

THE RELEVANCE OF ANARCHISM

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CLOSE students of the vocabulary of established politicians and pundits will not have failed to notice a significant new development in the past three years: the reappearance of the word "anarchist" (and its variants) as a term of abuse. Applied almost invariably to radicals and radical activity, it is a label the simple use of which is enough, it is evidently assumed, to discredit the labelled effectively in the eyes of the general public. In the West it bids fair to replace "communist", "red", and the rest, as the would-be most damaging stigma; but this is a term which transcends orthodox ideological frontiers, and it is equally popular with the politicians of Eastern Europe. In this respect in Washington, Warsaw and Walsall the authorities speak the same language. *Trybuna Ludu* and *Pravda*, confronted by the Polish workers' rising of December 1970, call for "an end to all anarchy",¹ while in Walsall, Staffordshire, a councillor denounces supporters of the gipsies' case against the local authority as "liars and anarchists"? Examples could be multiplied.

If a single date or event was to be chosen to mark this change in the terminology of abuse it would have to be the events of May 1968 in France, a milestone in this respect as in so many others (as I hope to indicate later). For in that crisis the French Communist Party was not only quite clearly not the source and origin of the revolt; it was as much concerned to contain the upheaval as it was to exploit it politically—indeed, the one was the precondition of the other. It was quite natural, therefore, that the leaders of the PCF and its newspaper, *L'Humanité*, should have been as vociferous as anyone in denouncing the real instigators of the upheaval, and in these somewhat embarrassing circumstances the "anarchist" label was clearly the only one which could be used to any great effect. And so, as early in the development of "the events" as May 3, we find Georges Marchais, deputy secretary-general of the Party, denouncing Daniel Cohn-Bendit with a characteristic chauvinism as a "German anarchist", and demanding that "such false revolutionaries . . . be energetically unmasked . . ."² Even when, subsequently, the Party claimed that it had always supported the students in their struggle, it continued to denounce the "anarchists" and proclaim its hostility

to "anarchy". This was a necessary consequence of its decision to compete with Gaullism on Gaullism's own ground in the June elections by presenting itself as "a party of order".⁴ In this competition it was predictably unsuccessful, but whether this was due in any great measure to President de Gaulle's lurid warning, in his broadcast on May 30, that France was threatened by the "dictatorship" of "totalitarian communism" is perhaps doubtful. Certainly it is significant that Georges Pompidou, the Prime Minister, who is generally agreed to have had a better grasp of what was going on than the ageing President, did not present the choice before France in those terms. His tactic was to urge the French people to "reject anarchy".⁵ That was the way it looked to the Gaullist Prime Minister, and that was also the way it looked to the British Labour Minister of Defence. Denis Healey claimed to hear "disturbing echoes from the Thirties in the violence and anarchy across the Channel."⁶ Thus the linguistic consensus among the politicians at that time was more or less complete, and it has been insistently sustained ever since.

There are, however, concrete grounds for this semantic shift, and the first of these is implicit in the reference to the situation and reactions of the French Communist Party in May 1968. Not only in western Europe, but virtually everywhere else—in Latin America, in India and Japan, for example—the official communist parties are no longer regarded as presenting a revolutionary challenge to the established economic and political order. Whether they do present such a challenge is another matter. Certainly many communist parties still use the language of revolution, and many of their most fanatical enemies still regard them as totally subversive organizations. But the fact is that the great majority, both revolutionaries and anti-revolutionaries, do not see orthodox communism as a revolutionary force. Yet at the same time there have emerged in many countries, developed as well as poverty-stricken, movements and groupings which do describe themselves as revolutionary and which do, in one degree or another, present an immediate challenge to reactionary and capitalist political regimes. These movements, the various liberation fronts, and the guerilla movements, both urban and rural, have adopted precisely those strategies of confrontation, provocation, and violent assault which most established communist parties now denounce as "adventurist".

These are only the most spectacular and dedicated examples of contemporary non-communist revolutionary activities. There are also the many small groupings and specific campaigns which, working in less dangerous ways, nevertheless place their work in a revolutionary perspective and usually disassociate themselves from the framework of established and constitutional politics within which most communist

parties are prepared to work, alongside the "bourgeois" political parties. It is these movements which have generated crises for, among others, General Franco and King Hussein, and the governments of Uruguay and West Bengal. It is members of these movements who are currently imprisoned by the Pompidou regime in France, hunted down—and often shot down—by the police and the FBI in the United States, and, as the Dutschke Tribunal hearings revealed, spied on by the Special Branch in Britain. And, in order to sustain popular support for this persecution, it is these groupings which are made the targets of regular denunciations by the politicians. But since they are clearly not communists, some other terminology of condemnation has had to be found. A former British Minister of Education, Edward Short, in a flash of inspiration, called some of them "Brand X revolutionaries". But that will hardly do as a term for everyday abuse. Hence the regular use of terms like "anarchist" and—another current favourite—"extremist".

These rather vague words do reflect a genuine dilemma and genuine puzzlement on the part of the authorities, both east and west. What, for example, are they to make of someone like Rudi Dutschke, who moved from East to West Germany, yet who attacked West German capitalism as vehemently as East German bureaucracy? He fits neither the Communist nor the anti-Communist stereotype. He is, however, a self-proclaimed revolutionary, and that has enabled the popular press to label him "Red Rudi". But the epithet, with its suggestion of communism, is inept, and it was even more so in the case of the "German anarchist" Cohn-Bendit, who described the leaders of the PCF as "crapules Stalinistes". Similar problems faced the politicians and leader-writers of Moscow and Warsaw last year, when they were confronted by Polish workers who demanded, not the restoration of capitalism, but the end of the "red bourgeoisie", and who marched upon Communist Party headquarters singing the *Internationale*.

But if the first cause of the return of "anarchist" to the vocabulary of politics is the existence of movements of revolution and revolt which lie outside, and sometimes are directed against, established communism, the second cause is a much less oblique one: there *has* been some kind of revival of anarchism. I put it as loosely at that, since while there has been a modest though appreciable revival of specifically anarchist groupings, what is of much greater importance has been the revived influence of anarchist thought and attitudes on the left generally, among many who neither call themselves anarchists nor would want to.

Anarchists sometimes prefer to avoid an opprobrious label and call themselves libertarians. There is a version of libertarianism which

has a closer kinship with anarchism than with the narrower conceptions of conventional liberalism, by virtue of its strongly anti-authoritarian emphasis and its concern with spontaneity and the greatest possible degree of voluntarism. It is in this form that the influence of anarchism is strongest. The anti-authoritarianism of the international New Left is one of its central characteristics. Many young revolutionaries or would-be revolutionaries are profoundly suspicious of any kind of fixed and formalized organization, since it is argued that such institutions have an almost irresistible tendency to produce leaders, elites, a hierarchy and a bureaucracy,—in a word those concentrations of power in the hands of the few at "the top" which always and necessarily involve the suppression and denial of the freedom and spontaneity of the many "below". Here, obviously, is a further source of conflict between the New Left and orthodox communism, which has produced political organizations as rigidly hierarchical and as ruthless towards individual heresy in words or actions as any the world has seen. I think that Stephen Hatch seriously overstates, and oversimplifies, the case when he writes that

"For the most part not only does the student left reject Stalinism, it shows little interest in the later Marx and has a deep-seated, anarchistic distrust of all formal structures, quite alien to the whole tradition of Marxist-Leninist political activity. Indeed the student left is extremely reluctant to accept any form of leadership, whether from individuals or from organized groups."⁷

The student left does not by any means comprise the whole of the New Left, and even within the student left there is greater diversity of opinion, and more interest in Marx, than this description allows for. Nevertheless there is a substantial kernel of truth here, and the reference to anarchism is certainly apt.

On occasion the link with anarchism is explicitly avowed, as when the brothers Cohn-Bendit cite anarchist critics and historians of Bolshevism such as Ida Mett and Voline in the course of their comprehensive attack on Soviet communism.⁸ Sometimes it is simply the word "libertarian" that is taken up, as when young revolutionaries or radicals describe themselves as "libertarian Marxists", or "libertarian socialists" (as some of the British Young Liberals did in 1970). On yet other occasions it is true to say, as the French anarchist Daniel Guérin has done, that many young radicals are "libertarian socialists without knowing it."⁹ Intentionally or otherwise, all these instances bear witness to the renewed influence of anarchist ideas on the left.



This renewal is largely a phenomenon of the past few years, as we can see by taking a brief look back at the early 1960s. In 1963 and

1964 two major scholarly studies of anarchism, by George Woodcock and James Joll, were published in Britain, and both were treated by some at least of their reviewers as, in effect, obituaries for a movement which, it was generally agreed, had died in Spain during the civil war of 1936-39. Indeed, Mr. Woodcock himself chose 1939 as the terminal date for his study, because

"It marks the real death in Spain of the anarchist movement which Bakunin had founded two generations before. Today there are still thousands of anarchists scattered thinly over many countries of the world. There are still anarchist groups and anarchist periodicals, anarchist schools and anarchist communities. But they form only the ghost of the historical anarchist movement, a ghost that inspires neither fear among governments nor hope among peoples nor even interest among newspapermen.

Clearly as a movement, anarchism has **failed**."¹⁰

Stuart Hampshire, reviewing Woodcock's book, agreed with this judgment. "Since anarchists have entirely failed, and since the tide of affairs has moved steadily against them, . . ." his review **began**.¹¹ George Lichtheim wrote in much the same valedictory vein, à propos of James Joll's book :

"Anarchism . . . has become respectable. In its heyday the movement had a uniformly bad press, aside from being treated as dangerous by governments and police authorities. Now that it no longer exists . . . its legendary founders benefit from the indulgence commonly extended to the defeated. This is an old ~~story~~."¹²

At about the same time (the spring of 1965) an article on the British anarchists in *New Society* began :

"People are sometimes as surprised to discover that there are still anarchists in Britain as to discover that such a historic body as the Independent Labour Party considers itself still in business . . . the anarchists no longer figure in the public consciousness, except perhaps as figures from the past . . ."

The significance of the lack of government or police attention, as contrasted with the past, was once more dwelt on :

". . . the anarchists . . . have, it appears, failed to attract the interest of the Special Branch." (And one of the editors of the anarchist weekly *Freedom* merrily commented:) "it would be a sign of revival if we were being watched by the police **today**."¹³

If the attentions of the police are to be taken as one reliable indication that a group or movement is taken seriously as a political force, then it is likely (though I cannot positively vouch for it) that anarchism is once again a political force. However it is noteworthy that *Freedom* has not yet been made the object of a campaign of

police harrassment aimed at closing it down, while this *has* been the fate of *International Times* and *Oz*, both of which have reflected some anarchist attitudes in a rather haphazard manner, and have achieved far larger circulations. In fact the obituarists may yet be proved right in the letter of their prediction: there may very well be no large-scale revival of a formally anarchist movement. It is also fair to acknowledge that both Hampshire and Woodcock argued, the one hesitantly, the other more confidently, that the anarchist *idea* might very well outlive the historical movement, and that it retained its relevance. But their valedictory tone indicated that they were out of touch with significant developments in radical thought and action which had already gained considerable momentum by the time these books and articles appeared, between 1963 and 1965. It was, after all, as far back as October 1960 that the Committee of One Hundred, committed to direct action in the cause of British nuclear disarmament, had been formed, and anarchists were prominent among its creators. One of them, Nicolas Walter, asserted, indeed, that

"its inspiration was anarchist, both conscious and unconscious, and the effect of its activities since it was formed has been to give British anarchism a bigger push forward than anything else that has happened since the last war."¹⁴

Walter was probably too partisan in claiming for anarchism the copyright for the Committee's inspiration, but he was right to point out, in the same article, that the sit-down demonstrations led by Bertrand Russell and Michael Scott were not the first of their kind: there had in fact been a series of such demonstrations against nuclear weapons dating back to the early 1950s. The earlier ones were tiny and hardly noticed, but those staged by the Direct Action Committee from 1958 onwards were more formidable. Placed against this background (and the first appearance in 1961 of a new anarchist journal, the monthly *Anarchy*, ought also to have been noticed), the conversion to direct action of the most remarkable English intellectual of the twentieth century ought to have been seen as a significant sign of the times. Instead most "responsible" commentators felt obliged to try to explain it away as a manifestation of either senility or eccentricity.

The Committee of One Hundred, like its constitutionalist running mate the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, failed to achieve its prime purpose, and has long since been dissolved. But, although many people are still understandably reluctant to admit it, the Committee established, or re-established, a tradition of direct action for political or quasi-political purposes in Britain, and its use of the sit-down has since been widely copied. While by no means all of those who use direct action are or have been anarchists, it is nevertheless true that

the specifically anarchist kind of justification for direct action has been increasingly widely accepted. It has come to be seen not merely as a disagreeable necessity in situations where more conventional and decorous methods prove ineffective, but as intrinsically valuable because of its activating, do-it-yourself character.

"To the anarchist, one of the tragedies of human existence is that the vast majority of the world's inhabitants are people *to whom things happen*. Direct action is the method of people who do things, who initiate things, who are their own masters."¹⁵

Or, to put it another way, it converts its participants (in some degree) from the objects of history into its subjects, or makers.

Thus the ground was being prepared for the revival of anarchism even at the time when its funeral orations were being composed. It was left to a writer like Paul Goodman, a man closer to anarchism and closer to the young than the writers quoted above, to notice what was going on, especially in the United States :

" . . . today we see that this 'failure', this discredited 'idealism', is again reviving and becoming relevant to the young and wise. For instance, any Marxist thought that now makes sense is strongly libertarian . . ."¹⁶

That was written in early 1965. Nevertheless it was not until 1968 and the spectacular May happenings in France that it became generally apparent that anarchism had re-emerged as a significant political force. And perhaps the clearest indication that it had "arrived" as far as public consciousness was concerned, was the devotion to it of a first leader (no less) in *The Times* in the early days of June. It was a by no means unsympathetic editorial :

"The creed is being tallied about again, and in the same breath many of the old misunderstandings about it are revived."¹⁷

Since then anarchism has made further inroads: it has attracted the attention of the academics, and last year a complete issue of a leading "journal of comparative politics", *Government and Opposition*, was devoted to it. Several of the articles were strikingly sympathetic and perceptive. But before we can examine and attempt to assess present-day anarchism, a word must be said about those "old misunderstandings" to which *The Times* quite rightly referred.



The root of many of these misunderstandings lies, conceptually speaking, in the ambiguity of the word "anarchy" itself. In its original

Greek form it means simply "no government" or "without government". It is over the implications of that that differences at once arise. For many people have always believed that to have society without government or authority is simply an impossibility; the one depends upon the other, so that the absence of government, laws and authority would mean a catastrophic descent into a chaos of disorder and barbarism, in which brute force and the fear of force would be the dominating features. This is the meaning of Hobbes's state of nature, and it is the source of the popular identification of anarchy with "chaos or confusion."¹⁸ This interpretation has always gained strength at times when people have had direct experience of the unchecked brutality and lawlessness which usually result from the unlooked-for collapse of government and law. At those times the necessary connection between government and a principle of authority on the one hand, and social peace and harmony on the other, seems to be an irrefutable fact of ordinary human experience; as it did to Thomas Hobbes, writing in the aftermath of the English civil war.

But in one sense Hobbes's state of nature is a myth, an imaginative account of human life before the advent of government, and against it must be set the counter-myth of the primitive golden age. According to this myth, a watered-down version of which can be found in the work of Hobbes's near contemporary, John Locke, the period before the advent of government was one of natural harmony among men, who lived together in society but felt neither the need nor the desire to rule or be ruled. This expressed, in a backward-looking and usually rather fatalistic form, the ideal of anarchy, and it always enjoyed a good deal of popularity among the many poor and oppressed who knew themselves to be the victims of government rather than its beneficiaries.

This ambiguity at the theoretical level was bound to cause confusion. But what is more significant in real terms has been the systematic and relentless exploitation of this confusion by the defenders and apologists of government and the established socio-political order throughout history. It has been only too easy for them to denounce rebels and revolutionaries as "anarchists", whether or not this was in fact the case, knowing that they could rely on the general identification of anarchy with chaos and disorder to ensure the more or less automatic discrediting of their challengers as, in fact, nihilists, men of destruction and nothing more. There can be no doubt that those who use the term against radicals today are for the most part perfectly well aware of this particular propaganda advantage that the term possesses. Anarchists, and revolutionaries generally, are now frequently accused of wanting to "destroy society", but those who make the accusation must know that it is unfair, a sleight of hand. Anarchists

do indeed want to destroy the existing forms of society, which they see as essentially authoritarian. But that is not at all the same thing as wishing to destroy society itself. On the contrary, it is precisely because the anarchists believe much more strongly than their opponents that man is essentially and by nature a social animal that they argue that man can dispense with government and all other forms of enforced authority : As George Woodcock puts it :

"The anarchist believes in a moral urge in man powerful enough to survive the destruction of authority and still to hold society together in the free and natural bonds of **fraternity**."¹⁹

It is the conservatives and liberals who are apt to found their defence of the necessity of government and authority on the gloomy Hobbesian picture of man as essentially egoistical, aggressive and competitive, in a word, naturally anti-social. But still the illusion persists that anarchism can be equated with nihilism, and with a love of, and belief in, destruction and violence for their own sake. When Professor Peter Wiles produces the remarkable portmanteau term of abuse "**trendy Anarcho-Fascism**"²⁰ we can reasonably assume that he knows what he is up to; he is not attempting to be fair. But it is more depressing to find Professor Chushichi Tsuzuki, in an article specifically on "**Anarchism in Japan**", writing "Anarchism, or rather nihilism, as a sentiment, flourished in post-war Japan . . ."²¹ as if the two terms were virtually interchangeable. And it is, I think, regrettable that Professor Joll should write loosely of "the curious co-existence in the anarchist tradition of enlightened reason and a belief in **violence**"²² when even the article from which this sentence comes shows that he recognizes that most anarchists have never believed in violence in itself, or for itself, but only as what they have sometimes seen as a necessary means to their political ends, whether immediate or remote.

It would be foolish, however, not to recognize that the orthodox equation, anarchism equals nihilism equals dedication to violence, does also owe quite a lot to the lively folk memory of the most spectacular and perhaps the most futile episode in the history of modern anarchism—the series of bloody acts of terrorism which took place principally in the twenty years before the outbreak of World War I. As to the assassination attacks upon the crowned heads, presidents and other political leaders of Europe and America, these, whether right or wrong, effective or counter-productive, had a clear and comprehensible political purpose; and it is doubtful whether the mass of people were as shocked by, for example, the attacks on hereditary tyrants like the Romanovs, as bourgeois historians would like us to believe (just as the Basque people are reported to have rejoiced when Basque nationalists assassinated **Franco's** police chief in San Sebastian in August

1968.) What really shocked people were the random attacks on ordinary citizens, such as the bomb thrown by Emile Henry in the Café Terminus in Paris on February 12, 1894. One person was killed instantly, another died subsequently and about twenty were injured. At his trial Henry made no secret of the fact that he wanted to kill as many of the bourgeoisie as possible, on the grounds that "no bourgeois can possibly be an innocent person".²³ When another of these dedicated dynamiters, Ravachol, was arrested, he was carried off shouting "Long live anarchism! Long live dynamite!", and an English anarchist pamphlet of the time was reported as including the slogan "By Dynamite to Anarchy".²⁴

It ought to be superfluous to add that many anarchists were as deeply shocked as anyone by such actions as Henry's, and recognized too the damage they would do to the reputation of the movement. This did not, of course, prevent them from being made the victims of the large-scale campaigns of repression which invariably followed the bomb attacks. Nor did it save the reputation of anarchism. Ever since that time the picture of the anarchist as a man with a bomb in his pocket—the picture presented in a brilliant but utterly biased form by Conrad in his novel *The Secret Agent*—has never lost its currency. And it has inevitably gained in plausibility from the wave of bomb-attacks, kidnappings and even assassinations in both developed and developing countries in the past few years. As Nicolas Walter has written, "There is a dark side to anarchism, and there is no point denying it." There is, he admits a "streak of psychopathic violence which always ran and still runs through it."²⁵ But to take this streak as representative of anarchism as a whole, particularly when many anarchists are and have been pacifists totally committed to non-violence, or to regard a "belief in violence" for its own sake as intrinsic to the definition of anarchism—these assumptions are patently false and unfair, and most of those who propagate them know that this is so.



So much for one or two of the commoner misconceptions. We can now turn to more substantial questions. What is the character of the present revival of anarchism? What is the explanation of it? What is its relevance, I mean its relevance for socialists? The last question obviously involves the making of what can only be a personal assessment. The first two questions are possibly in principle susceptible of purely factual and objective answers. Yet in practice any answers are bound to reflect the sympathies and commitments of the respondent, and I cannot claim to offer anything but an essentially subjective, yet not, I think, baseless, interpretation.

First, the character of the revival. There has been a distinct, though fairly modest growth in the numbers of the anarchists themselves. One fairly reliable indicator of this has been the growth in the circulation of the two principal explicitly anarchist journals in Britain, the weekly *Freedom* and the monthly *Anarchy*, both published by the Freedom Press, founded in 1886 when Kropotkin came to England. It is reported that in 1965 both had a circulation of between 2000 and 2500. In 1969 the circulation of *Anarchy* had risen to around 3500, and that of *Freedom* to more than 4000. Way back in 1962 a mere six local groups, all to be found in London, were listed in *Freedom*. By November 1968 no fewer than 85 were listed.¹⁰ Given even a reasonable dose of scepticism about the size and vitality of some of these groups, the expansion is nevertheless remarkable. Anarchists were, as we have seen, active in the campaign against nuclear weapons. Since then many of the techniques of protest and pressure developed in that campaign have been applied to other issues, and anarchists have been active in campaigns among and for the homeless, in particular the revival of squatting from 1969 onwards, in the movement for workers' control, and in the student movement.

However, as has already been suggested, it would be a serious mistake to measure the revival of anarchism only by such narrow criteria. The influence of ideas is always a difficult thing to trace or to measure. How many people have read Freud, or Darwin, or even Marx, to say nothing of Einstein? Yet it cannot be denied that most people think differently because of what these men discovered and wrote, though it may be no more than their names that they are conscious of. Similarly it would be absurd to suggest that the majority of the New Left have read deeply in the writings of Proudhon or Kropotkin, let alone the utterly neglected William Godwin; or that they are familiar with the classic conflict within the First International between Marx and Bakunin. Nevertheless, in some way or other comparable to that by which we become superficially familiar with Darwin without ever reading *The Origin of Species*, anarchist ideas and attitudes have been widely adopted outside the "official" anarchist movement itself. And perhaps this is in itself a paradoxical tribute to the influence of anarchism. The intense resistance among young radicals to being labelled, towards fixed ideologies and doctrines, and formal political parties and sects, has led to their fighting shy of identifying themselves even with anarchism. And, after all, not even the anarchist movement has entirely succeeded in avoiding the kind of bureaucratic fossilization to which the established parties of the left have fallen prey. David Stafford, in an article from which I have already borrowed, quotes a British delegate at a recent international conference of anarchists :

"our aim is not the struggle for anarchism as an abstract ideal but a revolutionary movement with the most libertarian character possible. That is why we prefer to work with large numbers of revolutionaries some of whom might not bear our anarchist label, rather than with certain bureaucrats for whom the only thing that made them anarchists was the use of the label itself."²⁷

Anarchism, after the demise of syndicalism and the triumph of Franco in Spain, had to cope with the problem created by the apparent hopelessness of its situation as the remnants of what had once been a mass movement. It could hardly be expected that it would escape all the vices of sectarianism, and it did not. It developed to some extent the same inward-looking character and the same kind of obsessions—with having the "correct line", and with interminable and bitterly fought disputes over doctrine which were largely meaningless because they had so little to do with action of any kind.

To the extent that the anarchist movement took on the character of a political sect, to that same extent it identified itself with the past rather than the present of the left, and has therefore suffered in a lesser degree the fate of the other survivals from the radical and socialist past. And so, as Woodcock noted, when he came to reconsider the fate of anarchism in 1968, some six years after writing his book, it is

"anarchism, as a doctrine rather than as a movement, (which) has had a revival during the last few years . . . The old revolutionary sect has not been resurrected, but in its place has appeared a moral-political movement typical of the age."²⁸

Today, as he noted, people "become" anarchists, rather than "join" a movement—"A change of heart rather than a party ticket." And it is even more likely that they will not even accept the anarchist label. What they will accept is a great deal of the philosophy of anarchism, and they may well seek to combine it with elements of Marxism, socialism and even existentialism. What they take from anarchism is its libertarian and anti-authoritarian principles.

Now this in itself might not mean very much. There are, after all, not many political groupings of any colour who would advertise themselves as being either anti-libertarian or authoritarian. Everybody is for personal liberty and against tyranny and dictatorship. But the commitment I am referring to goes a long way beyond any vaguely liberal consensus of that sort. What is widely rejected by the New Left is that separation between general principles and specific policies, between utopian goals and present practice, between ends and means, which for the liberal empiricists is the very beginning of practical political wisdom. The idea that you can be committed as an ultimate

ideal to a wholly free and equal society, in which distinctions between rulers and ruled, leaders and led, them and us, have become meaningless; yet at the same time accept that in the present it is possible to work towards such an ideal by means of movements, institutions and organizations in which such odious distinctions are all too plainly part of their basic structure—this dichotomy, or paradox, as its defenders might call it, is seen by the New Left as a blatant and corrupting contradiction. Similarly rejected is the parallel divorce between personal conduct and political convictions, as found in the socialist who sends his children to private (and privileged) schools or plays the stock exchange, justifying himself by arguing that individual gestures are futile and ineffectual: it is the system which has to be changed. The cry of "revolution now" is not simply the demand for an immediate political upheaval, but also the assertion that the kind of society which only a revolution can produce can nevertheless be foreshadowed, demonstrated, shown in miniature in the personal behaviour of revolutionaries and in the kind of institutions they create.

"The new style of revolutionary politics is people doing things for themselves . . . It will be a revolt from below which breaks up all the repressive institutions of our society today . . . and replaces them by popularly administered, democratic, worker-controlled organizations in all the different institutions of social life. . . . What we've got to do is build a movement which already shows you, in anticipation, the sort of institutions that will characterize the post-revolutionary society."¹⁰

Nor is this type of anticipation regarded as some kind of optional extra, an attractive top-dressing beneath which the *serious* work of making a revolution goes forward. On the contrary, it is seen as essential, because the way in which the revolution is prepared, the character of the revolutionary movement, will unavoidably determine what kind of revolution it is :

"these aesthetic needs and goals must from the beginning be present in the reconstruction of society and not only at the end or in the far future. Otherwise, the needs and satisfactions which reproduce a repressive society would be carried over into the new society."¹¹

Marcuse's highly individual terminology, which is not arbitrary but reflects a carefully worked-out theoretical approach, need not obscure the fact that he is making a now widely accepted point. It is a point which, if not consciously taken over from the anarchists, is at any rate closer to anarchist principle than it is to the dominant traditions of socialism. It is Nicolas Walter's view that this is the core of the specifically anarchist contribution to the struggle to change society :

"to emphasize the goal of a libertarian society, and to insist on libertarian methods of achieving it. This is in fact a single contribution, for the most important point we can make is not just that the end does not justify the means, but that the means determines the end—that means *are* ends in most cases."¹¹

Again, stated in so general a way, the point can seem unexceptionable. But there is a conflict here with much of the most central Marxist thinking:

"A number of Socialists have latterly launched a regular crusade against what they call the *principle of authority*. It suffices to tell them that this or that act is *authoritarian* for it to be condemned"

wrote Engels sarcastically almost exactly one hundred years ago. To him this attitude was manifestly nonsensical, and he rammed his point home by adding that "a revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is."¹² Whether Engels was right or wrong in his attitude, there is no doubt that his observations are as topical in 1971 as they were in 1872. There are perhaps more socialists today than there were then who would emphatically reject his view that a revolution must be authoritarian because it necessarily involves "one part of the population imposing its will upon the other part". For them, if the revolution is authoritarian, it will have failed. Nor would they accept his contention that there can be no organization, and no large-scale industry, without authority, notwithstanding Hal Draper's claim (in *The Socialist Register 1970* p. 290) that Engels in this article "definitively disposed of the anarchist conception of the question" of authority.

For this same kind of reasons, many of the New Left would also reject Lenin's criticisms of "spontaneity" in *What is to be done?* as the Cohn-Bendits do, for example. Lenin argued that if the field was left to spontaneous action by the workers, they would never develop more than a trade-union consciousness, and that an ideology, and a specifically socialist consciousness, "would have to be brought to them from without".¹³ This was the role of the vanguard party. It is for these very reasons that the New Left is not only apt to reject the concept of a vanguard party, but even to view the very idea of ideology with suspicion, because, as Martin Oppenheimer puts it, "the tendency . . . to dominate action with ideology is subversive of democracy." And "The problem of ideology is that overplanning leads to separation from the masses, hence to elitism . . ."¹⁴ Whether or not the **revolutionism** of the New Left deserves to be castigated as a form of what Lenin attacked as "*petty-bourgeois revolutionism*, which smacks of anarchism"¹⁵ is a point we shall have to return to. But that it "smacks of anarchism" can hardly be denied.



To explain these developments is perhaps the task of the social or political scientist, which I am not. Moreover, from my own partisan viewpoint I find it difficult, if not impossible, to separate explanation from justification. But perhaps, given a certain basic respect for fact, it is pointless to make the attempt. There are unlikely to be any impartial explanations in this field which do not lose insight in the same degree as they gain in neutrality.

The specifically political reasons for the revived influence of anarchist thinking are not hard to find. They lie in the failure, as vehicles of socialism, of its two major institutionalized forms in the twentieth century—social democracy and orthodox communism. For the better part of the century the only substantial choice for socialists appeared to lie between these two major movements. Both the decisive success of the Bolshevik revolution, and the appallingly complex character of its subsequent development, reinforced this polarization. So did the Cold War, especially in its most virulent phase after 1945. It seemed that the choice had to be between a thorough-going socialism which involved giant brutalities and long-term denials of many elementary freedoms, and a movement which, while it respected certain liberal democratic principles, had watered socialism down to a point of near invisibility. The affinities between those two movements ranged against each other were as remarkable as their differences. In both cases the ultimate ideal of socialism, as envisaged by Marx, for example, a classless, stateless and therefore totally free and fraternal society, seemed to be a perpetually receding goal, postponed until a tomorrow which never came. In both movements there was a glaring, painful contrast between the principles they continued to preach and the day to day policies which they espoused. In both cases the parties became political machines, bureaucratized, centralized, intolerant of dissent or even debate. Social democratic parties more and more resembled the bourgeois parties they competed with. Communist parties lost the character of mass movements. On both sides there was the tendency to equate socialism with state power and state control; and somehow, even to many who knew little of Marx, or Morris or John Ruskin, this seemed a long way in spirit from the old dreams of co-operation, comradeship and equality. This other, popular conception of socialism never quite disappeared, and, in however vague and idealistic a form, it provided a subversive test by which the theory and practice of the established socialist institutions were weighed in the balance, and found wanting.

Until about 1956 there were few who were able to escape from

the trap of a choice between these two corrupted giants. But in that year the coincidence of Khrushchev's long and detailed indictment of Stalin with the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising, inaugurated a crisis in international communism which has in fact continued ever since. The immediate result of those events which was most important in the British context, was the defection from the British communist Party of a substantial number of its leading intellectuals. Most of these, so far from moving from dedicated communism to dedicated anti-communism as had happened so often in the past, were determined to find a third path to socialism which would avoid the excesses and failures of both social democracy and orthodox communism. This can be seen as the first link in the chain of developments which bring us eventually to the current anarchist revival. But there was still a long way to go. Three years later, in 1959, G. D. H. Cole concluded his *History of Socialist Thought* with a personal confession of faith: "I am neither a Communist nor a Social-Democrat, because I regard both as creeds of centralization and bureaucracy." At that time, it was, as Peter Sedgwick has recently said, "no more than a solitary confession of faith, from a maverick thinker . . .". But a whole range of political developments in the 1960s served to convert Cole's credo into a commonplace of the international New Left.

On the one hand the processes of de-Stalinization in Russia and eastern Europe slowed down, and were even reversed in some respects, and the Soviet-Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was the clearest evidence that the Soviet Union was ready to use force if necessary to maintain its ideological grip on eastern Europe. Communist parties remained bureaucratized, centralized and intolerant, while at the same time, by an apparent paradox, in western Europe and other parts of the world, they were increasingly committed to constitutionalism, the politics of gradualism, reform and co-operation with social-democratic and even catholic parties. Revolutionary perspectives were, to all intents and purposes, abandoned. On the other side the experience of social-democratic government in Britain in particular, and especially perhaps of its complicity in the American war on Vietnam, was bitterly disillusioning even for those whose faith in the potential of social democracy was strictly limited. At the same time, although America's involvement in south-east Asia was always justified in cold war terms as part of "the fight against communism", in Europe the confrontation mythology of the cold war appeared increasingly meaningless, and its hold on political thought and attitudes declined correspondingly.

In this way the conditions emerged in which the mapping out of that "third path" towards socialism became increasingly possible at

the same time as it was so clearly seen to be still necessary. Given the history of the two major traditions of organized socialism, the presence of a strong anarchist, or anarchistic element, in this third variant of socialism, was more or less inevitable.

Consider, for instance, the single fact that young socialists and radicals often now describe themselves as "libertarian socialists", or "libertarian Marxists": In terms of the theory of socialism or Marxism that word "libertarian" ought to be redundant. It ought to be unnecessary, because it is tautologous. That it is thought necessary to be quite explicit in this way is not primarily a sign of theoretically superfluous anarchist leanings, but a comment on the appalling history of socialism in our time. The terrible fact is that in the minds, and even more in the bitter experience, of many millions of people in the twentieth century, the word "socialism" suggests immediately either ruthless authoritarianism or, at best, the steady increase in the power of the state. These popular images cannot simply be brushed aside as testimonials to the success of ceaseless capitalist propaganda. Nor will it do to talk weakly of "mistakes" having been made, in the process of "building socialism". Such language is in itself an indication of the decay of the humane conscience and imagination which has taken place among many long-standing socialists. No. Terrible crimes have been committed in the name of socialism. The creed has been horribly perverted, and diluted. The reputation of socialism has suffered unimaginably. No rehabilitation of it can have any chance of success which does not start from the honest recognition of these disagreeable facts. Hence the necessity, and the rightness, of the use of that word "libertarian".

This is, as I see it, the political background to the anarchist revival. But there are also social and economic factors behind it. These can be grouped under two major headings, the first of which is centralization. A good deal has been written by now on the recent rapid concentration of economic power in the hands of fewer and fewer, and larger and larger, international firms. The name habitually given to this process by those who support it is "rationalization", and "rationalization" has certainly not been confined to the purely economic sphere. Attempts to strengthen the power of the TUC at the expense of individual unions, proposals for the "reform" of local government involving the absorption of smaller local units into larger ones—these and many other developments have the effect of concentrating decision-taking powers in fewer hands. There is now much talk of the need for de-centralization (though far less effective action), and while it would be absurd to attribute this to the direct influence of anarchism, it is certainly the case that anarchism does offer, as perhaps no other political creed does, a systematic opposition to

centralization. Anarchism, with its emphasis on self-activity, on people having direct power over their own lives, makes an obviously relevant challenge and response to the feelings of helplessness and powerlessness which are the inevitable obverse of the concentration of power at the top.

No doubt the mere existence of these centralizing tendencies would not necessarily generate any kind of active political response. But other recent social developments have helped to produce such a challenge. The reasonably steady improvement of general living standards brings with it an increase in self-esteem, in the sense of personal dignity. There is a general sense of having a rising status within society. Yet at the same time this growth of self-respect does not bring with it any greater power over one's own life. On the contrary, if anything the concentrating tendencies I briefly referred to mean that the mass of the people become increasingly powerless even as their status seems to be improving. The tension created by this conflict is at the root of many of the outbreaks of discontent in developed societies. The rising number of strikes, stoppages, and other protests at the work place which relate, not primarily to matters of money, but to seemingly small privileges, rights and dignities of the workers, is one indication of this tension. But so too is the growing number of protests against what is seen as the arbitrary, high-handed behaviour of both local and national authorities. Needless to say, most of these strikes and protests take place without a thought being given to anarchist theories about direct action, or the destruction of state power. But in this situation it was perhaps predictable that a minority who looked beyond their immediate discontents should see that anarchism had something relevant to say about the situation.

This conflict is perhaps most clearly grasped by the growing numbers of those who obtain some form of after-school, or tertiary, education. That they receive this education constitutes society's recognition of their talent and ability. But there are now far too many of them to be absorbed into what is in any case a numerically contracting power elite. The economic rationale for "producing" so many students, stated in the Robbins Report of 1963 and elsewhere, was that a more sophisticated economy needed this "trained manpower". But despite this, growing numbers of this indubitably privileged group perceive, even before they reach the job market itself, that there is sharp dislocation between their education and their ability on the one hand, and the opportunities open to them on the other. Furthermore, since students are now less exclusively drawn from the most privileged sectors of society they are less inclined to take for granted the period of comparative freedom and independence which being a student provides. They are often keenly aware of the contrast between this

temporary freedom to experiment in life styles, and the constraint of ordinary working life which awaits them, and to which their less fortunate contemporaries have already had to submit. A doctrine such as anarchism, which focuses directly upon the question of power and its relation to freedom, has therefore a natural appeal to a substantial number of the most conscious students.



So much by way of what is, inevitably, a fairly speculative and tentative attempt at explanation. It remains to supplement what has already been said with a brief, crude and essentially tentative attempt to assess the value of anarchism at this particular juncture in the history of socialism. No absolutist assessment, independent of a consideration of particular historical circumstances, is in my view possible. The value of any individual political tendency can only be judged in relation to the needs of the time, and these inevitably vary.

Something has already been said about the revival of anarchism as a reaction against the bureaucratic and authoritarian forms which socialism in practice has taken. I would argue that in this respect the revived influence of the anarchist approach is in general both beneficial and necessary. It is surely clear that if future socialist movements achieving some kind of success are to avoid re-enacting the grimmer episodes in the history of communism, or the pathetic decline of social democratic gradualism, something more will be required than vague good intentions and ritual denunciations of Stalinism and reformism. The root causes of these crimes and failures have to be uncovered. That involves, for example, a willingness to think again about the connections between Stalinism and Bolshevism in a more objective manner than was really possible in the ethos of the cold war, when it was necessary for the Left to mount some defence against the reactionary attempt to discredit the whole revolutionary enterprise in Russia and everywhere else as inherently and ineradicably totalitarian. Among the anti-authoritarian *groupuscules* in France today, Richard Gombin tells us,

"There is criticism of the very nature of the October revolution, a political revolution above all, brought about by a small minority of professional militants who imposed their own tactics and aims on the masses."

That kind of revolution, a "revolution from above" as it is opprobriously called, was perhaps the only kind of revolution that was possible in Russia in 1917, and we might come to a similar conclusion about other revolutions. But this does not contradict what is suggested by some anarchists—that the roots of Stalinism lay in the character of

the revolution itself, and the character of the revolutionary party which made it. Long before the Bolsheviks, Bakunin, in his great dispute with **Marx**, had asked :

"How can you expect an egalitarian and a free society to emerge from an authoritarian organization? It is impossible. The International, embryo of future human society, must be from this moment the faithful image of our principles of liberty and federation, and reject from its midst any principle leading to authority and dictatorship."³⁸

Trotsky, with comparable prophetic insight, wrote in 1904 an attack on Lenin's "substitutism", as he called it : the doctrine that the party of the proletariat can act on behalf of the proletariat. He predicted the following developments :

"the party organization (the caucus) at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organization; and finally a single "dictator" substitutes himself for the Central Committee . . ."³⁹

And we need only recall Rosa Luxemburg's criticisms of Lenin at that same time, and her critical commentary on the policies of Lenin and **Trotsky** in the immediate aftermath of the October revolution, to realize that the current questioning of orthodox Leninism has a long and politically respectable ancestry.

The case against the vanguard party, and against revolution from above, does not depend simply upon the argument that they were the roots from which Stalinism grew. I would also argue that, as far as the societies of the capitalist West are concerned, social and political developments have made the Leninist type of party organization an anachronism. Given both the repressive character of **Tsarism**, the backward character of the mass of the Russian peasantry, and the comparative smallness of the Russian proletariat, Lenin's prescriptions were probably appropriate. But none of those conditions at present obtain in the West (although the intensification of repression against left-wing organizations might well necessitate tighter forms of political organization, as has already been shown to some degree in the United States.) In particular the character of what is a comparatively well-off and sophisticated working population makes it exceedingly unlikely that they would ever accept in large numbers the political dragooning and the hierarchical structure of the archetypal vanguard party. Such a conception is simply incompatible with that growing sense of personal dignity and independence to which I have already referred. Moreover, if it is accepted (as I believe it ought to be) that a key role in the socialist movements of the future is bound to be occupied by radical students, then it must be recognized that this group is extremely

independent-minded and not remotely likely to submit to the strait-jacket of Leninism.

If the model of a vanguard party is inappropriate to the conditions of advanced capitalism, it is also the case that the preoccupations of anarchism have a direct relevance to that society, in that as direct economic oppression becomes less widespread, resentment focuses increasingly upon the manipulative and authoritarian aspects of the system. At the same time, as Tom Nairn has pointed out in his essay on the French May events—and this point about the potential of contemporary industrial society has been stressed by Marcuse—sheer technological advance has brought the actual possibility of freedom much nearer :

"All the evidence of May suggests strongly that without a powerful dose of anarchic sentiment and ideas, a revolution of this sort and in these conditions is very unlikely to get far. It is no longer enough to say, with Lenin, that Marxists and anarchists can agree on distant aims--on the ultimate state of 'freedom' the revolution will one day bring about but must disagree as to methods. Under advanced capitalism where society is materially much closer to the possibility of "freedom", means and ends are also necessarily much closer."¹⁴⁰

The question of means and ends brings us to a more fundamental case to be made against not only Leninism but also social democracy, which is implicit in the quotation from Bakunin. What is there insisted on is a consistency between means and ends, not simply for some general moral reason, but because it is in practice impossible to separate means from ends. The ends, the goals arrived at, are determined by the means adopted to reach them. A revolution from above may achieve great things. Social democratic reformism also has substantial achievements to its credit. But in both cases there are limits to what they can achieve which are inherent in the methods to which they are committed. For both, in their different styles, are examples of Trotsky's "substitutism". Both claim for themselves the role of the agent of working people, and both in doing so deny the virtue and to some extent the possibility of self-activity on the part of the people. Now self-activity is one of the crucial characteristics of a truly socialist society. But self-activity is the last thing that can possibly be legislated into existence, or handed down from above in any way. The idea of liberating or emancipating people from above, in this most fundamental sense, is simply a contradiction in terms. As Rosa Luxemburg said, "socialism by its very nature cannot be decreed or introduced by ~~unjust~~."¹⁴¹ Consequently it has to be recognised that a difference over the means by which it is held, that socialism may come about—either by self-activity on the part of the people, or through legislation or the leadership of a political party—is not simply

a dispute about means, but about ends as well, since nothing worth calling socialism *can* come about through legislation, manipulation, centralized planning etc. If we want finally to win for ourselves a fully free and democratic society, those same principles will have to be embodied in the struggle for it, and in the agencies of that struggle. The costs of separating the future from the present, means from ends, present necessities from the ultimate utopia, have already been commented on. The last devastating cost of this disjunction is that it guarantees that utopia will never be reached.

However, it must be recognized that this certainly does not entirely dispose of Lenin's attack on those who placed their faith in "spontaneous" revolt from below. For if a faith in spontaneity meant that socialists should abandon any kind of agitational or propaganda activities for fear of dominating over people, and instead simply wait for revolution to break out, then surely Lenin has right on his side. One can sympathize with suspicions of leadership, and it is easy to see how the propagandist function naturally tends to produce an arrogant "**we** are bringing the Truth to you" mentality. Nevertheless it is the clear duty of socialists to counteract the overwhelming influence of established ideology by propagating socialist ideas and a socialist analysis of society. And I can think of no formula which would ensure that the elitist tendencies in such activity are avoided. In practice, however, it is often possible to observe the contrast between political groups whose primary concern is to impose their own direction and interpretation upon some movement of protest or revolt, and by attempting to do so effectively alienate those they would like to convert, and those groups and individuals who, so to speak, submerge themselves in, or place themselves at the service of those movements.

No discussion of the relations between spontaneity and organization can ignore the experience of the French May events. Here certainly there was spontaneity—an entirely unpredicted, unexpected explosion, which developed without leadership or even the support of established political bodies such as the parties of the left and the CGT, and in which, as commentators have pointed out, even the small established revolutionary groups (Trotskyists, Maoists etc.) played only a marginal role. But in the end, despite the evident paralysis of the state during the general strike, the regime was able to reassert its authority. We may well want to reject the view that an established, recognized political body was required to replace the Gaullist regime by filling the vacuum which existed at the end of May, for such a conventional type of replacement seems quite out of key with the events that had gone before. But it is clear, I think, that some more coherent and organized resistance would have been necessary to sustain the revolt

beyond the challenge of de Gaulle's speech of May 30, and that a greater measure of organization will be necessary if any future upheaval of that character is to succeed any better. Tom Nairn saw in spontaneity at once the strength and weakness of the upheaval:

"For, if spontaneity—the necessarily unplanned breaking of old forms and the old horizons of consciousness—was an obvious lesson of May, it was also the most obvious weakness of the movement. The same shattering unexpectedness which paralysed the state and the whole of society, and made a total, apocalyptic change seem possible, also held the revolution fatally in check, and made a reversion to established patterns inevitable."⁴³

But while I would not, for these reasons, deny that the cult of spontaneity and resistance to organization can be carried too far, it remains the case that this is in many respects a necessary reaction against the theory and practice of authoritarian socialism. And it ought to be clear by now that I mean more by this than what is implied in Lenin's apparently similar observation that "Anarchism was not infrequently a kind of penalty for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement."⁴⁴

I have concentrated on the value of the anarchist contribution to socialist thought and action, but it is worth adding that I agree with those who argue, as *The Times* in that unique editorial (written, evidently, under the intoxicating influence of the May events) that anarchism has a permanent value in that it offers "an abiding criticism of society as it is developing in the advanced countries." It offers a challenge to the Weberian rationality, the organizing, technocratic character of advanced industrial society in the name of starved emotions, repressed creativity and the under-valued imagination. This challenge gets a sympathetic response among many people precisely because it connects with their own experience. It would be pessimistic indeed to conclude that this kind of repression is inherent in industrial society, but it is certainly common to such societies regardless of their political orientation today, and so long as it persists, so long will anarchism in this aspect remain relevant and valuable, and will retain its appeal. Theodore Roszak has discussed the technocratic rationality of advanced industrial society at length in his striking book, *The Making of a Counter-Culture*, and has stressed the relevance of anarchism in this respect.⁴⁵ Dismissive suggestions that this is no more than backward-looking, Luddite, romantic nostalgia reveal only the imaginative poverty of those who make them. To equate the process of industrialization with "the advance of civilization" was the crude ideology of nineteenth century businessmen. It ought not to form a part of contemporary socialism.

My argument hitherto has been that in a number of respects anar-

chist ideas make an important contribution to the present development of anti-authoritarian socialism. Since this is my central point, I shall not obscure it by dealing at length with those aspects of anarchist thought and practice which seem to me either misguided or simply wrong. But something must be said about them, since it would be misleading to give the impression that anarchism can be regarded in *toto* as a beneficial influence, or as an ideology which is wholly compatible with a socialist understanding of society.

Many anarchists also call themselves libertarians, and in general it is true to say that the central anarchist commitment and concept is freedom. Thus anarchism bears an obvious relation to liberalism, and can even be regarded, in David Stafford's words, as "the successor of nineteenth century liberalism in its primary concern with the freedom of the individual."⁴⁹ The value of anarchist libertarianism has already been stressed. But while it is clear that the anarchist definition of freedom is a far more radical and fundamental one than that of conventional liberalism, and therefore offers a much more far-reaching challenge to any type of repressive society, in some respects anarchist thinking about freedom remains imprisoned within the assumptions of bourgeois liberalism. The individual is apt to be seen as being fundamentally independent of society. It is not that anarchists deny man's social nature—quite the contrary, as was pointed out earlier—but there is often in anarchist thinking the hidden assumption which is central to liberal thought from Hobbes and Locke onwards, that the individual is a being complete in himself, self-sufficient, and therefore capable of a satisfying independent existence. Socialism, on the other hand, rejects the idea, often implicit in the very use of the term "the individual", that a man can be complete as a human being in himself. It is only in society, in a community, that he or she becomes fully human. Starting from that kind of analysis of the relation between "the individual" and "society", socialism therefore naturally comes to place a high value on community, fraternity, and solidarity. It recognizes that the logic of freedom, understood in the liberal-anarchist sense, can lead ultimately to the wilderness of isolation and loneliness. It is therefore suspicious of a theory which could be interpreted in such a way as to imply the dissolution of *all* social ties on the grounds that they are restrictive of individual freedom. There may be a conflict in such situations between the logic of freedom and the logic of community, and it is not self-evident that people always prefer or need individual freedom more than they need the sense of community with their fellows. This tendency in anarchism is inevitably strengthened when it is linked to the view of society, held, for example, by Nicolas Walter, as "nothing more than a collection of individual~". 'Quite apart from the sociological naïvete of this belief, its

significance for orthodox liberalism, which attaches no value to notions of community or fraternity, is obvious; and it is, as they say, "no accident", that this sociological individualism should have been vehemently expounded by the apostle of liberalism, Sir Karl Popper, and his acolytes.

The failure to escape the heritage of liberalism is also demonstrated by the perennial anti-statism of the anarchists. As Walter points out "anarchists have traditionally concentrated their opposition to authority on the state", and he himself does not deviate from that tradition. He too regards "the overwhelming power of the state" as "the main enemy of the free individual".⁴⁷ Even a more explicitly socialist anarchist like Daniel Guérin writes in the same vein of the state as "the most deadly of the preconceptions which have blinded men through the ages". And he goes on to quote Stirner with approval: "The State has always one purpose: to limit, control, subordinate the individual and subject him to the general purpose. . . ." Proudhon too eloquently expounded the same view of the state. It is not necessary to be a Fabian, a Stalinist, or any kind of believer in state socialism, to feel the need to quarrel with this anarchist view. To take the lesser point first, it is manifestly false that the *sole* and *exclusive* purpose or function of the state is "to limit, control, subordinate the individual". The state executes a variety of functions of which this is only one. It is, for instance, undeniable that the extension of state intervention in social and economic life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Britain and other capitalist societies, brought a net gain to the mass of working people, not only in improved living conditions but also in the diminution of the most brutal forms of oppression and exploitation by capitalist employers. Now it may well be that one powerful motive for this extension of state regulation was the desire to avoid popular unrest. And it can also be admitted that the welfare functions of the modern state involve a degree of regimentation. But neither of these two considerations outweighs the fact that, in relation to *laissez-faire* capitalism, the state has in many ways increased, not diminished, the concrete freedom of ordinary people.

This brings us naturally to the second and more important objection to the anarchist view of the state. It is absurdly *ahistorical* to suggest that at all times and in all places it is the state which is "the main enemy of the free individual". Such a view might be appropriate in the context of, for example, the Soviet Union today. In the context of nineteenth and twentieth century capitalism it is a piece of misleading dogma. As I have just suggested, the state operates in some respects as a curb upon the "natural" tendencies of capitalism, but it can also act within limits determined by the capitalist character of

the economy and society. Hence if the British state was to vanish overnight, the orgy of individual freedom which the anarchists would presumably expect to follow would very soon give way to an orgy of unrestrained repression and exploitation by capitalism, which would then know no limits upon its drive for profit. The lack of any systematic sociological analysis implied by the anarchist obsession with the state (and, in practice, with the state's most obvious agency of control, the police) would be astonishing, were it not that we can see reflected here once more the debilitating inheritance of conventional liberalism. For it is utterly characteristic of liberal political theory to juggle with those two abstractions, "the state" and "the individual" in such a way as to suggest that all political conflict and activity revolves around the opposition of these two. Much anarchist thinking appears to accept that fictional conception of the social order without question or qualification.

Freedom, independence, the individual, and the state. A political creed which revolves as closely as does anarchism around these few concepts is bound to be in some vitally important ways impoverished as a vision of future society, and deficient in its analysis of present society. It is principally in these respects that anarchism reveals itself as old-fashioned and, taken as a whole, as no substitute for socialism. But future socialism has got to be more consistently anti-authoritarian and libertarian than it has been in the past. It has got to recognize the inevitable dependence of ends upon means, the inseparability of the two. And in these respects, and others, as I have attempted to argue, the anarchist contribution is, knowing what we do of the history of socialism in this century, quite simply indispensable.

NOTES

1. Quoted in *The Times*, 18 December, 1970.
2. Quoted by Eric Lubbock in the *New Statesman*, 25 December, 1970.
3. Quoted by Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville, *French Revolution* 1968 (Penguin 1968), p. 184.
4. A phrase used by Waldeck-Rochet in his television election address on June 21. Quoted by G. and D. Cohn-Bendit in *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative* (Penguin 1969), p. 164.
5. As reported in *The Guardian*, 17 May, 1968.
6. As reported in *The Times*, 28 May, 1968.
7. Stephen Hatch, "From C.N.D. to newest Left", in *Anarchy and Culture* (Routledge, 1969), p. 126.
8. *Op cit.*, part iv.
9. Daniel Gukrin, *Anarchism*, (Monthly Review Press, 1970), p. 156.
10. George Woodcock. *Anarchism*, (Penguin, 1963), p. 443.
11. *Sunday Times*, June, 1963.
12. *New York Review of Books*, 25 March, 1965.
13. Adam Roberts, "The Uncertain Anarchists", *New Society*, 27 May, 1965.

- Nicolas Walter, "Direct Action and the new pacificism", *Anarchy*, 13, March 1962, p. 92.
15. Editorial in *Anarchy* 13.
16. Paul Goodman, *Peace News*, 12 February, 1965.
17. *The Times*, 3 June, 1968.
18. See Nicolas Walter, *About Anarchism*, (Freedom Press, 1969), p. 6.
19. George Woodcock, "Anarchism Revisited", *Commentary*, August, 1968, p. 58.
20. See *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 194.
21. Chushichi Tsuzuki, "Anarchism in Japan", *Government and Opposition*, Autumn 1970, p. 502. All the articles cited here from *Government and Opposition*, Autumn 1970, have now been reprinted in book form: *Anarchism Today*, edited by David Apter and James Joll (Macmillan, 1971).
22. James Joll, "Anarchism—a living tradition", *ibid.*, p. 544.
23. Quoted by J. C. Longoni, *Four Patients of Dr. Diebler*, (Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), p. 160.
24. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 149.
25. Nicolas Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 14, 34.
26. All these facts are taken from David Stafford's article "Anarchists in Britain today", *Government and Opposition*, Autumn 1970, p. 486.
27. Quoted by David Stafford, *op. cit.*, pp. 497-8.
28. "Anarchism Revisited", *op. cit.*, p. 55.
29. Robin Blackburn, in a television interview. *The Listener*, 22 January, 1970.
30. Herbert Marcuse, "Liberation from the Affluent Society, in *The Dialectics of Liberation*, (Penguin, 1968), p. 186.
31. Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
32. Frederick Engels, "On Authority", in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, (Moscow, 1962), p. 636, 639.
33. V. I. Lenin, *What is to be done?* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969), p. 31.
34. Martin Oppenheimer. *Urban Guerilla* (Penguin, 1970), pp. 50, 56.
35. V. I. Lenin, "*Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1968), p. 16.
36. Peter Sedgwick quotes Cole's remark at the opening of his essay, "Varieties of Socialist Thought", in *Protest and Discontent*, (Penguin, 1970), p. 37.
37. Richard Gombin, "The Ideology and Practice of Contestation seen through Recent Events in France", *Government and Opposition*, Autumn 1970, p. 414.
38. Quoted by James Joll in *The Anarchists*, (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964), p. 105. These words appeared in a circular issued by the Jura anarchists, according to Professor Joll, but his cited source is the works of Bakunin.
39. In a pamphlet, "Our Political Tasks", published in August 1904, and quoted by Isaac Deutscher in *The Prophet Armed*, (Oxford, 1954), p. 60. This passage is also quoted, and the relation of party to class discussed by Ralph Miliband in "Lenin's The State and Revolution", *The Socialist Register* 1970, pp. 313-316 especially.
40. From Angelo Quattrocchi and Tom Nairn, *The Beginning of the End*, (Panther, 1968), p. 136.
41. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1961), p. 70.

42. Quattrocchi and Nairn, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
43. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism*, p. 16.
44. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture*, (Faber, 1970), especially Chapter I, and pp. 264-5.
45. David Stafford, *op. cit.*, p. 499. James Joll, in the article already cited, also observes that "Anarchism owes more to conventional liberalism than some of its exponents are willing to admit." *ibid.*, p. 554.
46. Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
47. *Zbid.*, p. 9, 16.
48. Gukrin, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.