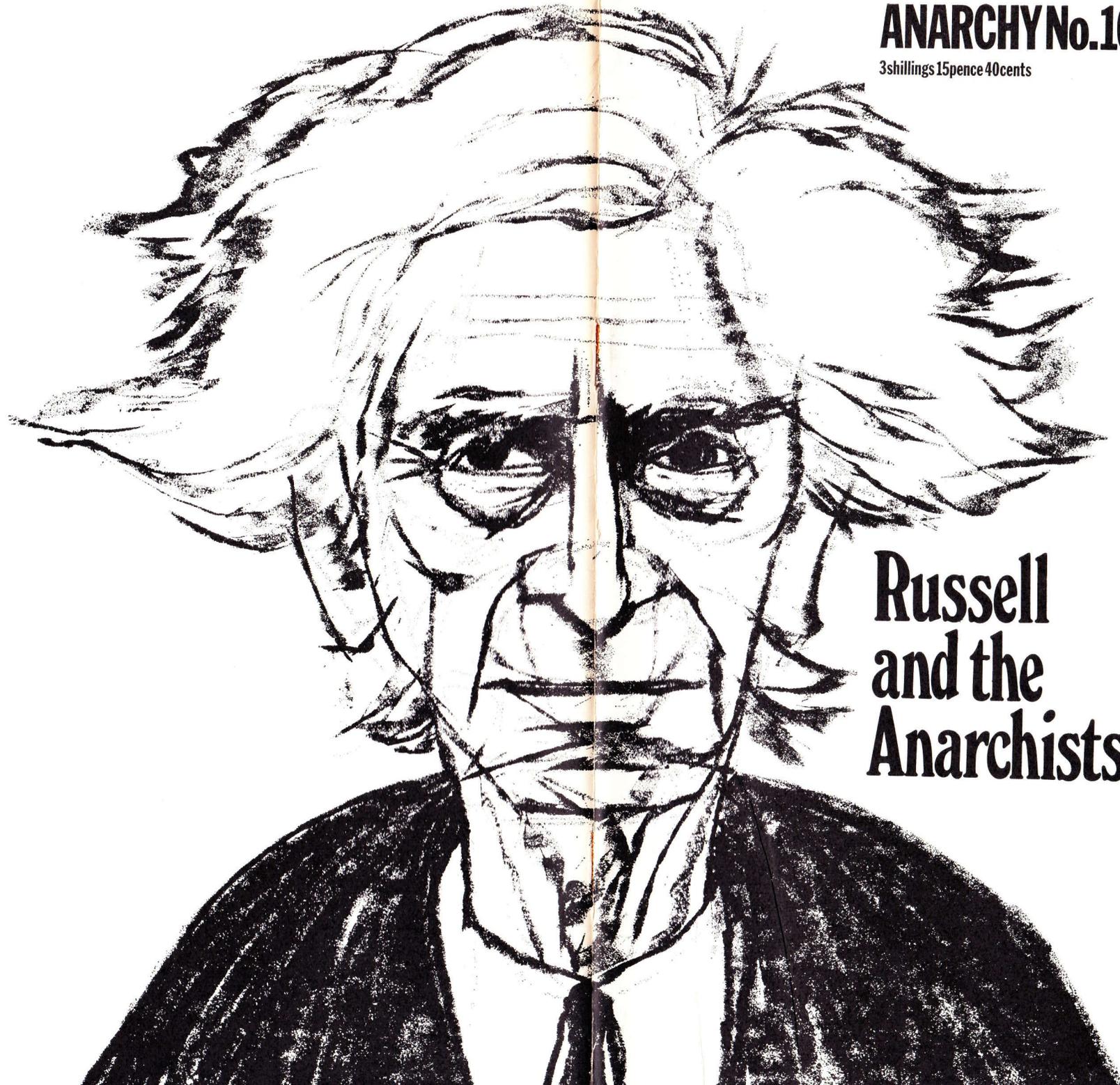


ANARCHY No.109

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**Russell
and the
Anarchists**

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Neither God nor Master

RICHARD DRINNON

THOUGH ITS ROOTS ARE DEEPLY BURIED, modern anarchism dates from the entry of the Bakuninists into the First International just a hundred years ago.

As it happens, this is the centenary year as well of the birth of the American anarchist, Emma Goldman. As a modest, in-the-nick-of-time tribute to that splendid rebel, I should like, with your indulgence, to imagine her up here presiding over this session.

She might commence with a sombre recital of the number of times historians have pronounced anarchism irrelevant to complex societies, as at best "poetic nonsense". A recent example: Mr. George Woodcock contended in his book called *Anarchism*, published in 1961, that modern anarchists "form only the ghost of the historical anarchist movement, a ghost which inspires neither fear among governments nor hope among people nor even interest among newspapermen". Hard after this prophesy followed Berkeley, the imaginative politics of the Provos in Amsterdam, the comic-strip uprising of the Situationists at Strasbourg University, the rebellion of the Berlin SDS, and then, in May 1968, the rise of the New Paris Commune. But let

RICHARD DRINNON is Professor of History at Bucknell University. These remarks were made from the chair at the recent session on anarchism at the American Historical Association's Convention in Washington.

me draw on the breathless authority of *Time* magazine of May 24, 1968, by way of summary:

“The black flag that flew last week above the tumultuous disorders of Paris stood for a philosophy that the modern world has all but forgotten: anarchy. Few of the students who riot in France, Germany or Italy—or in many another country—would profess outright allegiance to anarchy, but its basic tenets inspire many of their leaders. Germany’s ‘Red Rudi’ Dutschke and France’s ‘Red Danny’ Cohn-Bendit openly espouse anarchy. . . . Not since the anarchist surge in the Spanish Civil War has the Western world seen a movement so enthusiastically devoted to the destruction of law, order and society in the name of unlimited individual freedom.”

So *Time* is finally on our side, Emma might wryly observe. Nor will it do for Mr. Woodcock to contend that the recent spurt of interest in anarchy lacks continuity with the historic movement (see *Commentary*, August 1968). As Daniel Cohn-Bendit has made quite clear, he is well aware that while Marx stood to the left of Proudhon, Bakunin stood to the left of Marx.

And just a generation ago, she might recall, an editor of *Harper’s* magazine commenced premature last rites for her by prefacing an article of hers written in 1934 with this comment:

“It is strange what time does to political causes. A generation ago it seemed to many American conservatives as if the opinions which Emma Goldman was expressing might sweep the world. Now she fights almost alone for what seems a lost cause; contemporary radicals are overwhelmingly opposed to her. . . .”

It *is* strange what time does to political causes, she might agree—perhaps they, like the historical profession, are subject to the same boom-bust cycle as the economy and perhaps subject to the same mysterious causes—can we rule out with confidence the sunspot thesis of Jevons? Whatever reasons are adduced, she would accept with delight recent changes in the fortunes of anarchism and embrace with delight, as spiritual brothers and sisters, Red Danny

and Red Rudi and Bernadette Devlin, and, for that matter, the women and men of the Resistance, the Women’s Liberation Movement, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, and even, if the Vice-President is to be believed, the organizers of the October Moratorium—Agnew ruled them to be, you know, “hardcore dissidents and professional anarchists”.

Isn’t it lovely, she might gleefully observe, that anarchy, like adultery, seems to be coming back? And isn’t it lovely that the august—nay, magisterial—American Historical Association has unbended to devote an entire session to the topic? And this at one of its annual meetings at the heart of the American Empire, or, better, in the National Seat!

But here she might raise a final series of questions: Why have historians made so many eager attempts to entomb anarchism and other varieties of radicalism? Why has the present unparalleled interest in anarchism been so long in coming?

Can it be that anarchism’s rejection of the Nation State and Empires, its commitment to decentralization, to the primacy of functional groups, to direct action, and to direct participation in decision-making—can it be that these commitments have frightened the great washed majority of historians who have their own commitments to a distrust of spontaneity, to an affection for order, for discipline, for bureaucratic authority? Have not most of you, she might say to us—have not most of you really undertaken to be scribes of the Prince or his successors? Haven’t you found yourselves, despite all your rhetoric, locked into Michels’ Iron Law of Oligarchy? And liking your unfreedom?

Self-help, mutual-aid movements, organized from the bottom up, she might conclude, have long awaited their chroniclers. If they seem another series of lost causes, be not unduly distressed: I accept wholeheartedly one of the graffiti on the walls of the Sorbonne which went: **BE REALISTIC! DEMAND THE IMPOSSIBLE.**

Bertrand Russell and the anarchists

VIVIAN HARPER

We had an anarchist from Holland staying with us, the secretary of the AIT. He was a charming and very intelligent man, and has been a good deal in Spain with the CNT. He was a great admirer of yours. He said that he had recently written an article on anarchism for an Encyclopedia. In the bibliography at the end he included "All the works of Bertrand Russell" because, he explained, though they are not actually anarchist, they have 'the tendency' as old anarchists say.

—GAMEL WOOLSEY in a letter to Bertrand Russell, November 1938.

IN THE EULOGIES OF BERTRAND RUSSELL last month, much was said about the anarchistic character of his thought. Michael Foot called him an anarchist, Edward Boyle characterised him as a libertarian. Russell himself, years before, had confessed to "a temperamental leaning to anarchism", and years before that, as far back as 1895, Beatrice Webb described him in her diary as "anarchic". Certainly, a mere glance at the titles of many of his books indicates that the preoccupations of anarchist thought, the social and political issues which anarchists attempt to grapple with, were the same as the topics with which he was concerned.

Yet in only one of his books did Russell give serious consideration to anarchism itself as a social and political philosophy. This was in *Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism and Syndicalism*, published in 1918, and reprinted eleven times since then. Russell had been commissioned by an American publisher to write this book and completed it in a hurry "in the last days before a period of imprisonment" in April 1918.

How did this book strike anarchists when it was first published? Fortunately we can tell, from the long review published in *FREEDOM* for March 1919, unsigned, and probably by the editor Tom Keell:

"It is very interesting to anarchists to find a philosopher of Mr. Bertrand Russell's standing weighing the arguments for and against anarchism; and although he says that it is 'for the present impossible', he admits that pure anarchism 'should be the ultimate ideal to which society should continually approximate'. The author has divided his work into two parts—the first part dealing with socialism, anarchism and syndicalism from the historical point of view, the second part

being devoted to the author's views on 'Problems of the Future' and how they might be solved.

"Mr. Russell in his first chapter gives a sketch of Karl Marx and his socialist doctrine and points out that although state socialism might be the outcome of the proposals of Marx and Engels, as put forth in the *Communist Manifesto*, they cannot be accused of any glorification of the State. It is their followers who have made an idol of the State. The second chapter on 'Bakunin and Anarchism' deals with the struggle between Marx and Bakunin in the International Working Men's Association. The Germans and English followed Marx, but the Latin nations in the main followed Bakunin in opposing the State and disbelieving in the machinery of representative government. Although Bakunin did not produce a finished and systematic body of doctrine, he may be regarded as the founder of anarchist communism. 'There is something of anarchism in his lack of literary order.' If we wish to understand anarchism, says Mr. Russell, we must turn to his followers, and especially to Kropotkin, who presents his views 'with extraordinary persuasiveness and charm', although our author says, 'the general tone of the anarchist press and public is bitter to a degree that is hardly sane'. In speaking of what he calls the 'darker side' of anarchism, 'the side which has brought it into conflict with the police and made it a word of terror to the ordinary citizen', he says that the revolt against law leads to 'a relaxation of all the usually accepted moral rules'. In another part, however, Mr. Russell says that 'those anarchists who are in favour of bomb throwing do not in this respect differ on any vital principle from the rest of the community. . . . For every bomb manufactured by an anarchist, many millions are manufactured by governments; and for every man killed by anarchist violence, many millions are killed by the violence of States'. Is it a 'revolt against law' that leads States to relax 'the usually accepted moral rules'?

"The chapter on 'The Syndicalist Revolt' is a brief sketch of the syndicalist movement in France, which arose as a protest against parliamentary socialism. Syndicalists wish to destroy the State, which they regard as a capitalist institution, designed essentially to terrorise the workers. They wish to see each industry self-governing. Similar in its aims and methods is the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), an American organisation which has branches in most English-speaking countries, and whose clear-cut policy has been summed up by its secretary in one sentence: 'Complete surrender of all control of industry to the organised workers.' Mr. Russell finds something to accept and something to reject in each of the 'isms' he deals with, but says that 'the best practicable system, to my mind, is that of Guild Socialism, which concedes what is valid, both in the claims of the State Socialists and in the syndicalist fear of the State'. We cannot deal with Guild Socialism now, but will turn to Mr. Russell's criticism of anarchism in the second part of the book.

"The author first deals with the questions of production and distribution under anarchism. He quotes largely from Kropotkin's *Anarchist Communism*, which is the basis of his criticism. Mr. Russell admits that the production of food and other necessities of life sufficient for the wellbeing of all could be so easily maintained that everyone would be able to take just what he or she required without any check being necessary. But as to the other anarchist proposal, that there should be no obligation to work, and no economic reward for work, he has his doubts. He thinks that idlers could only be influenced if society were divided into small groups and each group only allowed to consume the equivalent of what it produced. The members of each group would thereby be interested in seeing that all did their share of work. But, of course, that would not be anarchism, he admits. He then deals with the socialist theory, that work alone gives the right to the enjoyment of the produce of work—all who can should be compelled to work, either by the threat of starvation or by the operation of the criminal law. Mr. Russell does not agree with this, as he says that 'the only kind of work recognised will be such as commends itself to the authorities', which will leave little freedom of choice to the individual. 'If the anarchist plan has its dangers, the socialist plan has equal dangers.' Anarchism has the advantage as regards liberty, socialism as regards inducement to work. So he suggests as a combination of these two advantages that a certain small income, sufficient for necessities, should be given to all, whether they work or not, and that a larger income should be given to those who are willing to engage in some work which the community recognises as useful. This, of course, means that a governing body of some kind would be necessary, an argument that runs through the whole book.

"In the chapter on 'Government and Law' Mr. Russell gets to grips with the anarchist position, and in this is very disappointing. At times he uses arguments against anarchism which anarchists use against government. For instance, he says: 'Envy and love of power lead ordinary human nature to find pleasure in interferences with the lives of others.' Surely that should be a powerful reason why power should not be put into the hands of any body. Again, he says that without government: 'the strong would oppress the weak'. Does Mr. Russell really believe that governments exist to protect the weak? Up to the present every government has protected the interests of the strong, and any government in future will be compelled to stand by those who put it in power. In dealing with the question of 'crime' such as theft, cruelty to children, crimes of jealousy, rape and so forth, he admits that some of these are due to our present system of society, but says they are almost certain to occur in any society to some extent. Granted, but in an anarchist society people would learn to protect themselves from such anti-social acts. At present people look to the police and government for such protection; in fact, we are frequently told by magistrates that we 'must not take the

law into our own hands'. But the spirit of mutual aid is still alive, and anarchists have never preached non-resistance. But we have found by experience that government and police do not protect us. Mr. Russell's sentence of six months' imprisonment taught him that lesson.

"In spite of his belief in the necessity of some central organisation, backed by law and force, Mr. Russell shows very strong leanings towards anarchism in his constructive proposals. He says, 'From the point of view of liberty, what system would be best? In what direction should we wish the forces of progress to move? From this point of view, neglecting for the moment all other considerations, I have no doubt that the best system would be one not far removed from that advocated by Kropotkin.' And later he says, 'The system we have advocated is a form of Guild Socialism, leaning more, perhaps, towards anarchism than the official Guildsman would wholly approve. It is in the matters that politicians usually ignore—science and art, human relations, and the joy of life—that anarchism is strongest, and it is chiefly for the sake of these things that we include such more or less anarchist proposals as the "vagabond's wage!"' Altogether *Roads to Freedom* is a very readable book, and—an exceptional feature with critics of anarchism—the author certainly understands the principles he criticises,* even if he does not agree with them."

* * * *

If *Roads to Freedom* were a new book, published fifty years later, an anarchist reviewer would have much the same comments to make. But would Russell's own opinions have changed? In a new edition in 1948, thirty years after the original publication, he contributed a new preface in which he remarked:

"So much has happened since that time that inevitably the opinions of all who are not impervious to experience have undergone considerable modifications. The creation and collapse of the League of Nations, the rise and fall of Fascism and Nazism, the second world war, the development of Soviet Russia, and the not remote possibility of a third world war, have all afforded political lessons, mostly of a sort to make the maintenance of optimism difficult. The creation of an authoritarian undemocratic form of Socialism in the USSR, while very relevant to many of the discussions in this book, does not, in itself, suggest any need for modification of the opinions advocated. The dangers of a bureaucratic regime are sufficiently

*A few months later in an article in *FREEDOM* (August 1919) "False Roads to Freedom", W. C. Owen remarked that Russell "refers to Proudhon more than once, but one feels that he has no conception of what Proudhon taught". And on 29 September, 1919, Harold Laski wrote to Russell, "in any new edition of that book I wish you would say a good word for Proudhon! I think that his *Du Principe Federatif* and his *Justice dans la Révolution* are very great books".

emphasised, and what has happened in Russia only confirms the justice of these warnings. In one respect—and this is my chief reason for agreeing to a reprint—this book is rendered again relevant to present circumstances by the growing realization among Western Socialists that the Russian regime is not what they desire. Before the Russian Revolution, Syndicalism in France, the IWW in America, and Guild Socialism in England were all movements embodying suspicion of the State and a wish to realize the aims of Socialism without creating an omnipotent bureaucracy. But as a result of admiration for Russian achievements all these movement died down in the years following the end of the first world war. In the first months of 1918, when this book was written, it was impossible to obtain reliable information about what was happening in Russia, but the slogan ‘all power to the Soviets’, which was the Bolshevik battle-cry, was taken to indicate a new form of democracy, anti-parliamentary and more or less syndicalist. And as such it enlisted left-wing support. When it turned out that this was not what was being created, many Socialists nevertheless retained one firm belief: it might be the opposite of what Western Socialists had been preaching, but whatever it might be it was to be acclaimed as perfect. Any criticism was condemned as treachery to the cause of the proletariat. Anarchist and syndicalist criticisms were forgotten or ignored, and by exalting State Socialism it became possible to retain the faith that one great country had realised the aspirations of the pioneers.”

He remarks that those who could no longer give uncritical adoration to the Soviet Government were impelled to look for less authoritarian forms of socialism, like those described in his book. Guild Socialism which he favoured in 1918 “still seems to be an admirable project, and I could wish to see advocacy of it revived”.

Not so anarchism. For he goes on, “But there are other respects in which I find myself no longer in agreement with my outlook of thirty years ago. If I were writing now, I should be much less sympathetic to anarchism. The world is now, and probably will remain for a considerable time, one of scarcity, where only stringent regulation can prevent disastrous destitution. Totalitarian systems in Germany and Russia, with their vast deliberate cruelties, have led me to take a blacker view than I took when I was younger as to what men are likely to become if there is no forcible control over their tyrannical impulses.” What an exasperating *non sequitur*! Once again, as FREEDOM remarked thirty years earlier, he was using arguments against anarchism which anarchists use against government. Totalitarianism is not the consequence of anarchy but its antithesis. It is government unbridled.

* * * *

In the summer of 1920 Russell visited Russia, accompanying, unofficially, the British Labour Delegation. He met the Bolshevik

leaders, and he also met some anarchists including Emma Goldman, and Alexander Berkman, who showed him round Moscow. He was not allowed to visit Kropotkin. The book he wrote on his return, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, is a highly intelligent and fair-minded account of what he saw, and how it related to Communist theory, and it was published at a time (and how many such times there have been since then) when, as Russell said, it was regarded as a kind of treachery for a socialist to criticise a Communist dictatorship.

When Emma Goldman left Russia, Russell and Col. Josiah Wedgwood tried to persuade the Home Office to grant her asylum in Britain. She wrote to him from Berlin in July 1922, “Thank you very much for your willingness to assist me. . . . I was rather amused at your phrase ‘that she will not engage in the more violent forms of Anarchism’. I know, of course, that it has been my reputation that I indulged in such forms, but it has never been borne out by the facts. However, I should not want to gain my right of asylum in England or any other country by pledging to abstain from the expression of my ideas, or the right to protest against injustice. . . .” Two years later she was granted permission to enter Britain. Two hundred and fifty members of the left-wing intelligentsia attended a dinner to welcome her. FREEDOM reported that “By far the best speeches of the evening were those delivered by Bertrand Russell and William C. Owen. Mr. Russell, who has the most acute philosophical mind in England, made the most complete avowal of anarchist convictions of the evening.” Emma Goldman’s biographer, Richard Drinnon remarks that “When Emma rose, she was greeted with loud applause. Her vehement attack on the Soviet government and its merciless treatment of political prisoners, however, raised loud cries of protest. Was she going back on her past? Was she throwing in with the Tories? When she sat down, Bertrand Russell recalls, ‘there was dead silence except from me’.”

Drinnon notes that a comparable lack of enthusiasm met Emma’s efforts to form a committee to aid Russian political prisoners. Russell wrote to her to explain that he could not participate in this work: “. . . I am not prepared to advocate any alternative government in Russia: I am persuaded that the cruelties would be at least as great

It has been customary for people to draw arguments from the laws of Nature as to what we ought to do. Such arguments seem to me a mistake; to imitate Nature may be merely slavish. But if Nature is to be our model it seems that the anarchists have the best of the argument. The physical universe is orderly, not because there is a central government but because every body minds its own business.

—BERTRAND RUSSELL

under any other party. And I do not regard the abolition of all government as a thing which has any chance of being brought about in our life times or during the twentieth century. I am therefore unwilling to be associated with any movement which might seem to imply that a change of government is desirable in Russia. I think ill of the Bolsheviks, in many ways, but quite as ill of their opponents. . . . I am very sorry to have failed you, and I hesitated for a long time. But the above view is what, in the end, I felt to be the only possible one for me."

Emma, says Drinnon, was "painfully disappointed" by this letter. "Respect for Russell and diffidence about seeming importunate apparently prompted Emma to discontinue their correspondence. But in her reply to Laski she ripped into Russell's argument. She held, ironically, that it was illogical. His point that there was no other political group of an advanced nature to take the place of the Bolsheviks seemed to her completely 'out of keeping with the scholarly mind of a man like Russell'. Even if it were so, what bearing did that have on a stand for political justice for the victims of the government? Besides, with every other political organisation broken up and the 'adherents wasting their lives in Russian prisons and concentration camps, it is difficult to say what political group is likely to be superior to the present on the throne of Russia'. On this shaky foundation of illogicality and lack of evidence, was Russell really suggesting that 'all liberty-loving men and women must sit supinely by while the Bolsheviks are getting away with murder?' Would Russell have hesitated to use his pen and his voice in behalf of political victims of the Czar?"

"The question, as I understand it, is the Dictatorship and the Terror, such as a Dictatorship must make use of, not the name of the particular Group at the back of it. This seems to me to be the dominant issue confronting various men and women of Revolutionary leanings, and not *who* is being persecuted, or by *whom*."

However, in the following year, when the volume *Letters from Russian Prisons* was published, Russell contributed an acid introductory letter:

"I sincerely hope that the publication of the following documents will contribute towards the promotion of friendly relations between the Soviet Government and the Governments of Western Powers. Misled by Western Socialists, the statesmen of Great Britain, France and America regard the present holders of power in Russia as idealists and therefore dangerous. If they will read this book they will become convinced of their error. The holders of power in Russia, as elsewhere, are practical men, prepared to inflict torture upon idealists in order to retain their power. There can be no reason why Western imperialists should quarrel with these imperialists of the North-East, or why Western friends of freedom should support them until there is a radical change in their treatment of political opponents."

A year later, Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in Boston. Russell's comment was: "I am forced to conclude that they were condemned on account of their political opinions and that men who ought to have known better allowed themselves to express misleading views as to the evidence because they held that men with such opinions have no right to live. A view of this sort is one which is very dangerous, since it transfers from the theological to the political sphere a form of persecution which it was thought that civilised countries had outgrown."

* * * *

His support for the persecuted anarchists of the nineteen-twenties was probably Russell's last contact with anarchists, until, with his involvement with the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War in the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties, he came in touch with anarchists of a completely different generation and background. The return to his first world war position of resistance and provocation, which earned him another prison sentence, did not indicate a shift in his basic political outlook. In the leaflet *Act or Perish, a call to non-violent action by Earl Russell and Rev. Michael Scott*, the authors declare, "We are told that in a democracy only lawful methods of persuasion should be used. Unfortunately, the opposition to sanity and mercy on the part of those who have power is such as to make persuasion by ordinary methods difficult and slow, with the result that, if such methods alone are employed, we shall probably all be dead before our purpose can be achieved. Respect for law is important and only a very profound conviction can justify actions which flout the law."

Writing in *FREEDOM* (21 April, 1962), Nicolas Walter commented perceptively on this phase of Russell's public activity, "Russell's contribution to the unilaterist *movement* has been invaluable for a number of reasons, the most important being that he is a very fine and famous old man with charismatic qualities who is, as Pat Pottle said at the Old Bailey, 'an inspiration to us all'. But his contribution to unilaterist *thought* has, I think, been far less useful—even harmful. This may seem a hard thing to say, and even rather absurd, considering Russell's intellectual stature and reputation, but if anyone doubts it the best thing you can do is to read what he has actually said and

Men fear thought more than they fear anything else on earth, more than ruin, more even than death. Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible. Thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions and comfortable habits. Thought is anarchic and lawless, indifferent to authority, careless of the well-tried wisdom of the ages. Thought looks into the pit of Hell and is not afraid. But if thought is to become the possession of the many, not the privilege of the few, we must have done with fear.

—BERTRAND RUSSELL

written on the subject. . . .

“Now *Common Sense & Nuclear Warfare* is full of interesting and illuminating information about and discussion of the course of the nuclear arms race, the growing probability of disaster if this arms race continues, and the consequent necessity of an end to the arms race and so on. But he begins as follows: ‘It is surprising and somewhat disappointing that movements aiming at the prevention of nuclear war are regarded throughout the West as left-wing movements.’ Well, it may be somewhat disappointing, but how on earth can it be surprising to anyone at all? Again: ‘It is a profound misfortune that the whole question of nuclear warfare has become entangled in the age-old conflicts of power politics.’ Has become entangled? Surely not—nuclear warfare *derives* from power politics and can’t possibly be disentangled from it, nor should it be. This sort of attitude runs through the whole book. Nuclear war is considered as some extraordinary disease which has attacked human society from the outside and can somehow be cured without altering the form of society in more than a few details. This is why Russell can rightly be called irresponsible—because he proposes certain measures without realising how utterly revolutionary they are and without apparently being prepared to answer for what would happen if they were put into effect.

“It is important to recognise that Russell isn’t a pacifist. ‘I have never been a complete pacifist and have at no time maintained that all who wage war are to be condemned. I have held the view, which I should have thought was that of common sense, that some wars have been justified and others not.’ Fair enough. Nor is he an anarchist—indeed all his proposals for British unilateral disarmament and subsequent multilateral disarmament depend on the existence of strong national governments to carry them out and finally on the establishment of a world government to ensure that they are carried out properly. Fair enough again. But his rejection of pacifism and anarchism leads him into a highly inconsistent position. I am referring not to the fact that he thought America should threaten Russia with atomic war after the defeat of Nazi Germany in order to enforce international agreement about atomic weapons and now of course thinks nothing of the kind—his explanation that he has changed his opinion because circumstances have changed is perfectly acceptable—but to the fact that he would put the responsibility for *disarmament* in the hands of the very institutions (and people) who already have the responsibility for *armament*.

“This seems to me to be the fatal flaw in Russell’s unilateralism. Of course if the rulers of the world were governed by common sense, as he certainly is, they would immediately meet and disarm. In the same way, if the rich of the world were governed by common sense, they would immediately distribute their wealth among their poorer neighbours; and if the scientists of the world, and the writers and workers and all the rest, were governed by common sense, they

would join and refuse to support any wars. So what? Everyone knows this, and most people also know that the problem is that very few people in fact *are* governed by common sense.

“One particularly interesting side of Russell’s unilateralism is his view of the demonstrations organised by CND and now by the Committee of 100. He sees them as ‘a form of protest which even the hostile press will notice’, and comments that ‘for a time Aldermaston marches served this purpose, but they are ceasing to be news’, so ‘the time has come . . . when only large-scale civil disobedience, which should be non-violent, can save populations from the universal death which their governments are preparing for them’. What I want to know is how such civil disobedience furthers the cause of world government. It is intended to be a publicity gimmick, but apparently it is also a way by which people can resist their belligerent government; then isn’t it—or something like it—a far more promising way of preventing war by undermining the power of national states than any complicated programme of conferences and compromises leading to the emergence of a supra-national state? Has Russell without realising it lent his name to a movement whose end is not world government but world anarchism? If so, he would certainly appreciate the irony of the situation.”

* * * *

Ultimately, of course, it is not Russell’s political opinions, nor even the work that his philosophical reputation rests upon, that gives him his anarchist tendency. It is rather the advocacy of personal and social freedom and self-determination, that runs through so many of his books and essays. Works like *The Conquest of Happiness*, *Sceptical Essays*, *On Education*, *Marriage and Morals*, or *Why I am not a Christian*, have had an enormous circulation in many languages, and have played their part in changing the whole climate of opinion. In books like these, modest, simple and casual, Russell argues, wittily but persuasively for greater individual and social freedom. For generations he has been a liberating influence.

If life is to be saved from boredom relieved only by disaster, means must be found of restoring individual initiative, not only in things that are trivial, but in things that really matter. I do not mean that we should destroy those parts of modern organisation upon which the very existence of large populations depends, but I do mean that the organisation should be much more flexible, more relieved by local autonomy, and less oppressive to the human spirit through its impersonal vastness, than it has become through its unbearably rapid growth and centralisation, with which our ways of thought and feeling have been unable to keep pace.

—BERTRAND RUSSELL

Counter-culture

KINGSLEY WIDMER

THE MAKING OF A COUNTER-CULTURE by Theodore Roszak.
(New York: Doubleday \$7.95; London: Faber and Faber 45s.)

LIBERTARIAN RADICALS TRADITIONALLY WANT TO CHANGE power so to change institutions which will finally result in changed men: from political revolution to social revolution to cultural revolution. Much of what is happening in America today must be seen as the attempt to do it the other way around, to change the social order by making a revolution in sensibility. That is much of what the rising underculture of the past two decades, the bohemian-beat-hippie-dissident movement, is really about. Certainly it has succeeded in some remarkable changes of styles of dress and sex and feeling and dissent and, apparently, even dreaming. We should all be delighted. But can it finally change the institutions, humanly subvert the technocratic bureaucracies in the interstices of which most of us live? And can it somehow transform the power of the automated salesman, political morticians, and plastic cannibals who despoil the scene, so thoroughly control us, and drive all towards Armageddon?

Implicitly, such questioning pervades *The Making of A Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*, by academic-humanist-cum-radical-prophet Theodore Roszak. With an odd mixture of naive fervour and learned skittishness, he speculates around "a political end sought by no political means". Partly he describes the current "youth culture"—"the adolescentization of dissent"—and partly he develops his own cultural countering of the growing dehumanization of our world. (His style as well as his subjects sometimes show an awkward fracturing similar to that of his culture-hero, Paul Goodman.) More sympathetic in principle than in fact to the young counter culture—"one cannot help being ambivalent"—he admires, for example, the role but not the poetry of Allen Ginsberg. He rightly senses that most underculture literature is not High Art but (I would add) chant, curse, celebration, prayer, and therapy which serves para-communal but not literary-library functions. Roszak is "impressed" with the passionate energies of hip popular music but finds it "too brutally loud and/or electronically gimmicked up".

Here the visiting humanist misses the point. The best of the counter arts go beyond as well as below cultural modernism, outside elitist subtleties and defensive withdrawal from our mass technological disorder. These popular arts subsume the electronic and synthetic—

and our noise and affluence and distortions—and turn them into sheer play, sensation, magic, fantasy, and communal expression. Technology as well as traditional institutionalized culture gets subverted, re-natured into the personally kinesthetic and socially immediate. The popular protesting culture attempts to take up our realities, rather than making a schizoid withdrawal into the Land of Culture, and turn them into the more richly human.

The cultured critic finds this underculture suggestive, if hardly to his taste. Its religiosity, he admits, seems rather like "the cultic hothouse of the Hellenistic period". The drug cultism he sees as "decadent", and he makes a good case that it serves to "diminish consciousness by way of fixation". The "psychedelic crusade" ends in the absurdity "that personal salvation and the social revolution can be packed in a capsule". With such negative perceptions, does Roszak then take up with the dissident culture because of its future promise? Even on that he is sceptical, since he suspects that the result "is as apt to be as ugly or pathetic as it is noble". The professor seems to be engaging in some radical co-optation, perhaps even in a bit of dissenting careerism, in presenting "youth culture" as prologue to his own "counter culture". He wants an audience and legionnaires and "the young have become one of the very few social levers dissent has". Not proletarians or intellectuals or political activists but culturally dissident youth provide the only revolution actually going on.

Roszak's ambivalence about the underculture he wishes to defend for his own ideological ends is quite understandable. We radical intellectuals, warped by our professional humanism, now so thoroughly bureaucratized, and forlorn about our adversary roles which end up decorating the technocratic cake, desperately seeks allies among our students and drop-outs, even when they don't quite meet our aesthetic, dialectical, and political standards. What Roszak really yearns for is a revival of the romantic side of the old culture—his hope as well as his sensibility really belongs there—as he gives away in a charmingly foolish footnote on humanizing our powerful philistines: "If only our technicians . . . could be brought face to face with Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*. . . . Surely that would do the trick."

On his own considerable evidence about the technocratic mind and its essential indifference to the full range of human thought and feeling, surely no such academic-culture tricks will do. No doubt Roszak and I should go on enthusiastically teaching Blake and Lawrence, and Norman O. Brown and Herbert Marcuse. And surely we must defend as well as sympathize with that minority of young fundamentalists of the imagination who rather embarrass us by going beyond mere profession of the prophets of our countering culture. But, really, we shouldn't make exaggerated claims for what we do. Some seeds of the counter culture may germinate but they will hardly reach full growth in the inevitably sunless academy.

When Roszak gets down to his real subject, exposition and argument of countering thought, his cultural scepticism and beyond-culture enthusiasm conflict. In discussing Norman O. Brown and

Herbert Marcuse, he draws on Marcuse and aptly characterizes *Life Against Death* and *Love's Body* as a Joycean tour-de-force which subsumes liberation under antiquarianism—pedantic Dionysianism. Yet it is Brown, and not the Marcuse whose *One Dimensional Man* much influences his social analysis, that he finally joins up with: “the revolution which will free us from our alienation must be primarily therapeutic in character and not institutional”. For Brown blows up reality where Marcuse insists that what “is to be abolished is not the reality principle; not everything, but such particular things as business, politics, exploitation. . . .” Roszak, pushing against the grain of his own critical sense, commits himself to the hip cadres and magic of fanciful flights instead of to the dialectics of resisting a falsified reality.

Similar conflicts run through much of the American underculture: activists vs. contemplatives, politicalization vs. poetization, religion vs. revolution. Curiously reversible at times, these are variations on the same discontents; sometimes the political cadres seem more religious and ritualistic than the mystical communes, which display surprisingly social and political sense. Roszak seems to agree and assumes that the New Left and the underculture make up one countering movement. Still, antithetical imperatives are there, and the hip humanist inclines to hedged bets on the counter possibilities of a full social revolution or a new mass religion even though one might well become the other.

The positions of the senior intellectuals—the total therapy-mysticism of Brown, the abstract revolutionism of Marcuse, the fractured utopianism of Goodman, the poetic saintliness of Ginsberg, the trick psychedelicism of Leary, the glossied Buddhism of Watts—are lightly sketched by Roszak. His emphasis comes out more on the issue of consciousness than of social implications. The crux is that “the leading mentors of our youthful counter culture have . . . called into question the validity of the conventional scientific world view, and in so doing have set about undermining the foundations of the technocracy”.

All his prophets do agree that we suffer from authoritarian technology and its destruction of the natural environment, our domination by technical bureaucrats, and a pervasive dehumanization by a scientific ethos “untouched by love, tenderness, or passionate wonder”. They do agree, up to a point, as critics of false consciousness, of a rationality manipulative, technical, submissive, and exploitative. But it does seem rather abstract to make all our concrete problems—war, poverty, authoritarianism, mass-media mind rinsing, consumer fetishism, pollution, over-population, politics of resentment, intellectual careerism, alienating work, and debased responsiveness—as simply extensions of this false consciousness.

We must start, Roszak says, in another direction by “subordinating the question of ‘how shall we know?’ to the more existentially vital question ‘how shall we live?’”. Strangely, he then goes on to say very little about how we shall live. Instead, he adumbrates a different way of knowing. For him, the ultimate is a religious counter-war to the repressive “psychic monopoly of the objective consciousness”

which creates all our problems. To the ideology of self-aggrandizing technocracy (and its “scientific myths”) he replies with the ideology of magic, most especially the animist style of “shamanism”.

His white magic would counter the authoritarianism and dehumanization of technocracy’s black magic. This would restore the responses of the sacred and the subjective, give sensibility awe and passion, create human limits and liveliness, and arrive at mystery and communion. Here, in spite of his learned humanistic differences in taste, Roszak seems at one with the very things he criticized in the youth culture, as when it plays with witches, occultism, exotic rituals, astrology, and other synthetic styles of therapy. There is pathos as well as poetry in such attempts to put rich vibrations back into a denuded cosmos and a destructively manipulative civilization. Personally, I rather prefer Roszak’s neolithic shamanism to, say, astrology or Herman Hesse or science fiction or detergent-orientalism. However, his discussion tends to be a bit more self-charming than serious. He says nothing of the social roles of the shamen he quotes (weren’t they usually sexual-social deviants in a warrior culture?) anymore than the Zen addicts probe the historical fact that the sect only significantly existed in rigid cultures and authoritarian societies. Nor does Roszak’s shamanism, a religion without a theology, a consciousness without dialectics, receive any intellectual depth or negative delineation. It seems rather pious to believe that magic will produce only magical results.

No doubt you takes your choice and you pays your price. Most sensitive people these days show considerable doubts about the price to be paid by our pious commitment to bureaucratic technology and its dehumanizing sensibility. But before choosing an alternative, we might like a little better dialectical and imaginative sense of the price demanded by the shaman. Even should we agree that both personal and communal fulfilment require “nothing less . . . than the subversion of the scientific view of the world”, we shall have to see the tragic dimensions, not just another hip costume.

Ah, but now *my* humanism is showing through. Certainly I agree with Roszak that “beyond the tactics of (political and social) resistance . . . there must be a stance of life which seeks . . . to transform the very sense men have of reality”. But let us really consider that reality, including its social and political ways. Our mystagogues owe to us more pedestrian brethren the pragmatic tests of how men shall live with the new sensibility. No doubt we shall be more magically alive when we become anti-technocratic animists, but I have some nagging suspicions about who shall be the elite shaman (half-converted technologists?) and such quaint concerns as the old questions about equality and freedom. The shaman provides notoriously vague answers to such questions.

More pleasant than probing, Roszak’s position may well be symptomatic. Desperately ascending from the role of radical intellectual, humanistically critical of the underculture which also seems the only tangible alternative around, he ends as one of its free-floating mystagogues.

We should all share his desperation, though not his piety. Finally he is correct in linking his effort at post-humanism with the under-culture's questing for a new sensibility. But, in his own earlier terms, personal vitality and social wholeness can't be encapsulated into mere consciousness. Switches in styles are desirable but insufficient, though we may grant them to at least be therapeutically desirable for many of the victims of our civilization.

Courses of action, ways of resistance, social not just cultural movements, harder styles of refusal—character in reality, not just sensibility in dreams—seem necessary. Those who start, as does Roszak, from the premises of radical intellectuals can't slip out of the social and political perplexities. Our sympathy for countering culture should remain this side of the populist murkiness of the protesting young and its unpromising wooziness and passivity. Any critical effort suggests that we won't get a "political end" without some sort of "political means". Certainly we need a radical change in sensibility, but if it does not include social and political effectiveness it will not end as a change at all. A vicious circle must be broken at all points, not just expanded with romantic feelingness. We change the technocracy not just by shamanistically chanting at it but by radically transforming its ends and controls. I have no objection to chanting while we attempt it. But the counter culture must really counter, offering something rather more specific and radical than a magical change in sensibility, or else, as we can sympathetically fear with Roszak, we shall surely go under to domination, despoilation, and destruction of any humane culture at all.

The myth of legitimate authority is the secular reincarnation of that religious superstition which has finally ceased to play a significant role in the affairs of men. Like Christianity, the worship of the state has its fundamentalists, its revisionists, its ecumenicists . . . and its theological rationale. The philosophical anarchist is the atheist of politics . . . the belief in legitimacy, like the penchant for transcendent metaphysics, is an ineradicable irrationality of the human experience. However, the slow extinction of religious faith over the past two centuries may encourage us to hope that in time anarchism, like atheism, will become the accepted conviction of enlightened and rational men.

ROBERT PAUL WOLFF (Columbia University), "On Violence", *Journal of Philosophy*, LXVI (October 2, 1969), p. 616.

Dr. Richard Kunnes is not exactly one of your soap opera supermen, reeking with carbolic and sex appeal, striding down the antiseptic corridors of Emergency—Ward Ten or sending nurses into a swoon.

Imagine instead a young man in jeans, slip-sloppy sandals, sweat-shirt, rimless spectacles and a mop of hair which looks as if it was last combed in the Johnson Administration.

Take note of the fact that he numbers among his intellectual mentors Che Guevara and Eldridge Cleaver. Remember that a few weeks ago, when Richard Nixon came to New York to address a banquet of loyal Republicans, Kunnes went on the rampage with a group of Weathermen, the most violent and apocalyptic of the American Left, smashing windows in the big department stores along Fifth Avenue, and you will realise that you are dealing with one of the strangest individuals who ever took the Hippocratic Oath.

A few days ago, Kunnes led a rebel band of about 50 social workers and community leaders from the slums of Harlem in a raid on St. Luke's Hospital, a forbidding grey monolith on the fringes of Columbia University, chased away the occupants of 25 offices, brought in half-a-dozen camp beds and set up a completely illegal emergency centre for the treatment of young addicts withdrawing from the habitual use of heroin.

The success of the operation flabbergasted even the pessimistic Dr. Kunnes. For by the weekend word of the coup had reached Washington and two Government bureaucrats jumped on to a plane to New York and forced the hospital administration to provide at least 40 beds and a competent staff to treat addicts and help them over the first, difficult period of abstinence.

"Imagine what a blow this must be to the myth of the medical profession as a priestly elite endowed with the power of life or death," Kunnes said jubilantly when news of the surrender came. "A bunch of dishevelled bums like us walk into a hospital and within a few days we have the entire staff eating out of our hands."

This is not the first time that Kunnes, a resident psychiatrist at the Albert Einstein Medical Centre in New York, has attempted to bring American doctors face to face with their own shortcomings.

His most theatrical appearance was last summer, when he forced his way to the speaker's platform during a meeting of the American Medical Association and began his speech with the words: "Let's get one thing straight. The American Medical Association is really the American Murder Association."

Pandemonium ensued. One doctor threw a heavy glass ashtray at Kunnes, missing him narrowly. An elderly physician piped up: "Bring in the Marines and kick him out!" Another tried to club one of Kunnes's companions with the edge of a heavy medical textbook and a third leaped on to the stage shouting: "Let's kill the bastard."

Kunnes set a match to his AMA membership card, watched it burst into flame and left the hall with as much dignity as he could manage. He will be back again to perpetrate another outrage—as yet undisclosed—at the annual meeting later this year in Chicago.

"When I called the AMA a collection of murderers," Kunnes told me, "I was exaggerating, but only a little bit. Because they are almost entirely responsible for the fact that preventive medical services are a joke, that half of all Americans do not even have their own doctor, that our infant mortality rate is embarrassing, that almost *nobody* can afford to have a serious illness at the present time, that life expectancy is shorter by up to 20 years in this country than in parts of Western Europe and that about 50,000 victims of heart attacks could be saved *every year* if our hospitals were properly staffed."

—JEREMY CAMPBELL in the *Evening Standard*,
21 January, 1970

Kropotkin and his memoirs

NICOLAS WALTER

PETER KROPOTKIN WAS THE BEST KNOWN of all the Russian revolutionary exiles before 1917, and *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* is the best known of all his books. One can certainly appreciate it without knowing anything about him, and in a way it needs no introduction. But he was not a simple man, and it is not a simple book; moreover, the story it tells comes to an end long before he wrote it, and he lived long after he had written it. So one can certainly appreciate it more if one knows something about his life—especially his later life—and about the problems the book raises.

The first problem is that the title is misleading;¹ Kropotkin was an active revolutionist for a relatively short time. He was born in 1842 as a member of the Russian aristocracy, he was brought up to carry on its tradition, and he did so for a third of his life. Like many of his contemporaries, he had doubts about the Tsarist regime from an early age, but it was not until 1867 that he broke with it decisively by leaving the army, and it was not until 1872 that he opposed it positively by entering the Chaikovski Circle. This process of growth and change is described in great detail in the first half of the *Memoirs*, but it is necessary to emphasize that Kropotkin's revolutionary activity began only when he was almost thirty years old.

From 1872 to 1886 Kropotkin led the life of a typical nineteenth-century revolutionary agitator. He visited Western Europe to learn about the socialist movement, returned to Russia and joined the populist movement, was arrested and imprisoned without trial, escaped and fled from Russia, took refuge in Western Europe and joined the anarchist movement, was expelled from Switzerland and moved to France, was arrested and imprisoned after a fake trial, was amnestied and took refuge in England. This period of intense

NICOLAS WALTER's article was written as the introduction to a new edition of Kropotkin's memoirs to be published by Dover Books in the USA.

agitation is described in great detail in the second half of the *Memoirs*, but again it is necessary to emphasize that Kropotkin's revolutionary activity lasted for only fourteen years (of which he spent five in prison).

From 1886 to 1917 Kropotkin lived in England, and it was during this period that he wrote the *Memoirs*. In 1897 he visited North America for the first time, to attend the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Toronto, and he took the opportunity to travel across Canada and also to give lectures in several places in the United States. In New York he met Walter Hines Page, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, who commissioned a series of autobiographical articles from him. These appeared from September, 1898, to September, 1899, with the title "Autobiography of a Revolutionist", and a longer version was published in book form in England and the United States in 1899, with the title *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*.

The *Memoirs* is perhaps the best thing Kropotkin wrote,² and it gives an unforgettable picture of Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century, of the populist movement there in the 1870s, and of the anarchist movement in Western Europe in the 1870s and 1880s. But this is where we come to the second problem raised by the book: the twelve years between coming to England and writing the *Memoirs*, far from being described in the same kind of rich detail as the previous forty, are dismissed in a dozen pages at the end. Kropotkin also lived for another twenty-two years after writing the book and, though he suffered increasingly severe attacks of bronchial illness every year, he remained active to the end.

The result is that the *Memoirs* says a great deal about the first half of Kropotkin's life, but virtually nothing about the second half. It is a great pity that he cut the book short at the end, and that he did not bring it up to date before his death. Unfortunately no really satisfactory biography of him has appeared, and the best study so far—*The Anarchist Prince* by George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic—is twenty years old and has long been out of print. It is therefore worth giving a brief account of Kropotkin's life between 1886 and 1921, so that readers will know about some of the things which are not in the *Memoirs*, before dealing with the problems raised by some of the things which are in the book.

* * * *

By 1886 Kropotkin was the most famous anarchist in the world. He maintained his revolutionary opinions, but he was never again directly involved in revolutionary activity. He arrived in England at a time when the socialist movement was flourishing, and for a few years he took an important part in it. He immediately helped to found the Freedom Press, which has been the main vehicle of anarchist propaganda in Britain ever since. Though he was identified with

the anarchist section of the socialist movement, he was not confined to it. He addressed left-wing audiences of all kinds all over the country, and frequently attended meetings to commemorate such events as the Paris Commune or the Chicago Martyrs or to welcome some distinguished foreign visitor to London. He took a minor part in such episodes as the Bloody Sunday riot in 1887 and the Great Dock Strike in 1889. He was on good terms with several political groups on the left, and was friendly with such leaders as William Morris and H. M. Hyndman, Keir Hardie and Bernard Shaw. But his main influence was for anarchism, and the rise of the anarchist movement in Britain during the late 1880s owed much to his presence.

Within the anarchist movement his main influence was for intelligence and against extremism. Indeed Kropotkin himself became more and more intellectual and less and less militant. After 1890 he still wrote the occasional article for FREEDOM and went to the occasional meeting, but he took little part in political activity—except in special circumstances, as when he spoke at the meeting to protest against the exclusion of the anarchists from the London Congress of the Second International in 1896, or when he intervened with a Liberal cabinet minister who had once been a socialist leader to prevent the deportation of the Italian anarchist Malatesta in 1912 (in 1907 he intervened with the police to secure the release of another foreign revolutionary—none other than the Bolshevik leader, Lenin!³).

Kropotkin was more closely involved in the French movement, though he was unable to visit France for eighteen years. He wrote far more for the French than for the British anarchist press, and most of his political articles, pamphlets and books were first published in France and only later translated into English (as well as many other languages). In 1892 he was named in a secret police report in Paris as one of the leading members of a group believed to run the international anarchist movement from London; though the details were nonsense, the story gives a fair indication of his importance. In 1896 the French authorities refused to allow him into the country to give some lectures, and he was not let in until 1905.

In England Kropotkin gave a very different impression. So far as is known, there was never any question of deporting him; the only brush he had with the authorities was for keeping a dog without the necessary licence! He lived a life of almost bourgeois respectability with his wife and daughter—and sometimes a single servant—in a series of small suburban houses (near London in Harrow, Acton, Bromley and Highgate, and then in Brighton Kemp Town). Unlike many other Russian exiles, he made no attempt to recover the substantial property he had left behind, and he worked hard earning his own living by writing scientific articles for newspapers, magazines, and reference books.

Kropotkin was not merely a journalist. Though he did no more

original work after leaving Russia, he enjoyed a reputation as a scientist in his own right for what he had already done. His theories about the orography, glaciation and desiccation of Asia, which had appeared in Russia during the 1870s, were published in England thirty years later, and they are still recognized as valuable contributions to physical geography. But he was active in many other fields, and he was always particularly interested in the application of the findings of natural science to the improvement of human society. Thus in *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1899) he suggested that advanced agricultural techniques could be used to rationalize and humanize the economies of industrial countries; in *Mutual Aid* (1902) he suggested that the principle of co-operation, which was at least as important as that of competition in biological evolution, could be used to assist the social evolution of mankind; and in *Modern Science and Anarchism* (1901) he suggested that the movement of both natural and social science was in the direction of the anarchist ideal.

Two of Kropotkin's later writings are important enough to mention separately. His single major venture into the field of history—*The Great French Revolution* (1909)—was one of the earliest attempts to describe the French Revolution from the point of view of the common people and also to make proper use of the material on the popular movements of the 1790s. His work on ethics, which extended over many years and took up most of his attention towards the end of his life, was never completed and was published in a fragmentary form the year after his death.

In Continental Europe Kropotkin was thought of as an anarchist who happened to be a scientist; in the Anglo-Saxon world he was thought of more as a scientist who happened to be an anarchist. As a prominent intellectual—and as a Russian prince—he was widely respected in Britain and North America, sometimes to an embarrassing extent. In 1894 the British *Contemporary Review* published an account of him called “Our Most Distinguished Refugee”, and this kind of treatment—however much he discouraged it—was bound to have an effect. His political opinions were accepted as a romantic eccentricity, and it was difficult for him to make people take them seriously. On the other hand his fame did make the idea of anarchism more acceptable for many who would otherwise have rejected it without question, and he managed to exert a strong personal influence even in apparently unfavourable circumstances. When my grandfather met him in 1902, it was at the home of Sir Hugh Low, a former colonial administrator—and yet he succeeded in converting my grandfather to anarchism!

There are many anecdotes of Kropotkin's obstinacy in maintaining his convictions. He refused to rise for the toast to the King's health at a banquet given for him by the Royal Geographical Society; he refused to accept the Fellowship of the Society because it was under

royal patronage; he refused to consider the suggestion that he might become professor of geography at Cambridge (England) in case his freedom of speech and action might be limited; he refused to make any kind of deal with the Russian or French governments when they tried to open negotiations with him; and he consistently refused to give interviews to the press.

Nevertheless, though he would not compromise with authority, Kropotkin did modify his opinions—especially about war. Internationalism and antimilitarism have always been fundamental principles of the anarchist movement. He was himself very much a cosmopolitan; he lived in several countries, he spoke many languages and read even more, and he had friends and correspondents all over the world. He never showed a trace of racial feeling—his wife, incidentally, was Jewish. He wrote an eloquent attack on war which was included in his first anarchist book and reprinted as a pamphlet, and another which was included in his last anarchist book and also reprinted as a pamphlet. But in the 1890s he began to write in terms suggesting that the Hohenzollern regime and the Marxist Social Democrats in Germany were both expressions of a national character, and showing prejudice against Germany and in favour of England (the country which had given him refuge and allowed him freedom) and France (the country of the Revolution and the Commune).

This tendency became stronger in 1905, when the revolution in Russia made Kropotkin include it among the countries which should be defended. In private he went so far in his abandonment of anarchist tradition as to support the idea of a war by the Entente against Germany and the extension of conscription to prepare for it. So when the war which he had long expected finally came in 1914, it was not really surprising that Kropotkin—like many other left-wing leaders—gave immediate and unqualified support to the Allies. This won him the approval of liberals and patriots, but it cut him off from the movement he had been associated with for forty years. He made virtually no headway among anarchists in the West, and the most crushing rebuke came in an article by his old friend Malatesta in his old paper *FREEDOM* (November, 1914). The only place where he had much influence was Russia, and here it is necessary to go back and trace his relationship with his native land during his long exile.

When Kropotkin left Russia in 1876 he intended to return as soon as possible, but it soon became clear that he would never be able to cross the frontier without immediate arrest and eventual death in prison or Siberia. At the same time the Russian revolutionary movement grew away from the anarchist ideas which had previously influenced it; the preoccupation with constitutional government as an end and with assassination as a means repelled Kropotkin, and he ceased to have direct links with the movement soon after the death of the Tsar in 1881.

But most of Kropotkin's friends were Russian revolutionary exiles like himself, and he was always interested in what was happening in Russia—especially when anarchism revived. From 1892, groups of Russian exiles began to send anarchist propaganda from Western Europe into Russia, and they naturally made contact with Kropotkin and gave prominence to his writings. The most influential of these was his book, *The Conquest of Bread*, which was translated in 1902 with the title *Khleb i Volya* ("Bread and Liberty"); in 1903 a group with that name was formed in Switzerland, and it began a paper also called *Khleb i Volya* and produced another series of publications, again headed by Kropotkin's writings.

Anarchism became more widespread in Russia than ever before, and many anarchists were active in the 1905 Revolution. By then they were roughly divided into two sections—those who favoured extreme methods such as robbery and assassination, and those who favoured the traditional methods of propaganda and agitation; the latter acknowledged the leadership of Kropotkin, and he played a significant part in conferences of Russian anarchists in London and Paris between 1904 and 1906. Most of the exiles returned to Russia during the revolution, and *Khleb i Volya* ceased publication. Kropotkin hoped to follow them, and made preparations for the journey (including visits to a shooting-gallery to practise his marksmanship—at the age of sixty-three!). But while the situation was uncertain he ran a new paper called *Listki "Khleb i Volya"* ("Leaves from *Khleb i Volya*"), and when the reaction came in 1907 the anarchist movement was suppressed; he had to abandon hope of returning yet, though he contributed to Russian anarchist papers right up to the First World War.

Kropotkin's renewed involvement in Russian affairs was not derived only from his anarchism. An instance of his wider interests came when he suggested after his visit to North America in 1897 that the Dukhobors who had left Russia and were living unhappily in Cyprus might settle more happily in Canada—and, partly through his efforts, they did. Another prominent Russian intellectual who championed their cause was Tolstoy, and at about the same time Kropotkin began a correspondence with him (through Tolstoy's disciple Chertkov) which lasted for several years. Kropotkin was of course passionately fond of Russian literature, and when he made a second visit to North America, in 1901, it was to give a series of lectures on this subject to the Lowell Institute in Boston; these were the basis of his book, *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*, which was published in London and New York in 1905. (He was never able to visit the United States again, because of the change in the immigration laws following the assassination of President McKinley by the anarchist Czolgosz in 1901.)

A more important factor was that most of Kropotkin's Russian friends were not anarchists at all, but moderate socialists, and especially

populists of the kind he had worked with in the 1870s. Stepniak, who had once gone to the Balkans to join the Slav rising against the Turks and had gone back to Russia to assassinate a police chief, and who was for a time an anarchist, became so moderate that he joined the Independent Labour Party (the precursor of the British Labour Party) when it was formed in 1893. Nikolai Chaikovski, who had once led the remarkable group which Kropotkin belonged to, and who was also for a time an anarchist, became a right-wing populist leader in Russia, and after the 1917 Revolution he became the head of a short-lived anti-Bolshevik government at Archangel. At the end of the 1890s, the bulk of the populists formed the Social Revolutionary Party, and many of Kropotkin's old colleagues in the Chaikovski Circle became prominent members of it. When the first Russian translation of his *Memoirs* was published in London in 1902, it was mainly Social Revolutionaries who circulated it inside Russia. When the Social Revolutionary journalist Burtsev accused the Social Revolutionary leader Azev of being a police spy, in 1908, Kropotkin presided at the court of honour in Paris which found the accusation proved. His personal links with the party were strengthened in 1910, when his daughter married a young Social Revolutionary called Boris Lebedev.

Twenty years after leaving Russia, Kropotkin came to enjoy the status of a veteran among the revolutionary exiles, and, though his anarchist opinions were well known, he was able to represent the movement as a whole. In Britain he acted as its unofficial spokesman, writing on its behalf to the liberal press on many occasions. During the reaction after the 1905 Revolution, he was involved in the work of the Parliamentary Russian Committee, a pressure group uniting Russian exiles and British radicals, and he wrote a booklet for it called *The Terror in Russia* (1909).

Again, though Kropotkin never abandoned his anarchist identity, he did shift his position. By 1905 he expected a Russian revolution to go only as far as the French Revolution of 1789—that is, to replace Tsarism by a parliamentary republic rather than a socialist regime—and when the First World War began he went even further to the right than the Social Revolutionaries by establishing relations with the “Cadets” (the liberal Constitutional Democrats) and writing in favour of the war in their paper, *Russkiye Vedomosti* (“Russian Gazette”). His support of the war and his new political associations gave ammunition to left-wing opponents of the war who also opposed anarchism, and his example was used—above all by the Bolsheviks—to discredit the whole anarchist movement. But even in Russia his influence was limited, and he lost touch with those revolutionary groups which stuck to their principles.

When the 1917 Revolution began, Kropotkin returned to Russia after more than forty years in exile. He made contact not with the anarchists or the Social Revolutionaries, but with such figures as Lvov, the liberal who was the first prime minister of the Provisional

Government, and Kerensky, the moderate socialist who succeeded him. Kerensky indeed offered him a place in the cabinet and, though Kropotkin was still enough of an anarchist to refuse, the offer was a fair indication of his position. When he spoke at the all-party State Conference in Moscow in August, 1917, his intervention was a call for the declaration of a republic and for a renewal of the offensive against Germany. His comment on the Bolshevik seizure of power in November, 1917—“This buries the revolution”—was perhaps prompted more by their opposition to the war than by their tendency towards dictatorship, though it turned out to be prophetic.

The fall of the Provisional Government in 1917 and the end of the war in 1918 released Kropotkin from his awkward situation, and his open disapproval of the Communist regime brought him back to the anarchists. He resumed contact with the leaders of the Russian movement, as well as many foreign visitors. He also met Lenin, in 1919, and did what he could—which was not much—to prevent some of the early excesses of the new regime. In his last political writings—the *Letter to the Workers of the West* and *What is to be done?*, both written in 1920—he made two apparently contradictory but actually complementary points: that the communists were destroying the revolution, and that foreign intervention in Russia should stop. In his early life he had swung from the moderate to the extreme left—from the liberalism of the Russian Enlightenment in the 1860s (the *prosvetitelstvo*) through the socialism of the Russian populist movement in the early 1870s (the *narodnichestvo*) to the anarchism of the West European labour movement in the late 1870s; in his later life he had gradually swung back to a moderate position; but now at the end of his life he returned to the unequivocal anarchism he had maintained at the peak of his career, insisting that the people themselves should take control of their own fate.

Kropotkin died in February 1921, in the town of Dmitrov near Moscow. The government offered a state funeral, but his family refused, and in the event his funeral in Moscow was the last great anarchist demonstration in Russia. Later in the same year the anarchist movement there was suppressed once and for all. The editions of Kropotkin's political writings, which had begun to appear in 1918, came to an end. The house he was born in was made the Kropotkin Museum and kept his memory alive for a time, but it was closed soon after his wife's death in 1938. He was not forgotten: his name was given not only to the lane where he was born, but also to another street in Moscow, as well as a small square and a Metro station; a large town in Caucasia and a small one in Siberia are called Kropotkin; and the Siberian mountain range he was the first to cross in 1866 is also named after him. His grave may be seen today in the Novodevichi Monastery. He is still generally respected in the land of his birth, even if he is little read there.

Returning to the *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, the first task is to clear up the bibliographical problems. When it was commissioned, in 1897, Kropotkin had already begun to write it, in Russian; but he wrote the full text for publication in English, and did not have time to complete a Russian version—so that the Russian editions of 1902, 1906, and 1912 were in fact translations from his English. However, he rewrote several passages and also wrote new ones at various times, again in Russian, and some of these were included in the Russian editions of 1925 and 1929. By the end of his life he had written almost the whole text in Russian, and his manuscript was used for the Russian edition of 1933; the most recent Russian edition, of 1966, reproduces this text (with a few omissions). Some of the additional material appeared in English for the first time in the abridged edition published by Doubleday in 1962 (and reprinted by Peter Smith in 1967). The present edition is an unabridged reprint of the first American edition, which was published by Houghton Mifflin in November, 1899 (it was slightly shorter than the first British edition, which was published by Smith Elder in London at the same time, and also varied in several unimportant details). None of the additional material has been included, but it has of course been taken into account in this introduction and in the notes to the text.

Most of the book is so clear that it needs no comment. But it is worth discussing a few general problems. One small point is that Kropotkin tended to be inaccurate about minor details. This was natural enough, since he was writing in haste a long time afterwards. Some of his errors have been corrected in the notes, but no doubt others could be detected by more thorough research. Another small point is that Kropotkin was extremely reticent about his personal life. So far as sex is concerned, for example, he was a typical nineteenth-century puritan, and he raised the subject only to criticize other people's misconduct; his own relations with women were not mentioned at all, and even his wife was mentioned only in passing. In other areas the pattern was similar. He described his interest in the arts, but not his own enthusiastic if amateurish piano-playing and landscape-painting. We learn that he liked tea, but little more about his tastes; drinking and gambling, those favourite occupations of the Russian leisured classes, seem to have passed him by. He described ideas and characters, but not faces or voices.

Thus there is no point looking for intimate revelations in this book; Kropotkin's memoirs were essentially political. Here we come to the larger problem that he was rather evasive about some aspects of the two political episodes he was involved in before he settled in England—the Russian populist movement from 1872 to 1874, and the West European anarchist movement from 1876 to 1882. Again, this was natural enough, since he did not wish to injure old comrades by exposing their former activities too frankly, but he also tended to idealize the past and to play down his own particular role. To

set the record completely straight would require a long historical analysis with frequent reference to other sources, which would be quite out of place here; but it is necessary to indicate where Kropotkin's testimony should be treated with caution.

In the Chaikovski Circle, according to Kropotkin, there was not even temporary friction. But according to other members there was in fact considerable friction, and it was moreover frequently centred on Kropotkin himself. There was disagreement about allowing a prince into the group at all, and later he was found to be rigid in his views and dogmatic in his exposition of them. Kropotkin himself, in one of his additions to the *Memoirs*, made more of the differences between the moderates, who were in the majority, and the extremists, of which he was a leading spokesman; he recalled "strong arguments" about the programme he drew up for the group in 1873, and his criticism of those members who objected to his revolutionary proposals was resented. Kropotkin's part in the Chaikovski Circle was altogether more turbulent than one might guess from his *Memoirs*.

In the anarchist movement, Kropotkin again blurred the disagreements among the various factions. There was a deep division within the Jura Federation between old members who followed Bakunin and were collectivists chiefly interested in the labour movement, and newcomers—including Kropotkin himself—who tacitly rejected many of Bakunin's ideas and were communists interested in a wider struggle altogether. The Jura Federation was won over to anarchist communism in 1880, and the withdrawal of Guillaume, Schwitzguébel and Spichiger was due not only to the difficulties described by Kropotkin but also to political and personal differences. Again, Kropotkin's part in the anarchist movement was altogether more controversial than one might guess from his *Memoirs*.

Another thing Kropotkin does not mention is that, though he was later a strong opponent of secrecy and terrorism, he was during the 1870s a leading conspirator and advocate of propaganda by deed. In 1877 he attended the last meeting of the International Social Democratic Alliance, which Bakunin had secretly formed in 1868 to infiltrate the First International, and at the London Congress in 1881 he spoke privately in favour of having secret alongside open organizations. Also in 1877 he helped to write an article calling for propaganda by deed, and in 1880 he published an article calling for action not only "by speech, by writing" and so on, but also "by dagger, gun and dynamite".⁴ It is important to realize that Kropotkin was a much more aggressive character than one might guess from his *Memoirs* or from his later reputation.

And yet, though he played down what he had done, Kropotkin did not deny his past. Even when he had become acceptable enough

for his memoirs to be printed in a respectable American paper and then by respectable American and British publishers, he still proclaimed his revolutionary position right to the end of his book—and indeed to the end of his life. In his later years he came to occupy a position similar to those of Voltaire and Tolstoy before him and of Pasternak and Bertrand Russell after him—a subversive intellectual who was too obstinate to tame and too famous to silence, and who was important no longer so much for what he actually said or did as for what he stood for.

At times, indeed, Kropotkin seems too good to be true, and today he can certainly be seen to have been over-optimistic about the future. A Kropotkin in Russia today would rebel against an even crueller regime; he would be arrested after a few days, not after several years; he would be treated far worse in prison, and he would find it far harder to escape; if he did manage to do so, he would not be able to travel freely across the world; if he went to Britain, he would be an undesirable alien rather than an honoured guest; if he went to the United States he would not be let in at all; if he wrote what he believed, he would have difficulty in getting it published. Half a century after his death, this makes him all the more admirable. We need more Kropotkins, and a good beginning is to read his magnificent account of his own life.

¹It is perhaps significant that Kropotkin himself would have preferred the more neutral title *Around One's Life* (which was in fact used for the French edition); but he was overruled by his editors.

²The style is distinctly better than his other writings in English, presumably because it was revised by Richard Heath, a friend of his who was a Christian Socialist writer.

³This is the story told by Horace Brust in the first volume of his "memoirs of a political police officer"—*I Guarded Kings* (London, 1935)—but his general standard of accuracy is so low that it must be treated with caution.

⁴This article, "Action", was written by Carlo Cafiero, not Kropotkin; but it was published in *Le Révolté*, the paper Kropotkin had founded in 1879, on December 25, 1880, when he was still the main editor.

OBSERVATIONS ON ANARCHY 104: BAD LANGUAGE

KINGSLEY WIDMER is a professor of English, yet he writes a very decayed style of English. He can quote "federal correctional facility" in inverted commas, which appears to be a ridicule of the deceptive and vague jargon used by civil servants. He can also create a sentence such as "personal intransigence must ground any genuine radical awareness, not least as defence against the self-destructive schizophrenia which sickens our institutions". This sounds nonsensical when I read it aloud, and the idea I eventually found behind it was still dubious. The writer is not critical of bureaucratic jargon because it is bad language, but because it is his chosen enemies who use the words.

When people use vague or pompous language, they either want to disguise the facts or to promote an intellectual atmosphere in their subject which would enhance its outward appearance.

Left-wing political groups, and avant-garde movements in "the arts" use an abstract and verbose jargon for the second reason; to impress themselves and the watching public. Because they are not established or in charge, and have no responsibilities, there is no need to conceal unpleasantness. To say "we kicked the police and threw bombs" does not embarrass the revolutionary spokesman. It does not upset his public. Being in opposition, he has few facts of practical importance to report anyway. So most of his pronouncements will be in the form of description and criticism of his movement and his enemy. This is where the use of deceptive and uncivilised language is to be found.

The vocabulary largely consists of academic words gathered piecemeal from the "modern" sciences; its nature is abstract, and its style is a tight packing of already-condensed expressions. (This seems related to the "super-group" legend in pop music, or the indiscriminate lights/music/drama/participation trend in progressive art. It is a spoilt impatience or gluttony that might demand fine wine poured over a fine meal, dosed with a potent drug, and covered in a fine perfume; mix many good things to make a superlative!)

Global village is the most appalling phrase I have heard so far. To say "demythologise" is to sound clever. Sounding clever is one way of impressing yourself and people who don't like your faces or opinions. I remember earnestly telling my parents that those otherwise unacceptable pop groups had passed O Levels and loved gardening.

Putting up a good show for the watching world is delusive to both sides, but most people can grow out of that. What is bad is playing so carelessly and irresponsibly with the language that it suffers and weakens. When language weakens, truth becomes vague, and understanding difficult. The language that is gaining popularity is weak and inefficient, because it is chosen primarily for appearance and not for meaning.

Example; astronauts are exploring space inside modules. This

is the only current word, and will certainly persist. A module is a standard unit of measurement. It is mostly used by architects. It is not a spaceship. A shrewd Private Eye cartoon referred to the electronic personnel outlet, "or door as the men have wittily named it".

Example; my local pub has a pop group in the back room on Friday nights, and sometimes a light-show. A few months ago this was advertised as . . . "basically an audio-visual environment", in accordance with the popular style. This phrase looks really stupid, but more important, it does not mean what the reality demands: a pop group (you can hear it) and a light-show (you can see it) in a back room (environment?).

There is a desire to sound "serious" because seriousness means that sober thinking and logic support an ideology. What is missing is the desire to *be* serious, because that ensures honesty and perspective. But the word "serious" is one of the oldest casualties in our language (e.g. in music).

The safest method of staying serious in political writing is to state everything in words that are common and have received universal understanding. That way, you will be unlikely to deceive yourself or your audience.

To borrow the specialised language of sciences that have become fashionable is usually disastrous. You and I do not need "schizophrenia" or "paranoia" unless we are psychiatrists. We probably *mean* "confusion" or "fear", and we certainly know what these words mean to the people who see them.

I challenge someone to use the phrase "cultural deprivation" in a passage, so that: (a) it makes any more sense than global village, *et al*; (b) all those who read it understand substantially the same meaning in it.

Another aspect of language that needs less comment is the rabble-rousing style. Appeal to the emotions is well employed in entertainment, from professional wrestling to fiction. There it is provided and taken within recognised limits. Nobody turns to the fight ring or the pantomime to find and consider an ideology or theory.

Writers and speakers want emotional reaction when they have no facts, or when their facts cannot stand on their own. In the first case they are fooling themselves and their listeners. In the second case, they must be deliberately fooling their listeners.

Neither approach has a place in the limited space of a journal renowned for clear factual discussion. Indeed, this circus-barkers' style rarely appears in ANARCHY. However, recently Paul Lester suggested that such behaviour as owning six eggs while another has none, is ROBBERY. (In his own block capitals.)

Robbery means seizing someone's property violently; not owning eggs.