

# "A NEW ANARCHISM"

The Venice Gathering was heartening, optimistic.... and green



Murray Bookchin at the microphone, saying:

Radical social ecology provides an important, unifying and cohering perspectives towards the crucial issues of humanity's relationship with nature and the reconstruction of a future libertarian society.... It calls for a basic change in this image of a biological 'other' to which humanity traditionally opposed itself and it emphasises the creative, fecund, mutualistic and holistic side of nature as a grounding for a libertarian ethics. As William Trager, a distinguished American biologist observes: 'The conflict in nature between different kinds of organisms has been popularly expressed in phrases like 'the struggle for existence' and 'the survival of the fittest'. Yet few people realise that mutual cooperation between different organisms--symbiosis--is just as important, and the 'fittest' may be the one that most helps another to survive'. This conclusion could be easily taken from Kropotkin's Mutual Aid and adds a vitally new dimension to anarchist theory at a time when ecological breakdown has become one of the greatest problems confronting us in the years ahead.

Murray Bookchin

It was a stroke of genius to call an international anarchist gathering in 1984--the year when we are supposed to be cowering under the glare of Big Brother. There was no cowering in Venice dur-

ing the last week of September, when about 2000 anarchists from practically all over the world--from America north and south, Australia and the Far East and of course all of Europe were welcomed by our Italian hosts and hostesses (if you see what I mean) who had performed a miracle of organisation. For, although the gathering had been planned by comrades centred in Milan for over a year, it was not until three days before the gathering date; that the Communists--majority on the communal council of Venice--yielded to the Socialist mayor's decision and agreed to let the anarchists have their way.

By the time we arrived, however, a huge marquee had been erected, blown down by a freak storm and re-erected in the Campo S Polo, while in the main centre of operations, Campo Santa Margherita, two large shelters for tables and seating, a kitchen and wine bar, a book stall, an information centre and a stage for music and play acting had been built--while at another venue the Faculty of Architecture, everything had been organised for large meetings with simultaneous translations and, in three other rooms, smaller discussion meetings and an overflow from the main lecture hall.

A wide selection of subjects on 'Anarchism and....' were presented, starting predictably with considerations of Orwell's 1984 and the real 1984 that we now live in--and leading, through the days, to feminism, syndicalism, urban struggle, state communism, self-management, cultural imperialism, social

ecology and other subjects.

It was impossible for one person to cover all the meetings, which went on simultaneously--but those I did cover all had one heartening characteristic; they all approached their subjects with the attitude of 'Where do we go from here?'. Older, middle-aged or younger, er, all the speakers--and the contributors from the floor--addressed themselves to the future. Those who looked back to the past did so only to learn lessons for the future as well as the present.

This did make for dullness. Only those those who demand nothing more than calls 'To the barricades' squeaked from the comfort of a Gondola, could have failed to find the real comfort in this gathering: that the anarchist movement in 1984 is addressing itself to 1984 and not to 1848.

The issues of feminism and ecology were strongly represented, showing the recognition that ruthless exploitation of each other and of the planet are as much a menace to all out future as the power of the state and are strongly interlinked. This event was called a 'gathering' and that is what it was; people gathering together and talking to each other, formally and informally. I'd like to think I have made some new friends from faraway places--and I would like to, thank our Italian comrades who worked so hard and organised so brilliantly--freely and voluntarily and anarchistically.

PHILIP SANSON