

Attempted Theft of an Organisation

Hillel Steiner's report states that the crucial issue is whether the "expulsions" of 25th October 1982 were justified. He concludes that they were not justified. It is implicit in this conclusion that the EC continued to exist after Tame had declared it to be dead, and that the former EC majority (Alexander, Brady, Collier, Hawdon, Layson, McDonagh, Rantala, Steele, Zegarac), not the minority (Davis, Farrer, Levy, Tame), constituted the morally legitimate Executive Committee of the Libertarian Alliance.

I naturally welcomed these conclusions of Advisory Council member Hillel Steiner. He deserves all our thanks for the time and energy he has put in, but his report is nevertheless disappointing. Since this affair will be a talking point for years to come, since the most remarkable legends may spring up by spontaneous generation and since Professor Steiner's report does contain a number of factual errors, it is necessary to place a corrective account.

Did Tame attempt to seize the LA?

Prior to October 25th, Tame was Secretary of the LA. He had been appointed Secretary, of course, by the EC, and was answerable to the EC for his actions. The EC consisted of 13 persons: Alexander, Brady, Collier, Davis, Farrer, Hawdon, Layson, Levy, McDonagh, Rantala, Steele, Tame, Zegarac. This EC consisted of the founder members and those they had co-opted over the years, minus two (Hollick; Smith) who had resigned in September 1980.

Tame was also Manager of the Alternative Bookshop, which was employed by the LA as a mailing address, literature store and depository for files and records. There was never any official connection between the LA and the Alternative Bookshop, but there was a close informal connection.

The EC was self-appointed, but it was generally accepted by all EC members that

this state of affairs would soon give way to an EC annually elected by the whole membership. EC meetings were normally held monthly.

A stormy EC meeting was held on 18th October, attended by Alexander, Collier, Davis, Farrer, Hawdon, Layson, Levy, McDonagh and Zegarac. The next meeting, scheduled for 1st November, was to be a special meeting to discuss a draft written constitution for the LA, providing for an elected EC. There was little doubt that the draft would be amended and approved at that meeting, and put to the entire membership of the LA at its first annual general meeting during the weekend of the January Sunday talk. At the end of the meeting of 18th October, there was no hint that the meeting of 1st November might not take place as planned. There had been no talk of expulsion of EC members or any kind of drastic action. If Tame had not acted as he did on 25th October, a written constitution would have been agreed by the EC and passed by the first AGM of the LA. In all talk about the LA, it must never be forgotten that we have no written constitution only because of Tame's actions of 25th-26th October.

What Tame did on October 25th and 26th he did in consultation with two other EC members, Davis and Levy, and perhaps with Farrer though that is unclear. He also consulted with non-EC members, and even at least one non-LA member - Hollick. Hollick promised Tame £1,000 at once, with more to follow. No other EC members were told in advance what Davis, Levy and Tame were secretly planning, and at least two EC members (Brady; Collier) were not even subsequently informed by Tame.

On 25th October, Tame sent out letters to Alexander, Rantala, Steele and Zegarac, purporting to expel them from the LA. Tame sent a letter to McDonagh, informing him that he was still a member of the LA, but no longer of the EC. At no time then or since has Tame ever presented any charges to these five, or asked them for an explanation of anything they might have done. Tame sent a letter to all members and subscribers, telling them that the LA had been constituted as a limited liability company. The letter

announced that the LA's "journal, meetings and publications will continue in the normal manner", but the letter did not reveal that those members who produced the journal, organised the meetings and wrote the publications had purportedly been booted out.

The same day, Tame told a startled Hawdon by phone what had been done, and that evening, Hollick and Tame presented Layson with the *fait accompli*. The justification Tame gave was that the five "expellees" had been plotting against him. Tame said that if the plotting were not stopped now, it would "just go on". Layson was reluctant to accept this, but Tame assured him that everything had been resolved. After a few weeks, nothing more would be heard from the expellees. It was all over. Concerned above all to stay with a functioning organisation, Layson gave the impression he would acquiesce.

On the evening of 26th October, James Alexander was watching TV at home, when four individuals presented themselves at his front door: Davis, Levy, Tame and Thorn Robinson, a non-EC member. The four asked Alexander for a printout of the LA membership list, which he had collected from its custodian. Alexander had no inkling that he had supposedly been "expelled", and the four did not tell him. They were friendly in manner, but they were secretly taping the conversation. When James said he thought he had given the printout to Zegarac, they abruptly departed. A few hours later they turned up in Zegarac's flat. Their manner was hostile. They accused Zegarac of theft of the mailing list. Zegarac said that he did not have the list, but that as an EC member he had just as much right to it as Davis, Levy or Tame. Tame replied that the LA had been incorporated as a limited company, and Zegarac was not on its Management Committee. Zegarac asked Tame what was going on. Tame replied: "You will have to take me to court to find out." Robinson fetched the police, who however went off with Tame and his three friends, leaving Zegarac to go back to bed. The police were not interested in taking a statement from Zegarac, no charges were preferred and no police investigation was pursued.

On November 1st, coinciding with the scheduled EC meeting on the constitution, Tame had a meeting at his flat. Present were Davis, Farrer, Layson and Levy. They were informed that this was a meeting of the Management Committee of a new limited company, Libertarian Alliance and *Free Life* Ltd, of which the two Directors were Davis and Tame. (No such company had been registered. A minimum of two Directors is required by law. Davis is almost totally inactive. Directors appoint and dismiss management committees.) They were also told that Tame had secured considerable sums of money from his "backers". In justification of this dramatic transformation of the LA, they were told of a plot. Meanwhile Collier, McDonagh, Steele and Zegarac turned up for the EC meeting outside the Alternative Bookshop, which they found locked and deserted. The EC meeting delegated Collier (as the only person likely to be admitted) to go to Tame's meeting. Collier, Farrer, Hawdon and Layson refused to go along with Tame's announced changes, and insisted that Davis, Levy and Tame should attend an EC meeting. Davis, Levy and Tame, agreed to attend an EC meeting on 5th November, to have the whole matter thrashed out. A few days later Levy phoned Layson and said that Tame could not sleep, because he was so nervous about the coming EC meeting. Layson confirmed that Tame would have to explain his behaviour, and it was possible the EC might not approve it. Davis, Levy and Tame decided not to attend the EC meeting the first of three occasions where Tame first agreed to a meeting and then broke his word. (The final occasion was the Steiner Hearing itself, when Tame first agreed in writing to be present at a public hearing, and then requested a confidential session with Hillel Steiner instead.)

The EC meeting (Alexander, Collier, Farrer, Hawdon, Layson, McDonagh, Steele, Zegarac) discussed Tame's evidence of a "plot", regretted the absence of Davis, Levy and Tame, and agreed that Layson and Steele should not meet Hollick and Tame, on the strict understanding that the EC was a committee of equals, and that decisions could be made only at an EC meeting.

I met Tame on 7th November, first alone and then in the company of Layson and Hollick. I asked Tame to attend an EC meeting. He contemptuously refused. I asked him to attend an EC meeting minus Zegarac, to whom he particularly objected. He refused. I asked him to attend a meeting of those concerned without its being called an EC meeting, so that he would not have to recognise the EC. He refused. I suggested to him arbitration, and started making proposals, but he cut me short, saying no arbitration was acceptable.

Tame told me of his imagined "plot", pretty much as we had discussed it at the EC meeting. He agreed that "there have been some misunderstandings", and that the plot was at least in part non-existent. But strangely enough, he showed no interest in details of the behaviour of the "plotters" and did not want to examine the factual basis of his suspicions. It was clear that he now regarded the plot as irrelevant. Instead he justified those actions in the following way. He said that the LA was broke, whereas he and his friends had plenty of money. He warned me that he was prepared to spend thousands on legal action against us. He felt let down by his friends. He believed he was legally in the right because the LA was not legally incorporated and had no written constitution. Therefore it had no legal existence and he could take it over. Since Tame would not accept any discussion or arbitration, we worked out a compromise agreement to take back to the EC. The terms of this proposed agreement were that two organisations be formed, each changing its name from "Libertarian Alliance" and its journal's name from *Free Life*, and splitting the assets of the LA.

The proposed agreement was taken back to the EC meeting on 15th November, attended by Alexander, Farrer, Hawdon, Layson, McDonagh, Steele and Zegarac. The general feeling was that since the LA had done nothing wrong, there was no need for the LA to dissolve itself or change its name just because three members had done something silly. No one spoke in favour of the agreement. A motion that the LA carry on in its present form" was carried 5-0, with two abstentions (Farrer; Steele). Hollick and Tame reacted as though surprised and

enraged by the EC decision, and hired a lawyer of less than average fastidiousness to send us a stream of menacing letters.

Was there a libel threat?

Hillel Steiner states that Tame justified the "expulsions" on the ground of a threat to the interests of the membership posed by the possible publication of an article in *Free Life*, which would bring about a libel action. In the event of a successful action, the entire membership might be liable for damages. Unfortunately, Steiner treats this crazy story seriously. He does conclude that there was no such imminent threat, but he does not reveal certain facts which show what a lot of nonsense the whole thing is.

First of all, Tame did not justify his actions by reference to any libel threat at the time. This story was resorted to no earlier than four weeks after the pretended expulsions. (And the only way that we have been made aware that this is now Tame's story is from Hollick's remarks' at the January 11th hearing.) Tame's original story was solely that he had uncovered a plot. Libel was not mentioned.

October 25th Tame speaks briefly to Hawdon and at some length to Layson, in order to get their acquiescence in his already completed "expulsions" and other changes. The reason given is a plot. No mention of libel threat or of the members interests. Tame's letter to the membership refers to "the efforts of a handful of members to manipulate the organisation's decision-making processes in a manner more appropriate to a conventional political party than a libertarian group," *No mention of libel.*

November 1st: Tame argues for the support of Collier, Farrer, Hawdon, and Layson, No mention of libel.

November 5th: EC meeting which Tame refuses to attend. Detailed discussion of Tame's allegations, as he had presented them to Collier, Farrer, Hawdon and Layson. No mention of libel. November 7th: I have a two-hour discussion with Tame, and another two hours with Tame, Hollick and Layson. No mention of libel. November 3rd: I meet

Hollick and from now on speak to him by phone almost daily. I repeatedly press him for a plausible "plot". He has several fanciful tries, including a plot to mail the membership with dirt on Tame, and a plot to send the membership list to *Searchlight*, but there is not a peep about a libel threat.

The first inkling we had that Tame's actions were going to be linked by him with a libel threat came in a letter from a solicitor acting on behalf of Hollick and Tame, dated 19th November. We were all very puzzled by the emphasis this letter put on libel, though it did not defend the expulsions by reference to a threat to the membership.

Between October 25th and November 19th, Hollick and Tame spoke to many people attempting to justify Tame's attempted take-over of the LA. Not once during this period, to my knowledge, did they say a word about a libel threat, nor suggest that they gave the interests of the membership a thought.

Suppose that on 25th October Tame really had believed that James Alexander, editor of *Free Life*, was about to defy the wishes of the EC, and publish something critical of NTS. What would Tame have done? He would have had no difficulty in finding out from the printers that *Free Life* could not appear for some weeks after the next EC meeting. He could have obtained from the printers the complete contents of *Free Life*. It would have been the simplest matter in the world for Tame to make sure that nothing critical of NTS was due to appear.

But suppose that an unauthorised article critical of NTS had appeared. This would have been a serious breach by James Alexander, who was answerable for the contents of *Free Life* to the EC and the editorial committee, of which Tame was a member. But it is sheer baloney to suggest that NTS would sue the LA for repeating some of the unsavoury details of their past which can be found in any good library.

If Tame had believed that there was some threat to the membership of the LA - and there is no evidence that he did - he should have raised it at an EC meeting. He tried to get the consent of Collier, Hawdon and Layson for his *fait accompli*, but having

failed to get the consent, he discarded them. In effect, though without an explicit declaration, he "expelled" them too from the ruling body of "his" LA. If Tame thought that Alexander, McDonagh, Rantala, Steele and Zegarac were so vile that they could not be permitted to discuss their own expulsions, Tame could at least have called all the remaining EC members to an emergency meeting. Failing that, he could have spoken to them individually, but Hawdon and Layson were not informed until after the "expulsions"; Brady and Collier were never informed by Tame at all.

But suppose that nine of the 13 EC members were hopelessly depraved - either plotters or dupes of the plotters. Tame and his two (or three) supporters should then have gone to the membership. They could have simply waited until the January AGM, but if they thought the matter more pressing they could have circularised the membership calling an extraordinary general meeting. But what if virtually the entire membership of the LA was depraved? What if only the Secretary and a handful of his old buddies knew what was best for the LA, and the rest of the members were the evil plotters? Then, sadly, I would say that this noble little band would have to go off and form their own organisation, and leave the corrupt hulk of the old organisation to its undoubtedly nasty fate.

Have we been unreasonable?

Hillel Steiner's report is calculated to give the reader the impression that there has been avoidable misunderstanding and lack of tolerance on both sides. He states that he has been "categorically assured by both sides that there is absolutely no prospect of their working together. It seems to me that the reader is liable to interpret these words as suggesting that both Steele and Tame refuse to work with the other. This is absolutely incorrect. Tame refused to work with Steele. Tame claimed to "expel" Steele from the LA, and to have turned the LA into the property of Tame and Davis. Tame would not retract his "expulsions".

When Hillel Steiner refers to "doubts by either side of the other's libertarian credentials", the unwary reader may not

realise that while Hollick and Tame have cast doubt on our libertarian credentials, we have never cast doubt on their libertarian credentials. Indeed Hollick and Tame have suggested that we include at least one KGB agent, and they have linked another of our number to the Socialist Workers' Party. But no such fanciful stories have emanated from our side. Of course, being a libertarian does not guarantee one against having very poor judgement, or very poor morals, or both.

Addressing both Tame and me, Professor Steiner writes: "It seems to me little short of incredible that you should be willing to put behind you this record of successful co-operation to pursue these relatively ephemeral differences ..." This falsely implies that I have been willing to put behind me my co-operation with Tame. I have not been willing; it was thrust upon me by Tame. Tame claimed to have taken over the LA and excluded me and others from it. What was I to do? I put to Tame that he should come before the EC and have the matter out, but he refused to recognise the EC. Nine of the EC of 13 were to be dropped, leaving Tame and his three associates in control (for as long as Tame chose to tolerate them). The five "expellees" were the five most active members. They did 90 per cent of the work. The three associates of Tame were the three least active members. They did very little. (Davis had not been to an EC Meeting for over a year when he was pulled out to vote at the EC meeting of 18th October.

I proposed a number of compromises to Hollick. For example, I suggested that Tame, Dayls, Levy, Steele, Rantala and Zegarac should resign, and that the four "moderates" (Collier, Farrer, Hawdon, Layson) should be formed into a subcommittee to select the next five EC members. I made this offer because ostensibly it was Tame's fear that there was a plot by Steele's faction to take over the EC. This and other variants were flatly rejected by Hollick.

Hollick made two proposals to me: 1) that the LA should be owned jointly by Tame and me, and 2) that the LA should become an umbrella organisation, presiding over Tame's group and the successor of the LA. The first brushes aside the remaining 11 EC members. the second is another version of the

compromise the EC rejected on 15th November: that the EC of the LA should give up claiming to be the EC of the LA. If I had supported either of these proposals, they would still have been rejected by the EC.

What could the EC be expected to do, except carry on as the EC? That was what we did. We did not move to expel Tame. We did not even remove him as Secretary, but appointed an "acting Secretary *pro tem*, until Chris Tame is able to resume his duties". We intended to leave the door open indefinitely, so that Davis, Levy and Tame could always turn up at an EC meeting and return to the situation before their pretend "expulsions".

But Tame would not resume his place, nor leave us alone, nor negotiate with us in a friendly spirit. He and Hollick turned up at the beginning of the EC meeting of 19th November, to hand round a solicitor's letter promising to commence High Court action to wind up the LA unless we did what they wanted. Having failed to capture the LA, it seemed that Tame wanted it dissolved. In our naivety we believed the threat of High Court action. So we decided to agree to winding up of the Libertarian Alliance, and at the same time to form a new organisation entitled the Libertarian Alliance, with the same membership as the old Libertarian Alliance. On November 29th Bob Layson and I purchased a limited company, and moved to change the name to Libertarian Alliance Ltd. The change of name came through before Christmas.

To my surprise, when I told Hollick we were prepared to discuss terms for dissolution of the LA, he replied that this was not at all what they wanted. It was then that we realised that Hollick-Tame's threats of litigation were bogus.

We then decided to ballot the membership. We drew up a 'yes-or-no' ballot on the question of endorsing the present 13-person EC as the EC of the LA. That is, nothing was changed and there were to be no expulsions. We made arrangements with the Electoral Reform Society to collect and count the ballots. As soon as Hollick and Tame heard of this, they reacted angrily, and contacted the ERS to stop the ballot. So we abandoned that idea. Since then, we have repeatedly

proposed that the membership be consulted by means of a ballot or extraordinary general meeting; Hollick and Tame have always rejected it.

On 3rd December, seven of us sent to the membership the "Communication from a Concerned Majority". We did not wish to make this an official EC circular, partly because we hoped to keep the door open for a return of Davis, Levy and Tame to the fold. Instead, Davis, Levy and Tame, along with Farrer and the non-LA member, Hollick, sent a circular to the membership, asking to be endorsed as the new EC! Included was a draft constitution which gave the secretary alone the power to expel any member. This mailing included "letters of authorisation" for each member to sign, giving control of the LA to Farrer, Hollick, Davis, Levy and Tame. There was no provision for a "No" vote. Not all members were sent this mailing. The number of favourable replies has never been announced, and if it ever were we should bear in mind that the letters did not go to a neutral place such as the Electoral Reform Society, and any total claimed would have to be taken with a grain of salt.

In response to this, a solicitor representing Alexander and Zegarac wrote to Tame's solicitor, suggesting that the membership of the LA be permitted to choose between the two sides at a general meeting. Despite the hair-trigger quickness of Tame's solicitor when it comes to issuing threats, he has never replied to this proposal.

All the assets of the LA were retained by Tame, and he still keeps them. They include large stocks of literature, a bank account, building society account, and all files and records. All the mail which comes to the Libertarian Alliance at the Alternative Bookshop, and the continuous stream of income, the result of our work, is kept by Tame. Members who have written to Tame asking him to hand over their shares of the assets to the EC have been ignored (insufficient as that would be, for Tame is not by rights entitled to any of it.)

Numerous other attacks were made on the LA by Hollick and Tame. They got possession of manuscripts for *Free Life*, and withheld them from us, in order to stop *Free*

Life coming out. They bombarded us with threats of court action, to try and suppress discussion of what they had done. When I stated that the more we were threatened with litigation in an attempt to stop discussion of Tame's misdeeds, the more publicity would be given to those misdeeds, Tame had me reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions for blackmail. (The DPP, obviously, decided there was no case.) Hollick made numerous phone calls to LA members telling them any stories which might conveniently frighten them into leaving the LA.

In December we decided to pursue disciplinary action against Davis, Levy, Farrer and Tame. Detailed charges were sent to them, and they were given several weeks to reply. At an EC meeting on 3rd January 1983, they were expelled, subject to another seven days to reply. They never replied.

Hillel Steiner understandably entered this arbitration with the theory fixed in his mind that the split was due to misunderstandings and hastiness on both sides. He has held fast to this theory although there is no evidence for it. He concludes that both sides have failed to be generous in interpreting the behaviour of the other. But there is no substantiation for the claim that we have been less than bountifully generous in interpreting Tame's actions. There are numerous cases where Hollick and Tame have spread stories about us, stories supported by no more than wild surmise. I do not know of a single case where anything we have attributed to Tame and Hollick has turned out to be false, except where we erred by taking them at their word. They have talked of death threats, blackmail, KGB activity, collusion with *Searchlight*, High Court actions, firebombings and other episodes from "Dungeons and Dragons". We have talked only of the palpable record of Tame's attempt to take over the LA. I challenge Professor Steiner to name one instance where we have ungenerously interpreted Hollick-Tame's behaviour in a way which he knows to be false. Professor Steiner is well aware of several proven ways in which they have falsely misinterpreted our behaviour.

I interpret this episode in a fashion diametrically opposed to that of Hillel Steiner. Tame controlled a resource - the Alternative Bookshop - the use of which was very valuable to the Libertarian Alliance. Because of this, everyone knew that Tame had a hold over the LA. He could if he chose kick the LA out of the Bookshop. Because of that, he was humoured and indulged with a generosity which would not have been extended to other EC members. Precisely because Tame was treated over generously he gave himself ridiculous airs and graces, and began to think of his relationship to the LA in a most unrealistic way. By this I do not mean that he believed he was entitled to take over the LA. He knew perfectly well that he was not entitled to expel people or take over the LA, and that what he was doing was wrong. The unrealism lies in the fact that *he thought he could get away with it.*

He thought he could get away with it. He thought that he could get away with it. That is the Alpha and Omega of Tame's attempted *coup*.

Left versus Right?

People who hear about a dispute like the recent LA split tend to ask for the deep doctrinal differences which lie behind it. If they fail to find any, they conclude that it must be "a clash of personalities". But this crisis was not one of deep-seated ideological factions, and neither was it a personality clash.

Although there was often differences of opinion on the EC, there were not deeply entrenched factions. I voted with Tame more often than I voted against him. Since Davis and Levy showed little interest, and Farrer rarely expressed an opinion on anything, any "factions" behind this dispute could only have been a faction of one person (Tame) against the rest of the EC. But in fact no such factional warfare was apparent. For instance, the two LA policy statements, "Purpose and Strategy of the Libertarian Alliance" and "The Libertarian International", which might be expected to have been controversial, were written by me and rapturously endorsed by Tame. It is clear now that Tame has felt a growing disquiet with the way the LA was evolving, but he kept this feeling to himself.

He did not try to argue for different policies to set the LA on a different track.

Immediately before Tame's attempted coup, there was indeed a bitter dispute on the EC, arising out of the June 1982 *Searchlight* story on NTS, but I did not and do not think that this was an issue worth splitting the LA over.

The trouble arose because some LA members were active in the Anti-Soviet Society, which became a mouthpiece of the Soviet émigré group NTS. I have never disguised my opinion that the Anti Soviet Society was silly, but I have never expected all LA members to agree with me. Tame was not a member of the AntiSoviet Society, and was at least as vocally dismissive of it as I.

I knew almost nothing about NTS until I read the *Searchlight* story, and was not very perturbed by that story; for I assumed that it contained the worst about NTS that could be found. Only when I was alerted to the nature of NTS by Murray Rothbard did I take a more serious view of the matter. Mark Brady and I did what ASS ought to have done before rushing into the arms of NTS: we went to our libraries and did some work. Among works containing relevant information are George Fischer, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1952); John J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascists* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); Alexander Werth, *Russia, Hopes and Fears* (London, 1969) I. NTS: *The Russian Solidarist Movement* (Washington: US State Department, 1951); Anatole Goldstein, *The Attitude of the recent Russian Emigres toward the Jewish Question* (New York; Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1952); George Fischer, *Russian Emigre Politics* (New York: Free Russian Fund, 1951).

On the basis of these and other sources Brady and I concluded that NTS (1) was, during the 1930s and 1940s, closely akin to fascist in outlook; (2) co-operated extensively with the National Socialist colonial administration in Eastern Europe; (3) is now headed by some of the same individuals as during the 1940s; (4) has not recanted its past quasi-fascism and involvement with Naziism, or for that matter

apologised for them, but rather seeks to imply that these skeletons in the cupboard do not exist; (5) is committed to the maintenance of Great-Russian political hegemony over the non-Russian peoples who constitute the majority of the population of the USSR, and is strongly opposed to secessionist movements and (6) has the reputation of con-artists, who raise large sums of money from Western taxpayers (via intelligence agencies) and right-wing loonies on behalf of an underground network in the Soviet Union which is largely imaginary.

Brady and I are not easily intimidated by any scholarly consensus, and we are quite ready to accept the possibility that all the independent studies dealing with NTS are mistaken, but before we came to that conclusion we would require a little evidence. When we argued, successfully, that George Miller of NTS should not speak at an LA day seminar on foreign policy, we were unprepared for the violent storm of abuse and innuendo that emanated from Tame and some of his friends. (Of course, we have no objection to the LA providing NTS or any other organisation with a platform under the appropriate circumstances - where it is clear that they are opponents of libertarianism).

Looking back, it may appear that our "Open Letter" to EC members was tactless and over-sharp. If Tame had admitted the NTS and defended them by claiming they had turned over a new leaf or were worth supporting as a lesser evil than Communism, there would have been scope for gentler argument. But Tame insisted that NTS were utterly blameless, that *Searchlight* was making the whole thing up, that criticism of NTS was KGB-inspired and that the LA must never breathe a word critical of NTS. He sought out and buttonholed people who had shown no interest in the question in order to defend NTS. Added to the facts that Tame was Manager of the Alternative Bookshop, which was visibly promoting NTS, and that Tame refused to discuss the historical evidence, we felt there were grounds for concern that the LA would continue to be credibly linked with NTS.

It seems to me that there are many Soviet Emigre groups, and that we should

discriminate, selecting for friendly contacts those which are more liberal (or even, if we can find them, libertarian). After all, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) was well funded by freedom-loving Westerners convinced that Tsarism was so terrible any change would be better, and that the Bolsheviks seemed to be one of the more practical and active forces fighting to bring down the hated autocracy.

Who was plotting to take over the LA?

Tame's repeated charge against the people he pretended to expel was that they were plotting to take over the LA. Most of the time, I was cast as the mastermind of the plot, though at times my wife M.L. Rantala has been nominated as the KGB agent manipulating Steele (a new twist to "Finlandization").

What meaning can be given to such a charge? All members of the ruling body of any voluntary organisation push for their favoured policies and engage in legitimate factional manoeuvring. But I have never done anything dishonest to support my own line on the EC. I have never sought to expel Tame or anyone else. I have always favoured an organisation ultimately controlled by its members, with an elected EC. I fully accept that this means the organisation may be "taken over" by people with ideas I do not like. I have frequently lost out in EC arguments, and I did not therefore conclude that those who opposed me were plotting against me and should be removed. I have been prominent in the LA since its formation, and have done more than anyone else to determine the sort of organisation it has become, but this position of mine was based on my erudition, shrewdness, engaging personality and phenomenal persuasive powers, and was not in danger of being eroded.

It is already apparent, from the recent behaviour and output of the Libertarian Alliance and of the Hollick-Tame group, that in style and emphasis the LA is the same group it was a year ago, whereas the Hollick-Tame group, for better or worse, marks a radical departure.

Tame tried on October 25th to turn the LA into a body wholly owned by himself and his poodle. When that wasn't going too well, he sent out a "draft constitution" including the remarkable clause that the Secretary could at any moment and without consultation expel anyone!. (Even if that clause were removed, the draft would remain a blueprint for guaranteeing the concentration of power in the hands of an unchanging few.)

We are now enlarging the EC, by new co-optations. These new recruits are simply LA members who have come to the notice of the EC as enthusiastic activists. I barely know most of them, and some of them I have not met.

We have acquired a limited company, but the company does not own the LA. It will be written into the constitutions of the LA and of Libertarian Alliance Ltd. that elected EC members automatically become directors of Libertarian Alliance Ltd., and when they cease to be EC members, they automatically cease to be Directors. Expulsion procedure will be difficult, and will conform to norms of fairness and natural justice. (These statements about the constitution are subject to approval by the AGM.)

What sort of organisation?

Whereas Tame is in favour of an organisation which is guaranteed to be under the control of a particular individual or small group, we are in favour of an organisation with a ruling body elected by the entire membership, and a structure which means that no one is guaranteed to be in control indefinitely. Hollick has stated that the members are customers paying for a service. In our view, members are participants.

I do not mean to suggest that every member is expected to be active or to play an equal part in decision-making. It is inevitable that some members will just pay their dues to give support, and do little more than read what they are sent. Some members will be more active at some periods than at others. (One of the penalties of an organisation permanently run by the same entrenched group is that when that group tires the whole organisation flags.) But members are encouraged to be active, and they know that

if they do become active, they can have a share in running the show. New blood can be incorporated into the ruling body without the approval of the established members. The organisation is more of a living thing, which can develop in ways not foreseen by its founders or current "owners".

When Brady, Englander, Tame and I discussed the formation of the LA in 1978, and later took the initiative in setting it up, opinion was divided. I was in favour of the "participant" form and Tame of the "customer" form. After some discussion the issue was shelved, since we all agreed that elections, if any, should wait until the organisation had been in existence for two or three years, so that it could establish its image and identity, and frighten off non-Libertarians who might be attracted. We were not interested, for example, in recruiting mere "free enterprise" types, who want to decontrol industry but have qualms about decontrolling immigration, prostitution or heroin consumption.

An early EC member, Tony Hollick, was even more committed than Tame to the "customer" form. He resigned from the EC from the LA itself in September 1980, and never re-applied to become a member. Although he resigned on one narrow issue, he repeatedly informed people that his disagreement went much deeper, and that he objected in principle to the kind of organisation the LA was. He frequently bad-mouthed the LA. and formed his own organisation, the Centre For Liberal Studies, to show us how to perform better. The Centre for Liberal Studies did one thing: it reprinted the pamphlet *Is Socialism Left?* the unsold copies of which were recently unloaded onto the LA membership by Hollick and Tame.

In Hollick's absence, the organisational issue lapsed, and it became accepted without opposition that the LA would move to an elected EC. "Against his better judgement", as he now says, Tame ceased to argue against this.

The next we heard of the "customer" form of organisation was with Tame's attempted coup of 25th October, financed by Hollick.

The Libertarian Alliance is an independent, non-party group, with a shared desire to work for a free society.

I am not opposed to proprietary or "customer" organisations. Some of them, like the *Institute of Economic Affairs*, have done very useful work. But there is a role for organisations with essentially the conventional structure which we find in *Amnesty International*, the *National Council for Civil Liberties*, and other propaganda groups. That the LA would very shortly move to this "democratic" form was accepted by all EC members prior to October 25th, and had been announced to the membership.

The merits and demerits of an organisation completely owned and controlled by Chris Tame are no doubt interesting and worth discussing. Nobody has any objection to Tame setting up such an organisation and seeing how far he can get with it. But the LA was already owned, thank you very much. It already had an agreed structure, which Tame had not even criticised. Tame was just one member of this organisation. He may not have liked the fact, but that's the way it was. No doubt there are arguments for letting the Secretary expel anyone he believes to be "infiltrating or subverting" the organisation, but the Secretary of the LA did not possess such a power.

If Tame did not like the way the LA had turned out - if he had access to considerable funds which he wanted to use for libertarian propaganda provided that he determined the spending of them - it was open to him to form his own, new organisation on different lines. When all is said and done, that is what he did.

The trouble was that he tried to convert an already existing organisation into his own. Having openly formed a new organisation, Tame could have remained in the LA or resigned. As Manager of the Alternative Bookshop, he could have continued to let the LA use the Bookshop, or kicked us out. Either way, the EC would have been happy to circularise the membership of the LA with information on the new group. The two organisations could have co-operated, or at least, they need not have expended resources on fighting each other.

Hillel Steiner thinks it is sad and regrettable that there came a parting of the ways, but I am not so sure that the pie is too small. If

some members feel uncomfortable with the whole style and strategy of an organisation as it has evolved, perhaps everyone is better off if they go away and do things their own way. There may be more than one niche for libertarian propaganda groups. What is sad and regrettable is that one member of an existing organisation plunged that organisation into months of uncertainty and acrimony by seeking to capture that organisation, when there was negligible support for such a move. He could not be depended upon to abide by the rules which he had helped to determine and had consented to for three years.

I have my own responsibility to admit, and my own apology to make to the membership. I am responsible for the recent crisis - just as someone who forgets to double-lock the back door is responsible when the house is burgled.*

* Steele had left for the United States in October 1981. He returned three days after Tame's attempted coup and stayed until February 1983 - *Editor*.

Free Life