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Volume 17, Number 2 *Spring/Summer 1986*

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## THE LIMITS OF THE PEACE MOVEMENT

*Brian Martin*

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Over the centuries many methods have been used to prevent or oppose war or to reduce its severity. A few examples are the establishment of powerful military forces to deter or defend against attack, negotiations between governments, protests by community groups against particular weapons systems such as nuclear and refusal by individuals to be involved in military-related activity. To what extent do they contribute to eliminating the institutional underpinnings of war?

The answer to this question, of course, depends on an analysis of the war system, which I take to be an interlocking set of institutions — the State system, bureaucracy, military forces, and patriarchy, among others. The symptoms of the war system include particular weapons such as the neutron bomb and individual national elites such as the heads of the governments of the Soviet Union and the United States.

I shall discuss here five approaches to the problem of war: military defence, social revolution, convincing elites, influencing elites via public pressure, and symbolic nonviolent action. Choosing only these five approaches simplifies the actual diversity of thought and action on the issue. My aim is not to survey all antiwar methods, but to critically examine some standard approaches with an eye to their limitations in confronting the roots as well as the symptoms of the war system.

Although my comments on these methods are mostly unfavourable, this does not mean that the methods are useless.

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Applying pressure to elites, for example, may not be enough to end war, but it still can be a useful part of an antiwar strategy. Since many people have used these methods, my aim is to present a little of the other side of the picture. Pointing out the inadequacies as well as the strengths of standard methods is essential in building sound strategy.

### Military Defence

Military defence can be a deterrent against war. But it provides absolutely no basis for eliminating the war system, and indeed helps perpetuate it. Those who argue the need for military defence pay no attention to strategies for eliminating war permanently. Essentially, war is seen as an inevitable, if undesirable, feature of human society; a lesser evil compared to weakening national sovereignty, or compared to allowing the dominance of socialism, capitalism, or some other real or imagined enemy or evil.

Who are the people who accept military defence without question? Military planners, of course, but also just about everyone else. Many people in 'antiwar' movements do not question military defence in any fundamental way. Some favour a reduced number of nuclear weapons: 'minimum deterrence.' Even among those who want to eliminate nuclear weapons entirely, there is widespread though usually unstated support for conventional military defence.

### Revolution First

A number of revolutionary groups, such as some Trotskyist parties in Western countries, think abolition of war is something that will happen after 'the revolution.' But even the victory of revolutionary parties throughout the world would be no guarantee of a world without war. Every variety of State socialism so far, including the Soviet, Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese models, has resulted in an increased role for the military. Military confrontations, occupations, and wars between socialist States — Soviet Union-Hungary, Soviet Union-China, Soviet Union-Czechoslo-

vakia, China-Vietnam — are quite common. The proponents of socialist revolution led by vanguard parties have no programme for abolishing war. Their revolutionary success, in fact, would more likely mean an even greater militarization of society.

Although Marx, and particularly Engels, took a keen interest in military matters, they did not seriously address the problem of eliminating war, and Marxist theorists since then have continued to avoid this topic. Marxists focus on class relations — assessing classes by the relation of social groups to the economic mode of production — as the source of major problems in society. When class dynamics are not the primary driving force behind a particular social problem — and this is the case for sexism, racism and environmental degradation, as well as war — those with a strict class analysis are hard pressed to say something useful about the subject, much less formulate a strategy for eliminating the problem.

By focusing on the role of the economic mode of production, one downgrades the role of the State as an institution in its own right rather than as just a tool of the capitalist class or a locus of class struggle. This downgrading is related to certain basic assumptions in the Marxist perspective, such as the international character of the capitalist working class and the withering away of the State after socialist revolution. Rather than exhibiting transnational solidarity, working-class groups have more often supported the policies of their own State, particularly military policies. And rather than the withering away of the State following socialist revolution and abolition of capitalist ownership, the power of the State — and especially of the military — has become even greater under State socialism.

Despite its limitations, class analysis does focus on key structures in society and fosters thinking in terms of the roots rather than the symptoms of social problems. By contrast, liberal theorists and activists are less likely to think or act in terms of the dynamics of fundamental social, political and economic structures, and are more likely to see possibilities for reforming existing structures. This latter focus leads to the following methods for influencing elites.

## Convincing Elites

National political, economic and military elites are nominally in control of the processes that lead to war, such as military spending, development of military technology, and foreign policy. Could these elites be converted by logical or moral argument to the view that it would be in the interests of the people as a whole for governments to simultaneously reduce military spending, expand the role of international law and settle disagreements by nonmilitary means? This is the hope of many who have worked within and outside government to restrain military races. To illustrate this, I have chosen the arguments of William Epstein.

In his 1976 book *The Last Chance*, Epstein gives a comprehensive account of various treaties, conferences and other official steps towards nuclear disarmament. Given the actual course of the nuclear arms race, such an account cannot provide much cause for optimism, and Epstein is indeed rather pessimistic. His only hope — the 'last chance' to avoid nuclear annihilation — lies with two priorities: improving and strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and creating a moral and political climate in the world which would eliminate the need for nuclear weapons.

Epstein sees strengthening the NPT as a way to gain time in order to cope with nuclear proliferation. The trouble with his approach is that the NPT will not likely stop this proliferation without a change at the same time in the institutional pressures promoting proliferation, such as the power and prestige enjoyed by State elites in countries acquiring nuclear weapons and the profits to be made in exporting nuclear power technology. Even if proliferation could be slowed or halted, the nuclear arms race between the superpowers would remain a basic problem.

This leads to Epstein's second priority, creating a world climate in which governments do not need nuclear weapons. This would take place, according to Epstein, on three fronts: arms control and disarmament, more equitable distribution of the world's wealth, and a strengthened world organization. These are admirable goals, but Epstein does not outline how they will be achieved; he merely implies that elites will pursue them because of the necessity to avoid nuclear war. Yet the history of the nuclear arms race demonstrates the irrelevance of arguments based solely on welfare,

and Epstein's own account illustrates the virtual futility of negotiation. Epstein says of disarmament, "The two superpowers must, of course, lead the way." What will make them do this? Epstein relies on the power of knowledge and logic to convince elites of the folly of their governments' policies. This does not come to grips with the institutional forces promoting the nuclear arms race, not to mention conventional arms races.

National elites deal with the issue of war through 'negotiation.' The history of disarmament negotiations is a record of one failure after another. Why do the talks fail? Johan Galtung has offered a whole list of answers, including the impossibility of attaining comprehensive military balance when the forces on either side are not identical in type and vulnerability, the catch-up mentality in military blocs, and the power motive in national security bureaucracies. Furthermore, Galtung argues, disarmament negotiations actually perpetuate arms races: by keeping the management of arms buildup under the control of the strongest military powers; by providing opportunities for eavesdropping at the venue of the negotiations; and by providing an illusion of impending disarmament, which allays public concern.

So much for leaving the problem to the elites. The fundamental difficulty with convincing them is that their power, privilege and position depend on the very institutional forces which promote war. State elites are continually pressured by the institutional environment in which they work; this environment shapes their perceptions, and, more importantly, constrains their actions.

The elites may be entirely well intentioned. They may be just as concerned about war as anyone else. It is just that, due to their social position, they see the problems and solutions differently.

The difficulty lies not in the elites themselves but in the institutions in which they operate. For example, if a capitalist were persuaded to produce goods for social use rather than profit, there is a good chance the company would fail. The good intentions would lead to personal catastrophe rather than a change in the system. The focus must be on challenging and altering the patterns of social interaction on which capitalism is based, such as the role of the worker as hired labour rather than as equal co-producer.

Similarly, government and military elites from their position see mainly the dangers of disarmament such as instability, aggression, and war. Furthermore, they are often relatively powerless — and feel powerless — to take steps which diverge radically from standard policies. Those who dissent on fundamental matters know they will lose their influence on the inside. The approach of influencing elites through logical argument is, then, by itself not enough.

### Influencing Elites Via Public Pressure

Rather than convincing elites of the logic or the moral importance of disarmament — to which most of them give lip service anyway — let us use the force of 'public opinion,' recognizing that it is political pressure rather than logic that will influence their behaviour.

To illustrate my argument, I refer to works by Richard Barnet, who has made some of the best analyses of arms races and their institutional impact. Barnet presents a masterly explanation of the massive spending on war preparations, of the operations of the military-industrial complex, and of the psychology and bureaucratic dynamics of national security managers. But when it comes to offering solutions, his proposals are disappointing.

It is probably unfair to Barnet to expect from him a full-blown and watertight strategy, since this is not the purpose of his writing. But it is precisely because he goes further than most towards spelling out a strategy based on influencing elites via public pressure that an analysis of his prescriptions is illuminating.

In *The Roots of War*, Barnet lists three main roots for the case of the United States, and suggests how these might be eliminated. His first root is the military bureaucracy, which he says should be shrunk in size and reoriented towards healing rather than killing, controlled much more by the U.S. Congress, and structurally changed to introduce the principle of personal responsibility for official acts. How are these worthy goals to be achieved? Barnet gives us no hint. He implies that the logic of the case will itself be the basis for change.

Barnet's second root of war is the State capitalist economy and its dependence on profits and growth, especially from overseas investments. He sees the need for a shift in government expenditure away from the military and private goods towards health, education, transportation, and the environment. He suggests that such changes might be possible under some modified form of private ownership or mixed economy, but gives no idea of how these changes would be made.

The third main root of war, according to Barnet, is the ease with which the public is manipulated on national security issues. He sees the need to awaken and express "the deep but inarticulate aspirations for peace of the American people." Once again, Barnet presents no strategy. The implication is that an informed public would see the necessity for change and would elect a party with an antiwar platform.

In an earlier book, *The Economy of Death*, Barnet spells out in more detail the role of various groups in the community. Here are some of his suggestions:

- students: do research on the military-industrial complex; present seminars
- leading scientists and technologists: undertake a critical education campaign on national security
- business leaders: look for profits in nonmilitary production
- members of Congress: promote moves away from militarism
- clergy: explore the psychology of violence with congregations
- labour unions: undertake an educational campaign on war spending and personal security
- citizens: become personally educated in matters of military spending and the military-industrial complex; put pressure on the U.S. Congress; work to establish antiwar stands by local political organizations; undertake door-to-door educational campaigns; write to the Pentagon and demand the truth.

The strategy behind these suggestions seems to be that widespread public concern will influence elites to start dismantling the war system. This strategy consists of two steps: create antiwar public opinion; and use this concern to influence elites.

In a way, the job of convincing people about the dangers of war

is already complete. Most people agree that war is terrible. But going from there to questioning the *necessity* of war is a big step. The point of promoting an 'antiwar public opinion' is to discredit assumptions about the necessity or inevitability of war and the military, and thereby to undermine the legitimacy of arguments for the war system.

Barnet agrees that changing public opinion about arms races is a difficult task in the face of massive bureaucratic control over information and over how we perceive public policy, in the face of a media captive to State and corporate interests, and in the face of massive handouts to military contractors. Generally, people accept the military as necessary to prevent foreign domination, communism, anarchy, or some other danger. Even those who believe in controlling the war bureaucracies usually feel powerless to bring about change.

Assume that these obstacles are overcome and that the public outcry reaches deafening levels, such as it did in the early 1980's. What next? Does this influence the policy-making elites?

There are several ways in which elites can act to dampen the crescendos. One way is just to do nothing, to carry on as before. This is the usual procedure. Surges of public outrage are easily calmed. The core of committed people in a social movement must be quite substantial, well motivated and ready for long-term struggle; otherwise business-as-usual policies by governments will outlast the periodic waves of public concern.

Elites can also enter government-to-government talks. Negotiations give the appearance of concern and action, and a focus on them can drain social action. Prior to the 1982 United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament, scores of antiwar groups around the world put enormous effort into focusing attention on the conference, which turned out to be a dismal failure.

In terms of demobilizing public concern, even more effective than negotiating failures are minor negotiating *successes*. The treaty in 1963 which banned atmospheric nuclear testing was a major contributing factor to decreased public concern over nuclear war which had heightened since the late 1950's. The treaty had little impact on the ongoing nuclear arms race, since the nuclear weapons establishments had made ample preparations to

continue and indeed expand nuclear testing programmes underground.

The election of a reform government is yet another dead end for antiwar efforts built around mobilizing public opinion. Ralph Miliband, in his book *The State in Capitalist Society*, argues that reform governments elected in Europe since World War II have almost invariably served to contain the radical social and political demands of the people who elected them. If this applies to such issues as redistributing social wealth and increasing the power of workers *vis-à-vis* employers, it is even more true in relation to military issues. In many countries the major political parties have virtually indistinguishable policies on military questions. But sometimes a party, typically a social democratic party, will adopt certain antiwar policies when not in government, as a result of pressure from a strong antiwar movement with considerable influence within the party. But once the party becomes the government, policies which call into question the institutional role of the military are unlikely to be taken seriously.

For example, in December 1972, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was elected to government, and, as promised, immediately abolished conscription and withdrew the few remaining Australian troops from Vietnam. The ALP's platform at that time included opposition to foreign military bases in Australia. Three U.S. bases in particular are central to the Australian government's global political alignment and military posture. During the ALP's term of office not a single step was taken towards fundamental re-examination of the bases. For in spite of its important stands against conscription and against participation in the Indochina War, the party would not take any step which threatened the military alliance between Australia and the U.S. After the 1972 ALP victory, the antiwar movement in Australia rapidly collapsed. It had been built mainly on mobilization of public opinion without any strategy for challenging the institutions underlying war.

In his penetrating book *An Infantile Disorder?* Nigel Young argues that the strategy of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) leadership in Britain in the late 1950's and early 1960's, namely to influence the policies of the British Labour Party, was one reason why the antiwar movement of that generation failed to



achieve lasting change. Not only did the Labour Party resist adopting or implementing any policy which challenged the military status quo, but the effect on CND was to emphasize political compromise and de-emphasize moral concerns and radical initiatives at the grassroots.

A fourth way in which elites can hurt or destroy social movements is to engage in military confrontation and war. Prior to World War I, widespread public opposition to war was voiced through petitions and huge demonstrations. But when war broke out, populations quickly lined up behind their respective governments. The antiwar movement was almost completely destroyed.

The strategy of mobilizing public opinion to influence elites is thus limited in several fundamental respects. First, it is difficult to develop and maintain a high degree of public concern in the face of manipulation of public opinion by State bureaucracies and the media. Second, elites can defuse public pressure by doing nothing, by entering negotiations, by making mild reforms, or by engaging in military confrontation. Finally, a focus on influencing elites channels social activism into appeals to the elites or into electoral activities, thereby diverting efforts from alternative strategies geared to strengthening grassroots initiatives and laying the basis for institutional change. The approach of influencing elites via public pressure will therefore not eliminate war.

### Symbolic Nonviolent Action

*The Power of the People* is an inspiring account of nonviolent action in United States history — campaigns against slavery, for women's suffrage, against exploitation of farm workers. Not least among nonviolent campaigns have been those focused against war. Although the book does not explicitly pronounce on strategies, it does present a clear picture of the advantages of nonviolent action.

The problem with nonviolent peace actions is that they have not fundamentally altered the institutional forces which promote war. Reading accounts like *The Power of the People* is for me a troubling as well as an inspiring experience. While feeling encouraged by the history of social commitment and impressed by the appropria-

teness of the nonviolent means used to the ends sought, I am also keenly aware that these efforts have been far too few and too weak.

Nonviolent action is often aimed directly at elites, in an attempt to prick the conscience of individual people. This use of nonviolent action is not much better than other methods of influencing elites: the institutions of the war system are not addressed; rather, they are acknowledged by actions which focus on the decision-making role of those at the top.

More important are demonstrations, vigils, and acts of civil disobedience, which not only bring the issue to the attention of the public, but also show that opposition is indeed an option. However, these techniques are not yet practised widely. Furthermore, protest and civil disobedience do not necessarily overcome our sense of powerlessness nor allay fears of foreign attack.

Nonviolent action campaigns do not always have a clear underlying conception of how disarmament will be achieved. Will the public swamp the government with letters opposing war and elect antiwar candidates? Will workers in arms factories and soldiers strike for peace? To bring an end to war, we must dismantle the military establishments and create new social and political institutions which render impossible their re-emergence. Without a clear picture of how disarmament and institutional reconstruction are to be achieved, nonviolent action cannot reach anything like its full potential.

To the extent that the main effect of nonviolent action is mobilization of public opinion, then, it is as limited as a strategy as more conventional means of applying pressure.

In an essay entitled "How Effective Are Peace Movements?" Bob Overy makes the point that many peace movement activities — letter-writing, public meetings, demonstrations, civil disobedience — may serve more to help the participants express their personal values and take a stand than to effectively deal with the issue of war. Peace movements can become moral crusades testifying to good intentions but achieving little, like the fire fighters who, lacking water, pumps and hoses, organize themselves to chant "H<sub>2</sub>O! H<sub>2</sub>O!"

It is a strength of nonviolent action that participants have the opportunity to publicly express and internally reinforce their

personal values. They can also get a clearer picture of the driving forces behind war, by virtue of being exposed to the repressive force of the State. But it is a potential weakness of nonviolent action that participants can gloss over questions of effectiveness in the course of taking a personally satisfying stand.

### Principles

What is needed is a strategy based on activities which involve people in their daily lives, which encourage learning and provide stimulation in terms of action, and at the same time fundamentally challenge the underpinnings of war.

I will here outline several principles which I think are important for antiwar strategies. These are not meant to be dogmatic, everlasting, universal principles. Rather, my aim is to suggest principles which can be considered in developing strategies to remove the roots of war. Whether these are the most appropriate ones will only be determined by the test of political practice.

### Institutional Change

If all the military weapons in the world suddenly disappeared, war would still not be a thing of the past. For if existing institutions — States and other systems of political and economic inequality — were retained, then it would not be long before armaments returned to previous levels. Nor would the problem of war be solved if disarmament were decreed and carried out by a dominant institution, such as a world government. It would be easy for resisting groups to hide weapons, including nuclear weapons, or to make new ones with presently available knowledge and resources. Disarmament alone is not enough. We must also transform the structures that lead to war.

In what direction must dominant social institutions be changed? In very general terms, towards greater political, social and economic equality, towards greater justice and freedom, and towards more control by people over the decisions which influence them.

The principle of institutional change is a far-reaching one. The focus of peace movements in the early 1980's, as it was in the late 1950's and early 1960's, has been *nuclear* war. But even given the unlikely possibility that State elites will ever dismantle their nuclear weapons, eliminating nuclear weapons will not eliminate war, nor will it prevent the creation of weapons even more insidious than nuclear weapons. The goal must be more than disarmament, and certainly much more than nuclear disarmament.

Social institutions shape our attitudes, and our attitudes shape institutions. I take it for granted that an antiwar strategy must involve the changing of attitudes. The basis for a social movement must include some people who are critical of the status quo and who envision an alternative. The question is not whether attitudes should be changed, but whether this should be the focus of social action or a consequence of other actions.

There are dangers both ways. Focusing on changing attitudes by persuasion can leave unexamined the structures which shape these attitudes, such as the State, employer-worker relations, and the media. But focusing exclusively on changing the structures also has its limitations: if attitudes are not changed, alternative structures can quickly revert to the old ways. The ideal is simultaneous institutional and personal change.

My opinion is that strategies should be based on institutional transformation. Participatory campaigns with this goal will promote changes in attitude as they proceed. Given the present emphasis on changing attitudes, particularly by people in the antiwar movement, there is little chance that individual behaviour will be neglected.

### Social Change is Seamless

Focusing on the institutional roots of war, such as political and economic inequality, suggests a first principle for the antiwar movement — that war is only one of a range of social problems; and that elimination of war must go hand-in-hand with elimination of other problems. In terms of strategy, this means that war should not be given more attention than other social issues. Campaigns to oppose sexism, heterosexism, economic exploita-

tion, racism, poverty, political repression, alienation, and environmental degradation also contribute to the antiwar effort inasmuch as they challenge and attempt to replace oppressive social institutions.

An implication of this principle is that various social campaigns be linked at the level of strategy, and be mutually stimulating and educational. This is already the case to some extent, for example when feminists point out the fostering of aggressiveness in men as a factor in war, and when antiwar activists support environmentalists in their campaigns against nuclear power.

On the other hand, antiwar movements, like all social movements, do adopt strategies which are unrelated to other social issues. One example is the demand promoted since 1979 in the United States for a nuclear freeze: that the U.S. and Soviet governments stop increasing their nuclear arsenals. That this demand has little relationship to other social problems is no coincidence. The nuclear freeze campaign, which tries to influence State elites via public pressure, works through existing structures and does not attempt to transform them.

To claim that the issue of war — and nuclear war in particular — is so pressing that it should be given priority over other issues is bad politics. It cuts the antiwar movement off from other social movements that are vital to opposing war-linked institutions. And it can lead to strategies such as the nuclear freeze campaign which do not address the institutional roots of war. Orientation towards structural change follows an awareness of the connections between social issues.

### Means and Ends

A broad principle for antiwar strategies which aim to transform institutions is that the means be compatible with the ends; otherwise the structures may not really be transformed but just given a new appearance. Military coups seldom lead to an equitable or nonviolent society; they merely replace the rulers.

The compatibility of means and ends is a longstanding principle of anarchism. This principle distinguishes anarchism from

Leninism, which is based on achieving a classless and Stateless society by very different means, namely capture of State power by a vanguard elite.

The principle of keeping means compatible with ends has been taken up by many groups and individuals in social movements since the 1960's. Students opposing bureaucratic university administrations attempt to use participatory democracy in their own organizations. Feminists question sexist power dynamics in their closest personal relationships. Environmentalists attempt to live their own lives in an environmentally conscious way. Opponents of animal exploitation become vegetarians. These people are thereby 'living the revolution.' This basic principle has many implications for antiwar strategies.

### Nonviolence

The aim of any principled antiwar strategy is a world without organized violence. If means are to reflect ends, antiwar strategies must be based on a renunciation of violence. Indeed, it is simply incongruous to use violence to eliminate the need to resort to violence. World War I was called 'the war to end all wars.' The illusion that war can eliminate war has been less common since then, but it nevertheless does persist.

The use of violence, or the readiness to use it, has several consequences for a social movement. It causes suffering. It abdicates moral responsibility and alienates potential supporters. It requires secrecy and hence leads to less democratic decision-making. And if successful, it can lead to a violent and authoritarian new ruling elite. The introduction of State socialism in Russia, China, and Vietnam in each case was based on violent seizure and maintenance of power, which surely has contributed to the continued militarization of these societies.

Nonviolence is often adopted as a provisional tactic by Western social movements. Most communist parties in the West, for example, oppose violence as counter-productive in present political circumstances, but do not rule out violent methods in principle. Consequently, it is not surprising that communist

parties, however progressive their policies in other areas, have devoted little attention to eliminating war.

Nonviolence as principle rather than as tactic has had its greatest strength within the Gandhian movement in India. In the West, nonviolence is seldom taken as an inviolate religious principle; it is adopted on more pragmatic grounds. Nonviolent methods help transcend the dilemma of choosing between structural violence — poverty, exploitation, preventable illness — and the human costs involved in violent revolution. Such conscious choices are probably seldom made by Third World guerrilla fighters, whose involvement in liberation struggles is as much a reaction to State violence and oppression as it is strategy. But to the extent that a social movement *does* have options, a decision to promote the use of violence, and thus to justify inflicting direct physical harm, requires a sense of righteousness. Nonviolent methods do not avoid this problem entirely, since they can lead to lost income or prestige for those acted against, but at least they minimize immediate suffering.

The issue of violence and nonviolence has been the subject of considerable discussion within social movements. This debate is important in determining to what extent nonviolence is or should be a principle in itself and to what extent it is or should be a matter for pragmatic consideration.

### Participation

The structures underlying war are ones of centralized power, which allow elites to make the most far-reaching decisions. Alternative structures would allow much more participatory and decentralized decision-making. Such structures must be the basis for social change.

The way in which social movements are structured has strong implications for strategy. Hierarchical organizations are effective in interacting with other hierarchical organizations. This is how the war system operates. If movement organizations are also hierarchical, they will simply reinforce the established hierarchy, and will have little chance of influencing the dominant social institutions. Just as it is futile to leave the issue of war to State

elites, so it is futile to leave its opposition to movement elites.

The principle of participation also implies that social change should proceed at the rate that people want to take it, not at a rate determined by elites in established institutions or by elites in revolutionary or social action groups. This principle does not rule out strong advocacy or concerted action within social movements, but it does rule out unilateral decision-making or manipulation from the top.

There should be little worry that full participation in social movements will reduce social activism. Historically, formal leaders of social movements have more often served to hold back the rank and file than to push it ahead. The trade union movement is a case in point. In any case, a participatory social movement is a more solid base for sustained action than a movement in which all key decisions emerge from the top.

### Long-term Struggle

Fundamental transformation of States and bureaucracies and elimination of social inequality cannot happen overnight. Even if formal structures were overturned quickly, considerable adaptation would be necessary before alternatives could be established. After all, most people have learned to accept State bureaucracies — through school, work, and the media — and learning different modes of interaction and identifying with different goals would not be an easy matter. Therefore, a strategy to remove the roots of war must be a long-term one.

The goal is a world without war — and thus a stable society. The means compatible with this goal is not cataclysmic revolution, but patient and resolute efforts at social change.

Gradualist strategies are not popular with all social activists. Indeed, the desire for immediate change is one reason that appealing to elites is so popular: only elites seem to have the power to act quickly. Leninist parties hope for a rapid seizure of power. Many anarchist groups also look for quick revolutionary change, and put their trust in the natural ability of people to create non-hierarchical institutions more or less spontaneously. There is some basis for this line of thinking — during the Spanish Civil

War, communities collectively organized production, distribution, and services.

In crisis conditions, however, experience, tradition, and resources make a big difference. Anarchists had played a strong and active role in Spain for many decades before the Civil War. By contrast, when the Saigon regime in South Vietnam collapsed in 1975, there was no spontaneous creation of self-managing institutions. Instead, the North Vietnamese army took power. Many other cases of major social institutions collapsing show that we cannot expect an automatic response from the people. Attempts at communal living often fail as well, because they are poorly planned and allow old habits to fill the vacuum left by the inadequacy of supposedly beneficial spontaneity.

The principle of long-term struggle means that antiwar strategies cannot be premised on the inevitable breakdown of capitalism, State socialism, or any other major institution. Campaigns against these structures must be consciously planned and promoted. Yet crisis cannot be ignored. A long-term strategy should include *preparation* for taking advantage of crises.

## Truth

One goal for a world without war is a concern for truth: open and widespread attempts to understand social reality. If this goal is to be part of the methods to attain it, then antiwar activists must come to grips with certain truths which may be unpleasant. For example:

- There may or may not be a genetic influence on the expression of aggression in some aspects of human interpersonal relations.
- For many soldiers and civilians, wartime provides their greatest experiences of solidarity, meaningful activity, and enjoyment.
- Nuclear war may kill 'only' a small fraction of the world's population, leaving a partially devastated world in which antiwar efforts are greater than ever.
- Antiwar movements have had little effect on the course of arms races and the incidence of war.

Underlying the foregoing presentat    Such statements should

not be denied out of hand. We should instead investigate these assumptions and to come to grips with any unpleasant conclusions that may arise. A social movement may delude itself, but delusion is not a solid basis on which to build strategies for removing the institutions underlying war.

## Principles are Important

Underlying the foregoing presentation of principles is another principle, or rather a meta-principle: principles are important. Social movements can operate on day-to-day pragmatism, without constant principles. But without clear, open, and widely understood principles, social movements are much more vulnerable to manipulation, co-optation, and repression by governments, by opportunistic sectarian groups, or by their own leaders. Principles need not be fixed and inviolate. They can be the subject of careful study and heated debate.

Decisions about principles are often among the easier decisions made by social movements. The hard part is deciding what they mean in practice. Is our group doing enough to share tasks and leadership skills? How does our planned rally fit into a long-term strategy? What should we say about the role of civil defence in saving lives? Principles by themselves do not provide answers to such questions, but they are valuable in providing a general framework for working out solutions.

*The foregoing article is a slightly edited version of the first two chapters of Brian Martin's Uprooting War. The book goes on to present three areas for striking at the roots of war: social defence, peace conversion, and self-management. He then analyzes the key institutional roots of war — the State, bureaucracy, the administrative class, the military, patriarchy, and State socialism — and examines grassroots strategies for challenging and superseding these institutions. Finally, he presents the controversial view that nuclear war may not kill everyone on earth, and that peace activists should be prepared for this eventuality.*

## FROM PROUDHON TO BAKUNIN

*Daniel Guérin*

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The late Georges Gurvitch considered it “shocking to compare Bakunin and Proudhon” and maintained that one could write a book, *Bakunin and Proudhon*, to show how far Bakunin is, in fact, from Proudhon. No doubt Gurvitch had swallowed the reputation of destructive violence which has been stuck on Bakunin. The eminent sociologist dismissed as ‘aberrant’ any comparison between the two men. I propose to make here an indispensable reassessment of this subject.

First of all, the two were contemporaries and friends. Bakunin was only five years younger than Proudhon (whilst Marx was nine years younger). Their contributions are reciprocal, with a preponderance of influence from Proudhon to Bakunin. At least that is the opinion of Y.M. Steklov, a Russian biographer of Bakunin.<sup>1</sup> Both were the founders of libertarian socialism. Certainly their paths as men, as theoreticians, and as activists did diverge. One was a sedentary Frenchman, the other an exiled,

Note: The numbering of volumes is not the same in the edition of the *Complete Works* of Bakunin published by Brill in Holland and in the reproduction by Editions Champ Libre in Paris. The reason for this is that the first two volumes of Brill constitute only one volume, whereas Champ Libre numbers them 1 and 2.

<sup>1</sup> Yuri Michailovich Steklov, *Michail Alexandrovich Bakunin: 1814-1876*. Moscow, 1926-1927.

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cosmopolitan Russian. One a son of the peasantry, the other of landed gentry. One taught himself only dead languages, the other was a consummate polyglot. Above all, as Marcel Body has reminded us, Bakunin was removed from the struggle by imprisonment and then deportation for twelve years. A precocious and fecund writer, Proudhon was able to publish an immense amount of work between 1839 and his death in 1865. It was slightly before Proudhon's death that Bakunin, taking up the torch, entered upon his fiery career as an anarchist. He left behind a vast quantity of written work, which is still only partially accessible.

The impetus which, as he approached the age of fifty, made Bakunin branch off towards anarchism was due in large part, no doubt, to the influence of Proudhon, whom he visited in late 1863 and 1864. He had begun reading Proudhon's works before being cast into chains, reading which incubated in the solitude of prison cells, and was completed, with the devouring haste of someone making up for lost time, after his escape and return to Europe. Perhaps he even had some books by Proudhon at his disposal during the last two years of exile, when he was under house arrest in Siberia.

Nevertheless, it was only at the end of 1863, after the fiasco of the Polish uprising, into which, needlessly, he would have liked to have been able to throw himself, that Bakunin became a libertarian. Concerning that event, we should note that the positions of Proudhon and Bakunin were quite similar: Proudhon did not wish to support the insurgents, for he saw in them members of the nobility who were oppressing their peasants; Bakunin would agree later that "the programme of the Poles" did not conform to "socialist ideas," that "precisely for this reason" it neglected "the people's cause," and that the uprising which had been made "against the people," to the exclusive benefit of the privileged classes, was a "retrograde, deadly, counter-revolutionary"<sup>2</sup> movement.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Si les traités de 1815 ont cessé d'exister?*, 1863, ed. Rivière, 1952, pp. 399-422; Michael Bakunin, *Works*, ed. Stock, Vol. IV, 1910, p. 464; "Fragments formant une suite de l'Empire Knouts-germanique," 1872; letter from Bakunin to Herzen, 20 April 1867, and *Nota* on p. 246 in *Correspondance de Michel Bakounine, Lettres à Herzen et à Ogareff 1860-1874*, published by Michel Dragomanov, Paris, 1896, pp. 246 and 257; "Programme de la Fraternité révolutionnaire," 1865, in Max Nettlau, *Michael Bakunin. Eine Biographie*, 3 vols., London, 1896-1900, reproduced in my anthology of anarchism, *Ni Dieu ni Maître*, 1970, vol. 1, p. 173.

Well before 1863, as we shall see, Bakunin admired Proudhon's writings and revolutionary action during the French revolution of 1848, but he had not yet come around to what he called, in German, with a touch of irony, his *Systemchen*, his 'little system.'<sup>3</sup> As early as 1842, when he arrived in Dresden, he had been fascinated by a book of a German writer, Lorenz von Stein, entitled *Socialism and Communism in Contemporary France*. Amongst other revelations Bakunin discovered there the challenges hurled at property by the young Proudhon.

In 1845, in Paris, Bakunin formed bonds of friendship with the anarchist writer, whom he considered "one of the most remarkable Frenchmen" of his time.<sup>4</sup> In the intimacy of this relationship, Bakunin both learned and taught. On the one hand, he familiarized himself with anarchism, and, on the other, as a brilliant young Hegelian, he *attempted* to acquaint Proudhon with Hegel's thought, for Proudhon, who did not know any German, had some difficulty assimilating dialectics. One evening one of their friends left the pair engrossed in an animated philosophical discussion. The next morning he found them in the same place, in front of the embers in the fireplace, still palavering.<sup>5</sup>

When, at the end of 1847, Bakunin was expelled from France to Belgium for having spoken at a meeting in commemoration of the Polish revolution of 1831. Proudhon expressed in his *Notebooks* the indignation which this arbitrary measure inspired in him.<sup>6</sup>

Yet Bakunin quickly returned to Paris to participate with passion in the revolution of February 1848,<sup>7</sup> and he was to consider later that "in all that revolutionary phantasmagoria there were only two really serious men, albeit quite dissimilar to one another: they were Proudhon and Blanqui."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Briefe von und an Georg Herwegh: 1848*, Munich, 1896, pp. 22-23, letter from Bakunin to Herwegh, Aug. 1848.

<sup>4</sup> Bakunin, *Confession*, 1851; ed. P.U.F., 1974, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Herzen, *Sobranie*, vol. X, pp. 190-191, in Arthur Lehning, *Michel Bakounine et les autres*, Paris, 10/18, 1976, p. 116.

<sup>6</sup> Proudhon, *Carnets*, vol. II, Paris, 1961, p. 336; H.-E. Kaminski, *Bakounine: La Vie d'un révolutionnaire*, 1938, pp. 80-83.

<sup>7</sup> Bakunin, *Confession*, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-82.

<sup>8</sup> Bakunin, *Works*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, 1907, p. 128, "Lettres à un Français sur la crise actuelle," 15 Sept. 1870.

Some months later he departed for Germany. It was there that echoes reached him from the session of the National Assembly of 31 July 1848, when Proudhon, who had been elected as a representative, took on all comers.<sup>9</sup> The workers' uprising at the end of June had just been savagely repressed. The entire throng of parliamentarians, except for two representatives, one of whom was Proudhon, anathematized and insulted, as Bakunin would describe it later, "the heroic socialist who alone had had the courage to cast the challenge of socialism at that wild pack of bourgeois conservatives, liberals and radicals."<sup>10</sup> With the exception of Proudhon and Louis Blanc, Bakunin further noted, "almost all the historians of the Revolution of 1848... have never deigned to dwell upon the crime and upon the criminals of June." Why? "The crime of June affected only the workers."<sup>11</sup>

Shortly after the parliamentary harrying, Bakunin wrote to his friend, the German poet Georg Herwegh: "Proudhon is the only one in Paris — the only one in the world of political writers — who understands anything. He has displayed great and admirable courage. His speech was, at that wretched and hypocritical time, a noble act."<sup>12</sup> Bakunin was grateful to Proudhon for assailing the republican party of 1848, in the bosom of which "reactionary thought was conceived," and for having stigmatized "its governmental zeal."<sup>13</sup> He added: "There was against Proudhon, on the part of the official representatives of republicanism, a sort of conspiracy of silence."<sup>14</sup> Then he exclaimed: "Ah! How right Proudhon was when he said: 'In 1848, as in 1793, the revolution had as destroyers the very same people who were representing it'."<sup>15</sup>

In the wake of the unsuccessful uprising in Dresden, Bakunin was arrested on 10 May 1849. Having been handed over to Austria,

<sup>9</sup> Cf. this speech in vol. of the *Complete Works of Proudhon*, "Deuxième Mémoire sur la propriété," etc., ed. Rivière, 1938, pp. 359-406, and briefly summarized in my anthology, *Ni Dieu ni Maître*, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 61-62.

<sup>10</sup> Bakunin, *Works*, *op. cit.*, vol. V, 1911, p. 18; newspaper *L'Egalité*, Geneva, 21 Aug. 1869.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 367-368, *L'Empire Knouts-germanique et la révolution sociale*, 1871.

<sup>12</sup> Herwegh, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>13</sup> Bakunin, *Works*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 325, quoting Proudhon, *Idée générale de la Révolution au XIXe siècle*, 1851, ed. Rivière, 1924, p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> Bakunin, *Works*, vol. IV, 1910, p. 318, "Avertissement pour l'Empire Knouts-germanique."

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 360, quoting Proudhon, *Idée générale*, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-34.

then to Russia, his martyrdom began and doubtless he was unable to read the two books which Proudhon published the same year: *Revolutionary Ideas*, a miscellaneous collection of his speeches during the revolution of 1848, and *Confessions of a Revolutionary*. These two books Bakunin was to quote and recommend later,<sup>16</sup> and his friend, the federalist Arnold Ruge, translated them into German in 1850.<sup>17</sup>

Their Parisian friendship left some indelible memories for both Proudhon and Bakunin. When Proudhon announced in his paper *The People* the arrest of Bakunin, he described him as "the friend of all of us."<sup>18</sup> After being imprisoned himself in Sainte-Pélagie, Proudhon wrote to Alexander Herzen in November 1851, on the occasion of a rumour that Bakunin had died, that he 'weeps' for him and that he 'loves' him. In his *Notebooks*, in the entry for 25 October 1851, again relating to the rumour, published by the newspaper *The National*, he had declared: "Bakunin was my friend; his was a true intellect, abreast of all ideas; a fine character, full of devotion. Without writing much at all he effected extraordinary propaganda. Socialism and philosophy cannot forget him. His death is one more argument for them against the State, the Church, and Capital."<sup>19</sup> After the premature death of the older friend, on 19 January 1865, Bakunin spoke of the "tender respect" which he felt "for the memory of Proudhon."<sup>20</sup>

Yet this fidelity in friendship, and, later, their shared libertarian option, would not proceed without serious divergences. Bakunin referred to Proudhon, without necessarily adding sufficient qualification, as an "incorrigible idealist" and as a "metaphysician to the tip of his fingers," led astray into an "abstract notion of right," "in logic more powerful than his revolutionary peasant instincts."<sup>21</sup> He wrote of Proudhon in 1870 to the journal *Liberty* in Brussels: "If he had lived longer, driven on by the same logic, he

<sup>16</sup> Bakunin, *Complete Works*, vol. I, 1961, p. 170, Fragment M, copy from Nertlau, note at the foot of the page by Bakunin.

<sup>17</sup> Note 87 on p. 431 of vol. III of *Complete Works*, 1967.

<sup>18</sup> Newspaper *Le Peuple*, 2 June 1849, in Lehning, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Proudhon to Herzen, 27 Nov. 1851, in Lehning, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-86; Proudhon, *Carnets*, vol. IV, 1974, p. 367.

<sup>20</sup> Bakunin, *Complete Works*, vol. II, 1965, p. 199, "Ecrit contre Marx," 1872.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317, p. 437, note 104, manuscript of 1872.



would have reconstructed the good Lord, for whom he had always reserved a small place in his sentimental and mystical notion of the Ideal. He would have had to do it and he was preparing to do it; he told me so himself, in his half-serious, half-ironic manner, two months before his death."<sup>22</sup> In fact, God was already etched into the great work of Proudhon on *Justice*.<sup>23</sup>

To be sure, Bakunin defended Proudhon against the "filthy things" which Marx wrote against him, for "this great name and this so legitimate reputation put him in the shade."<sup>24</sup> But he agreed that "in the pitiless criticism" which Marx directed at Proudhon, "there is no doubt much that is true" and that the theoretician of historical materialism was justified in contrast to Proudhonian idealism.<sup>25</sup> He provided a lively encomium for *Capital*, which he considered a "magnificent work," "a death sentence, scientifically grounded and pronounced irrevocably" against capitalist exploitation. Yet, in a different vein, Bakunin added, "the instinct of liberty is lacking" in Marx. "He is from head to toe an authoritarian."<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, he reckoned that "Proudhon understood and felt liberty much better than he."<sup>27</sup>

Besides, Bakunin moderated his criticism of Proudhonian idealism when he observed that "the ideal, as Proudhon said, is only a flower, of which the material conditions of existence constitute the roots,"<sup>28</sup> and when he congratulated Proudhon "for saying that socialism has no other mission than to realize rationally and effectively on earth the illusory and mystical promises, the realization of which has been relegated to heaven by religion."<sup>29</sup> He approved of Proudhon when he wrote (after Feuerbach) that "men... have always only adored in their gods the other side of their own image."<sup>30</sup> And then how he savoured that

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. V, p. 3, letter to the newspaper *La Liberté* in Brussels, 12 Jan. 1870.

<sup>23</sup> Proudhon, *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Eglise, 1859-60*, ed. Rivière, 4 vols., 1930.

<sup>24</sup> Bakunin, *Complete Works*, vol. I, 2nd part, p. 217, "Lettre aux internationaux de la Romagne," Jan. 1872.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 317, *Etatisme et Anarchie*.

<sup>26</sup> *Works, op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 208-9, "Appendice à l'Empire Knouts-germanique," Nov.-Dec. 1870.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 437, note 104, manuscript of Bakunin.

<sup>28</sup> *Works, op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 18, *L'Empire...*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270, note by Bakunin, "Appendice."

<sup>30</sup> *Complete Works*, vol. I, 1st part, p. 9, "Réponse d'un international à Mazzini."

audacious broadside from Proudhon in *Justice*, saluting Satan as "one who has been slandered by priests and kings" and invoking the demon in these unwonted terms: "Come, Satan, come, let me embrace you, let me clasp you to my bosom, oh most blessed of my heart!"<sup>31</sup> Bakunin admired his friend for having greeted Satan "with eloquence full of love" the "creator of liberty."<sup>32</sup>

In sum, Proudhon, as seen by Bakunin, was "a perpetual contradiction, a vigorous genius, a revolutionary thinker always debating against the phantoms of idealism," a "realistic revolutionary" straddling an "idealistic philosopher." But it was of the revolutionary, and of him alone, that Bakunin considered himself to be the successor. He proposed to "enlarge, develop, liberate from all its metaphysical, idealistic, doctrinaire baggage the anarchist system of Proudhon," at the same time that he would add to it Marxist historical materialism.<sup>33</sup>

In one of his works, produced in 1867-1868, Bakunin paid this homage to Proudhon:

"Rule making was the common passion of all socialists before 1848, with one exception. Cabet, Louis Blanc, Fourierists, Saint-Simonians, all had a passion for indoctrinating and organizing the future, all were more or less *authoritarian*.

"But then along came Proudhon: son of a peasant, and, in fact and by instinct, a hundred times more revolutionary than all those doctrinaire and bourgeois socialists, he armed himself with a critique as profound and penetrating as it was merciless, in order to destroy all systems.

"Contrasting liberty to authority, against these State socialists, he boldly proclaimed himself an anarchist and, in the face of their deism or their pantheism, he had the courage to call himself simply an atheist. His own socialism, founded upon liberty, both individual and collective, and upon the spontaneous action of free associations, obeying no other laws than those general laws of social economy, discovered or yet to be discovered by science, beyond all governmental regulation and all protection by the State, moreover subordinating politics to the economic, intel-

<sup>31</sup> Proudhon, *De la Justice... op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 433.

<sup>32</sup> Bakunin, *Works, op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 434, *L'Empire...*

<sup>33</sup> *Complete Works*, vol. III, p. 437.

lectual and moral interests of society, had to later necessarily end in federalism."<sup>34</sup>

At the beginning of January 1870, Bakunin declared that he was absorbed in reading Proudhon, for he was considering writing a book on the destruction of the State, a book which was to become *Statism and Anarchy*.<sup>35</sup> In a document dating from September of the same year, he reckons that Proudhon had "demonstrated very well" that "the State... is the historical consecration of all despotism, of all privileges, the political reason for all economic and social reduction to slavery."<sup>36</sup>

Late in 1873, Bakunin contributed to the publication of a book, translated into Russian, which appeared in London in 1874. Michael Dragomanov, in the postscript to his *Correspondence of Michael Bakunin*, published in 1896, attributes the book to Bakunin. We know today that this claim is not quite correct.<sup>37</sup> In fact, this little book was put together by Bakunin's closest disciple in the International, James Guillaume.<sup>38</sup> The book translates from the Russian as *Anarchy According to (or After) Bakunin*. We know, moreover, thanks to another disciple of Bakunin, Arman Ross (and I have been able to check this myself), that Guillaume restricted himself to summarizing, with numerous quotations, the two books by Proudhon preferred by Bakunin: *Confessions of a Revolutionary* and *General Idea of Revolution in the 19th Century*. Bakunin, having been informed of Guillaume's project, encouraged him to proceed with it.

Arthur Lehning considers that Guillaume's preface was probably revised by Bakunin himself. This would lend more weight to the following passage:

"We deem it... useful to convey Proudhon's socialism with its genuine features and to expound, in simple and clear terms, the essentials of the ideas which he defended with such energy and talent."

<sup>34</sup> *Works, op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 38-40, "Fédéralisme, Socialisme et Antithéologisme," 1867.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 236, Preface by James Guillaume; *Etatisme et Anarchie*, 1873, *Complete Works*, vol. III.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 108, "Lettres à un Français..." 7 Sept. 1870.

<sup>37</sup> Dragomanov, *op. cit.*, postscript, p. 371.

<sup>38</sup> SJames LGuillaume, *L'Internationale... 1864-1878*, vol. III, 1909, p. 187; also from Guillaume, "Notice biographique" (of Bakunin), *Works*, vol. II, p. LII, note.

Putting aside any intention of dealing with Proudhon's idealistic and metaphysical "varied oddities," they limited themselves to "commenting only upon the part of his theories which Proudhon put forward in 1848 and which, taken up again in the programme of the International Working Men's Association... constitute the essence of his theoretical concepts, namely the abolition of the political state, the organization of society in economic Federalism... the Federalist doctrine concerning the organization of work."

In his introduction to Volume V of the *Archives*, Lehning provides both a facsimile of the title page and some extracts retranslated into French from the preface and from the book itself, a photocopy of which the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam was kind enough to let me consult. The original manuscript in French has since been burnt.<sup>39</sup>

It remains to me to sketch, in broad outline, the parallelism in the libertarian views of Proudhon and Bakunin.

Both use the word 'anarchy' (which they sometimes spell *anarchy*) in its etymological sense of absence of authority or of government. Yet they also use it in the common, and older, sense of social chaos. Perhaps they deliberately maintain this ambiguity in order to suggest that anarchy, through colossal disorder, complete disorganization of society, would install a new, stable, and rational social order founded upon liberty and solidarity.<sup>40</sup>

Both Proudhon and Bakunin fulminate against the State and against authority. Both challenge the "swindle" of the ballot box. Neither wanted political power, but they did want to destroy both capital and the State. Both reject any socialism which would not be libertarian; that is, any form of socialism which would aggrandize the State at the expense of liberty and which would tamper with the rights, the creativity, and the necessary de-alienation of the individual.

Proudhon and Bakunin were both resistant to Marxist 'dogmatism' and the Marxist 'cane.' That is what Proudhon expresses with force and alarm in his letter to Marx of 17 May 1846. It is

<sup>39</sup> Bakunin, *Complete Works*, vol. V, pp. LXIV-LXVII, commentary by Arthur Lehning.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. my book *L'Anarchisme*, 1965, p. 14.

equally evident in his personal copy of *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in which his marginal notes refer to Marx's bad faith, lies, libel, absurdities, and plagiarism in his vicious attack upon *The Philosophy of Poverty*.<sup>41</sup> But what was in Proudhon still only a summary retort was to be developed by Bakunin with infinitely greater richness when, long after Proudhon's death, he experienced the antinomies — which had become crystal clear — between anarchism and Marxism.

Both saw power and social revolution as incompatible. Proudhon exclaimed: "Put a Saint Vincent de Paul in power: there will be a Guizot or a Talleyrand." And Bakunin: "Take the most fervent revolutionary and give him the throne of all the Russias... and in the space of one year that revolutionary will be worse than (the tsar) himself"; and "Take the most sincere democrat and put him on any throne, he will without fail become a scoundrel."<sup>42</sup>

They were both at one and the same time individualistic and sociable. Both counted on the revolutionary spontaneity of the masses. They believed in the necessity, in the first case, of intervention by a few wise heads, in the second case, of a specific organization which would precede the awakening of the masses, and subsequently ensure unity of revolutionary thought and action, but without reviving any sort of authority. Both were communalists and federalists.

Proudhon and Bakunin were 'collectivists,' which is to say they declared themselves without equivocation in favour of the common exploitation, not by the State but by associated workers, of the large-scale means of production and of the public services. Proudhon has been quite wrongly presented as an exclusive enthusiast of private property. The confusion was to some extent created by himself, to be sure, but far more so, after his death, by his false disciples in the International, Tolain and others. At the Bâle congress in 1869, Bakunin did not hesitate to risk allying himself with the statist Marxists against them in order to ensure the triumph of the principle of collective property. He had nothing but contempt for that "little workers' coterie which had

<sup>41</sup> Marx, *Misère de la Philosophie*, ed. Costes, 1950.

<sup>42</sup> Proudhon, *Confession d'un révolutionnaire*, 1849, ed. Rivière, 1929, p. 285; Bakunin, *Complete Works*, vol. V, p. 282, "La Science et la question vitale de la Révolution," 1870; *Programme de la Fraternité...* cit. in *Ni Dieu ni Maître*, op. cit., vol. I, p. 199.

been formed in the last years of Proudhon's life," adding that "moreover, all that so-called Proudhonian coterie was a still-birth."<sup>43</sup>

Both of them, in advance of their time, were anti-colonialist. Proudhon denounced the crimes committed by the French military in Algeria and envisioned separation. He predicted: "One day independence will come for Algeria."<sup>44</sup> Bakunin anticipated a vast federation, at first Euro-American, then extending to Africa and Asia.<sup>45</sup>

In conclusion, I should like to disabuse those of my present-day libertarian socialist comrades who misjudge Proudhon only to magnify Bakunin, and, conversely, the overly zealous Proudhonians who belittle Bakunin. Certainly the work of the latter shows undeniable progress in relation to that of the former, whose strokes of genius are too often overlaid with tiresome dross. Yet I hope that I have proved that Bakunin reaped the harvest sown by Proudhon — the father of anarchism — filtering, enriching and surpassing it.

<sup>43</sup> James Guillaume, "Notice..." op. cit., *Works*, vol. II, pp. XXXVI-XXXVII; Bakunin, *Complete Works*, vol. I, p. 241, 1st part, Fragment T.

<sup>44</sup> Proudhon, *La Guerre et la Paix*, 1861, ed. Rivière, 1927, p. 241.

<sup>45</sup> Bakunin, *Complete Works*, vol. V, p. 299, "Circulaire à mes amis d'Italie," 1871.

## THE HAYMARKET AFFAIR AND LUCY PARSONS: 100th ANNIVERSARY

*Arlene Meyers*

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### *Introduction*

Lucy Parsons (1853-1942) was a fighter for economic and social justice for much of her life. Although she was a contemporary of Emma Goldman, Mother Jones, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, male historians have relegated Lucy to a secondary role as the wife of Albert Parsons —an anarchist hanged in 1887 for his alleged participation in the Haymarket Affair.

Lucy Parsons' biographer, Carolyn Ashbaugh, has attempted to correct this historical oversight by firmly establishing Lucy as a force in her own right: a formidable figure in labour and radical movements and an able and effective defender of the rights of working people. The material presented here was taken from Ashbaugh's unfinished manuscript, along with additional details supplied by Joseph Gruenhut's account of the Haymarket Affair and Lucy's life in *Knights of Labor*, and focuses on Lucy's activities at that time in history.

Although Lucy was called the 'Goddess of Anarchy' and her militant speeches and writings advocated 'propaganda by the deed' (direct action through sabotage and terrorism), there is no evidence that she was ever directly involved in terrorist activity. Her reputation as a firebrand came from her ability to inspire confidence and revolutionary fervour in others, to convince them

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*Arlene Meyers edited this material and wrote the introduction. Material for the article came from "The Militant Women of 1886" by Carolyn Ashbaugh. Ashbaugh has written a book entitled Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary.*

of the need to act upon their oppression. A contemporary reporter called her "a veritable Louise Michel,"\* and continued, "She is a wonderfully strong writer, and it is said she can excel her husband in making a fiery speech."

Ashbaugh's research into Lucy's life was complicated by the absence of official documents and personal data. There are no records of her birth, and little is known of her early life or formal education. Lucy Eldine Parsons' racial heritage was Black, Mexican, and Indian, and she was probably born into slavery on the Texas frontier. There are four or five variations on her origins. She herself resisted reporters' efforts to delve into her personal history in the belief that a revolutionary's personal life is irrelevant.

Lucy and Albert Parsons were married in Austin, Texas. He had served as a scout in the Confederate Army during the Civil War and his political leanings during his lifetime ranged from right to far left. At one time he was a Republican 'scalawag,' then a civil rights agitator in Waco, Texas. It was in Chicago that Albert was exposed to radical ideas and where he developed as socialist and revolutionary anarchist.

The Parsons left Texas in the wake of the savage Reconstruction period and migrated north in search of jobs. They arrived in Chicago in January 1874 in the middle of political and economic upheaval following the devastation left by the Great Fire of 1871. Although people were suffering from starvation and there was no recourse for the unemployed, the money collected for the poor through Chicago's Relief and Aid Society was not released without considerable pressure from working-class organizations.

It was the Parsons' direct experience with hunger, financial uncertainty, and social oppression which led to their deepening involvement in the class struggle. At first they worked in social democratic and labour organizations which promoted social change through the electoral process, but by 1877 they had become members of the Socialistic Labor Party. Lucy developed

\* Louise Michel was an anarchist active in the Paris Commune of 1871. See *Louise Michel* by Edith Thomas, Black Rose Books, 1980.

into a prominent speaker and exponent of socialism, and she helped organize a working women's union. Her position as a revolutionary became more clearly defined in a series of articles for *The Socialist*, a newspaper published by Albert Parsons and Frank Hirth.

Their two children were born in Chicago: Albert, Jr., in 1879, and a daughter, Lulu Eda, in 1881. (The children's birth records list them as 'black,' but their death certificates read 'white.') Lucy's personal tragedy did not end with Albert's murder by the State nor with the constant harassment she suffered at the hands of the police. Her daughter died in 1889 and Albert, Jr., was institutionalized in the Elgin State Mental Hospital for much of his adult life until his death in 1919.

In 1887, Lucy published A.R. Parsons' *Anarchism*, and in 1889 she co-authored *The Life of Albert R. Parsons*. These books, the many socialist pamphlets which she sold, and her lectures provided a meagre living. As well, for eight years after her husband's death she received an allowance from the Pioneer Aid and Support Association which had been founded to provide financial assistance to the widows and children of the Haymarket martyrs.

As part of her labour organizing, labour defence, and hunger and unemployment work, Lucy spoke around the country and wrote and published pamphlets and newspapers. She was a member of the Socialist Party of Eugene Debs and a founder of the Industrial Workers of the World. She joined the Communist Party in her later years in the belief that the Communists would "bring the revolution." Lucy was still an active radical at more than eighty years of age, and by the time she died in a fire at her home in 1942, she had devoted nearly seventy years to the radical movement.

Those of her private possessions not destroyed by the fire were soon seized by the Chicago Police 'Red Squad' and the FBI. The world may have been unaware of this woman, who was nearly blind in her later years, but the police had not forgotten who she had once been.

## The Haymarket Affair

In the spring of 1886, the movement for the eight-hour day was underway. To the anarchists, such a demand was reformist, not revolutionary. As Lucy Parsons stated the radical position, workers should not strike for the eight-hour day; they should seize the means of production. But the anarchists finally did join the movement, 'not wishing to be misunderstood by their fellow workingmen.' They plunged into the campaign and played a leading role in its last stages of organization; the general strike was to commence May 1, 1886.

On May 1, after leading a crowd of 80,000 singing strikers up Michigan Avenue in Chicago, Lucy continued her efforts to organize the women garment workers. Albert left for Cincinnati to speak. He returned to Chicago the morning of May 4, and that evening attended a meeting called by Lucy on the sewing girl question.

At about 9 p.m. another International Working People's Association (IWPA) member came to the meeting, held at the *Alarm* newspaper offices, to ask Albert Parsons and Samuel Fielden to speak to the striking workers at the Haymarket meeting. Albert and Lucy and their two children, along with Fielden and assistant *Alarm* editor Lizzie Holmes, went to Haymarket Square, where Parsons spoke. A storm was brewing, so the four Parsons and Lizzie adjourned to Zepf's Hall nearby to avoid the weather and to wait for the meeting to end when they would go home in the company of friends.

As the group was enjoying a beer in the hall, Captain Bonfield moved 176 policemen into the square to break up the peaceful meeting. At the approach of the police, a bomb was thrown, killing one officer instantly and fatally injuring seven, as well as a number of working people in the crowd. From Zepf's Hall, the Parsons saw the flash of the bomb and heard the ensuing shots. Knowing that the ruling classes of Chicago would like nothing better than to implicate him in the bombing, Albert Parsons left Chicago that evening for the Holmes house in Geneva, Illinois. He travelled from there to Elgin, and finally to Waukesha, Wisconsin.

When the police arrived at the Parsons' apartment, Lucy was there to greet them. "I have been expecting you," she said calmly. "You still wear the red ribbon, do you?" asked the officer. "Yes, and I'll wear it until I die," she replied, declaring that she was "ready to die at once for the glorious cause." She could not be induced to say a word about the whereabouts of her husband or her fellow anarchists. The detectives threatened her with the sweatbox. They grabbed six-year-old Albert, Jr., and spun him around on the floor demanding to know where his father was. "We'll string him up when we get him," they threatened. Lucy told the detectives that she had "the bombs salted away." "Get out or I'll blow your heads off!" she said.

A reporter who accompanied this 'organized banditti' wrote:

She is a self-possessed speaker and a fluent one. Her socialistic harangues are the most violent and vindictive of all the orators of that persuasion. She has often said that the ambition of her life is to fire the engine that shall run the guillotine to cut off the heads of the capitalists. "That is my religion," she asserted last night as her eyes flashed with a dangerous gleam. She is thoroughly conversant with the doctrines of communism, and is capable of making a terse logical argument, though her utterances are usually those of epigrammatic savagery. She is a remarkably strong-willed and determined woman of a fair education and no ordinary ability.

By May 10, Lucy had been arrested four times. Her house was searched, her few valuables stolen by the police, her mattresses ripped open and the bedding strewn about.

## The Militant Women of 1886

Lucy Parsons and Lizzie Holmes were subjected to police harassment and arrest, but they were not indicted in the Haymarket bombing. Ostensibly, they were presumed to have taken part in the bombing. They were leaders in the fights against low wages, long hours, child labour, and unsafe working conditions. They called for equal pay for equal work. They advocated abolition of the capitalist system, and they were known as 'anarchists' — loathsome creatures who flung bombs from dark alleys, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. Yet the police did not regard them as a real threat to capitalist society.

As early as 1879, there existed in Chicago a working women's union. In about 1881, Lizzie Holmes was discharged from her job for belonging to a union. The next year, she was fired for participating in the first known strike of Chicago sewing women. Lucy Parsons was an activist in the organization and was keenly aware of her sisters' plight. Many of the basement garment shops, in which women's health broke in the struggle for survival, were located in her own neighbourhood.

"Twenty-five cents fine for coming in late." "No talking and laughing." "Extra trimmings must be paid for." "Damaged goods will be charged to employees." "No cloaks checked until returned from the presser." Such were the signs hanging on the walls of any of the larger cloak-making shops.

Lizzie Holmes was well-acquainted with the implications of the last sign: a woman could not get paid for her work until the buttonholes had been stitched in, the buttons sewn on, and the cloak pressed — a process which could take two, three, even four weeks. In the meantime, she might not have the money to pay her rent or to buy food — let alone enough to pay doctor bills should she become ill. And illness was common among women who sewed for sixteen hours a day.

Lucy Parsons and Lizzie Holmes translated their anger into action. Lucy frequently lectured to mass meetings at the lakefront; both women led a march on the Chicago Board of Trade (commonly called the 'Board of Thieves'); they led Thanksgiving Day marches of the poor and hungry down mansion-lined streets. The spring of 1886 found the two, along with Sarah Ames and others, organizing the sewing women for the great eight-hour-day strike which was to burst forth on May 1.

After the successful march on May 1, women in Chicago's garment industry walked off their jobs by the hundreds on May 2. The *Tribune* ran the headline "Shouting Amazons" the following day and began their article: "Between 300 and 400 girls and women were affected with a malignant form of the eight-hour malady yesterday morning." The paper acknowledged, however, that nowhere did workers seem inclined to stay at their machines; the atmosphere was jubilant. Only at one shop did the owners put up resistance, refusing to shut off the power to the machines.

From 1877 to 1882, Lucy had lived on Larrabee Street. She knew the neighbourhood well — the little sweatshops where seven- and eight-year-old children worked for seventy-five cents to a dollar per week, where sewing women got three dollars and fifty cents to five dollars and skilled workers five or six dollars, rarely as much as seven. Lucy had her own private dressmaking shop in her apartment, but she knew the less fortunate women who had to work in the dark basements. Even the *Tribune* acknowledged the fact that working conditions were bad:

"The ranks were composed of women whose exterior denoted incessant toil, and in many instances worn faces and threadbare clothing bearing evidence of a struggle for an uncomfortable existence." This was the *Chicago Tribune*, one of the most ardent foes of working people's rights. "As the procession moved along, the girls shouted and sang and laughed in a whirlwind of exuberance that did not lessen with the distance travelled."

On May 3, Lizzie Holmes marshalled a procession of working women through the city. On the morning of the next day, Lucy urgently telegraphed her in Geneva, Illinois, to return to Chicago to help distribute leaflets for a working women's meeting which she had called for that evening. Lizzie hastened to town and after supper at Lucy's, went with the Parsons to the *Alarm* office to discuss organization of the sewing girls. It was here that a member of the IWPA came in to ask Albert Parsons and 'Red Sam' Fielden to speak at Haymarket Square that evening. The group agreed and thus came to be at Zepf's Hall when the police struck to break up the meeting. The police charge was met with a bomb, but whoever threw it remains unknown to this day.

The bomb signaled the start of a massive 'Red round-up.' Labour leaders were thrown into jail, and Parsons, among others, was indicted for "conspiracy to murder Matthias Degan," the patrolman who had died at the scene.

In the immediate aftermath, in a climate of search and seizure without warrant, Lucy was arrested four times by May 10. Lizzie spent a few days in jail, while Lucy was allowed to roam under surveillance, the police hoping that Albert would try to make contact with her and thus be entrapped. On May 8, Lizzie had her hearing and was represented by Kate Kane, a woman lawyer from Milwaukee who took the case without remuneration. She was

released on \$500 bond put up by her brother and was never brought to trial.

Lizzie Holmes' jail experience only served to reinforce her knowledge that poor women go to jail, not rich ones. She met a poor young woman who had been framed by those who wanted to make a prostitute of her. She met an Irish working woman who had argued with a barkeeper over the strikes. He pitched her out on her head. Still dazed from the contact with the paving bricks, she picked one up and heaved it through the tavern window. It would be months before she would come to trial; then she would have to work for years to pay the heavy fine which would be levied against her. All because she was poor, and her word would not be considered against that of the barkeeper. A Bohemian woman was jailed because she had threatened her husband, a brute who had beaten her for years. Once she tried to defend herself, he showed her that the law is on the side of the husband, not the wife.

### The Haymarket Trial

The grand jury in the Haymarket case handed down thirty indictments — all against men. Eight of the men were indicted for murder and were to stand trial. All summer the police threatened to arrest Lucy Parsons and Lizzie Holmes if they would not keep their mouths shut. Neither backed down from outspoken condemnation of the capitalist system. On June 21, Albert Parsons voluntarily surrendered himself for trial.

The trial of the anarchists resulted in a guilty verdict on August 20 and a death sentence for seven of the eight defendants. Hanging was scheduled for December 1, 1886. On October 7, the men were asked to state their objections to the sentences. Their speeches in court were a far-reaching indictment of capitalist society and of the forces which had brought them to trial. Within two hours, Lucy was on her way to Cincinnati to address the Knights of Labor on the travesty of justice which had occurred in Chicago and to raise money for an appeal to the Illinois Supreme Court — and, of course, to spread the doctrine of anarchism.

From Cincinnati she went east to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, and other cities. The press frequently villified her but

occasionally 'admired her pluck' and even complimented her intelligence. Her arrival in town was always awaited with some trepidation, and on several occasions efforts were made to prevent her speaking. In Orange, New Jersey, she kicked in the door of the lecture hall and spoke despite police bans.

"You may have expected me to belch forth great flames of dynamite and stand before you with bombs in my hands. If you are disappointed, you have only the capitalist press to thank for it," she told one audience. Lucy was a fluent speaker with a slight Southern drawl, perhaps accentuated by a suggestion of Negro dialect. A reporter parodied her drawl when she jestingly said that "Of cawse she and the otheah ladies had bombs in theah pawkets as dress-weights."

In her speeches she referred to Chicago meat-packer Phil Armour as "a slaughterer of children as well as of hogs," to the police as "vermin," and to Judge Gary as "Hangman Gary." Though she firmly believed that the Haymarket bomb had been part of a Wall Street conspiracy to break up the eight-hour movement, she maintained that an anarchist would have been justified in throwing the bomb when he saw "the police arrive on the scene with murder in their eyes determined to break up that meeting."

Lucy returned to Chicago for Thanksgiving Day speeches and triumphantly visited Albert in jail. The occasion was joyous, as a stay of execution and appeal had just been granted. She told a jubilant Chicago audience that she had spoken in eight states on twenty-three occasions. The anarchists asked for justice, not mercy. "I am an anarchist and a revolutionist, and I propose to continue so, even if I reach the gallows also," she proclaimed.

In March 1887 the Haymarket case went to Illinois Supreme Court. Lucy left for another speaking tour of the East to raise defence funds. On March 5, she was arrested in Columbus, Ohio, and spent a week in the filthy jail, where the town bums came to jeer at her through the bars. In September the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the guilty verdict and the death sentence. Execution was scheduled for November 11, 1887. On November 2, an appeal to the United States Supreme Court was denied. Albert Parsons refused to sign a petition for clemency, saying "Give me liberty or give me death!" Friends thought he was eager to die a martyr.



Lucy did not seek to influence Albert's decision but she was subdued as execution day approached. A reporter who saw her selling pamphlets in downtown Chicago wrote, "There was none of the old-time defiance, not a sign of the wild, untamed lioness about the faithful wife of the man now standing beneath the shadow of death. A year ago, Mrs. Parsons would have turned on the blue-coated minister of despotism (a policeman), she would have castigated him with fierce invective. Today she obeyed the by no means courteous order to 'move on'."

On November 11, Lucy, her children, and Lizzie Holmes tried to reach the jail before the fatal hour of twelve. But all four prisoners were hauled off to the police station where they were stripped naked, searched for bombs, and thrown into cells, there to remain until three that afternoon. Shortly after twelve, an officer came to tell Lucy that the execution was over. Albert Parsons, August Spies, George Engel, and Adolph Fischer had been hanged.

Three of the defendants, Sam Fielden, Oscar Neebe, and Michael Schwab, received commutations to life imprisonment. Louis Lingg committed suicide, or was murdered, on November 10. Two hundred and fifty thousand people lined the streets to honour the murdered martyrs at their funeral procession. (Several years later, Governor Peter Altgeld launched a full investigation into the still-controversial Haymarket Affair. The State's case against the defendants proved to be so full of inconsistencies that the governor extended a pardon to the three men remaining in prison. Altgeld's decision was so unpopular that it ruined his political career.)

The women — Lucy Parsons, Lizzie Holmes, Sarah Ames, and the wives of Sam Fielden and Michael Schwab — had carried the flag of revolution high. Why were they not indicted? Lizzie Holmes was assistant editor and a frequent contributor to the *Alarm*. Lucy Parsons was a prominent speaker in Chicago and was more outspoken than several of the men indicted, including her husband. Laws were at work which permitted a husband to have his wife jailed and which considered women legally incompetent. Perhaps Albert Parsons was even held accountable for Lucy's 'crimes,' although there is no documentary evidence to this effect. Her article "To Tramps," which appeared in the *Alarm* and was

distributed as a handbill, was introduced as evidence against the men, but this is in line with holding the editor responsible for everything appearing in a paper; many of the more damaging articles had been written by Gerhard Lizius and others — men who were not on trial.

The fact is that these militant socialists were probably not indicted precisely *because they were women*. Equal injustice was not extended to the women because they were not viewed as equally threatening. In this case, the fact that one of the best socialist speakers — Lucy Parsons — was never jailed for an extended period of time made it possible for the radical movement to maintain an active propaganda campaign while most of its leaders were in jail.

Lucy carried on alone in the cause for which she and Albert had fought side-by-side for so long. On the first anniversary of the 'judicial murders,' she was in London at the invitation of the Socialist League. A London paper printed this account of her appearance and demeanour:

She was dressed in deep mourning, the blackness of which was intensified rather than relieved by the light gold chain she wore at her breast. She has the full lips, the black hair, the gleaming black eyes, and the rich warm complexion that tell of a mingling of blood. She is handsome with a strange beauty. But it is not until she speaks that the full power of her personality strikes you, for she has a perfect speaking voice. Rich, sweet, clear and low, it carried itself without any effort on her part with ten times the effect of ten times greater lung power. It is a voice mobile to every changing sentiment it expresses.

## THE SOVIET UNION VERSUS SOCIALISM

*Noam Chomsky*

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When the world's two great propaganda systems agree on some doctrine, it requires some intellectual effort to escape its shackles. One such doctrine is that the society created by Lenin and Trotsky and moulded further by Stalin and his successors has some relation to socialism in some meaningful or historically accurate sense of this concept. In fact, if there is a relation, it is the relation of contradiction.

It is clear enough why both major propaganda systems insist upon this fantasy. Since its origins, the Soviet State has attempted to harness the energies of its own population and oppressed people elsewhere in the service of the men who took advantage of the popular ferment in Russia in 1917 to seize State power. One major ideological weapon employed to this end has been the claim that the State managers are leading their own society and the world towards the socialist ideal; an impossibility, as any socialist

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— surely any serious Marxist — should have understood at once (many did), and a lie of mammoth proportions as history has revealed since the earliest days of the Bolshevik regime. The taskmasters have attempted to gain legitimacy and support by exploiting the aura of socialist ideals and the respect that is rightly accorded them, to conceal their own ritual practice as they destroyed every vestige of socialism.

As for the world's second major propaganda system, association of socialism with the Soviet Union and its clients serves as a powerful ideological weapon to enforce conformity and obedience to the State capitalist institutions, to ensure that the necessity to rent oneself to the owners and managers of these institutions will be regarded as virtually a natural law, the only alternative to the 'socialist' dungeon.

The Soviet leadership thus portrays itself as socialist to protect its right to wield the club, and Western ideologists adopt the same pretense in order to forestall the threat of a more free and just society. This joint attack on socialism has been highly effective in undermining it in the modern period.

One may take note of another device used effectively by State capitalist ideologists in their service to existing power and privilege. The ritual denunciation of the so-called 'socialist' States is replete with distortions and often outright lies. Nothing is easier than to denounce the official enemy and to attribute to it any crime: there is no need to be burdened by the demands of evidence or logic as one marches in the parade. Critics of Western violence and atrocities often try to set the record straight, recognizing the criminal atrocities and repression that exist while exposing the tales that are concocted in the service of Western violence. With predictable regularity, these steps are at once interpreted as apologetics for the empire of evil and its minions. Thus the crucial Right to Lie in the Service of the State is preserved, and the critique of State violence and atrocities is undermined.

It is also worth noting the great appeal of Leninist doctrine to the modern intelligentsia in periods of conflict and upheaval. This doctrine affords the 'radical intellectuals' the right to hold State power and to impose the harsh rule of the 'Red Bureaucracy,' the 'new class,' in the terms of Bakunin's prescient analysis a century

ago. As in the Bonapartist State denounced by Marx, they become the 'State priests,' a "parasitical excrescence upon civil society" that rules it with an iron hand.

In periods when there is little challenge to State capitalist institutions, the same fundamental commitments lead the 'new class' to serve as State managers and ideologists, "beating the people with the people's stick," in Bakunin's words. It is small wonder that intellectuals find the transition from 'revolutionary Communism' to 'celebration of the West' such an easy one, replaying a script that has evolved from tragedy to farce over the past half century. In essence, all that has changed is the assessment of where power lies. Lenin's dictum that "socialism is nothing but state capitalist monopoly made to benefit the whole people," who must of course trust the benevolence of their leaders, expresses the perversion of 'socialism' to the needs of the State priests, and allows us to comprehend the rapid transition between positions that superficially seem diametric opposites, but in fact are quite close.

The terminology of political and social discourse is vague and imprecise, and constantly debased by the contributions of ideologists of one or another stripe. Still, these terms have at least some residue of meaning. Since its origins, socialism has meant the liberation of working people from exploitation. As the Marxist theoretician Anton Pannekoek observed, "this goal is not reached and cannot be reached by a new directing and governing class substituting itself for the bourgeoisie," but can only be "realized by the workers themselves being master over production." Mastery over production by the producers is the essence of socialism, and means to achieve this end have regularly been devised in periods of revolutionary struggle, against the bitter opposition of the traditional ruling classes and the 'revolutionary intellectuals' guided by the common principles of Leninism and Western managerialism, as adapted to changing circumstances. But the essential element of the socialist ideal remains: to convert the means of production into the property of freely associated producers and thus the social property of people who have liberated themselves from exploitation by their master, as a fundamental step towards a broader realm of human freedom.

The Leninist intelligentsia have a different agenda. They fit Marx's description of the 'conspirators' who "pre-empt the developing revolutionary process" and distort it to their ends of domination; "Hence their deepest disdain for the more theoretical enlightenment of the workers about their class interests," which include the overthrow of the Red Bureaucracy and the creation of mechanisms of democratic control over production and social life. For the Leninist, the masses must be strictly disciplined, while the socialist will struggle to achieve a social order in which discipline "will become superfluous" as the freely associated producers "work for their own accord" (Marx). Libertarian socialism, furthermore, does not limit its aims to democratic control by producers over production, but seeks to abolish all forms of domination and hierarchy in every aspect of social and personal life, an unending struggle, since progress in achieving a more just society will lead to new insight and understanding of forms of oppression that may be concealed in traditional practice and consciousness.

The Leninist antagonism to the most essential features of socialism was evident from the very start. In revolutionary Russia, Soviets and factory committees developed as instruments of struggle and liberation, with many flaws, but with a rich potential. Lenin and Trotsky, upon assuming power, immediately devoted themselves to destroying the liberatory potential of these instruments, establishing the rule of the Party, in practice its Central Committee and its Maximal Leaders — exactly as Trotsky had predicted years earlier, as Rosa Luxemburg and other left Marxists warned at the time, and as the anarchists had always understood. Not only the masses, but even the Party must be subject to "vigilant control from above," so Trotsky held as he made the transition from revolutionary intellectual to State priest. Before seizing State power, the Bolshevik leadership adopted much of the rhetoric of people who were engaged in the revolutionary struggle from below, but their true commitments were quite different. This was evident before and became crystal clear as they assumed State power in October 1917.

A historian sympathetic to the Bolsheviks, E.H. Carr, writes that "the spontaneous inclination of the workers to organize factory committees and to intervene in the management of the

factories was inevitably encouraged by a revolution which *led the workers to believe* that the productive machinery of the country belonged to them and could be operated by them at their own discretion and to their own advantage" (my emphasis). For the workers, as one anarchist delegate said, "The Factory Committees were cells of the future... They, not the State, should now administer."

But the State priests knew better, and moved at once to destroy the factory committees and to reduce the Soviets to organs of their rule. On November 3, Lenin announced in a "Draft Decree on Workers' Control" that delegates elected to exercise such control were to be "answerable to the State for the maintenance of the strictest order and discipline and for the protection of property." As the year ended, Lenin noted that "we passed from workers' control to the creation of the Supreme Council of National Economy," which was to "replace, absorb and supersede the machinery of workers' control" (Carr). "The very idea of socialism is embodied in the concept of workers' control," one Menshevik trade unionist lamented; the Bolshevik leadership expressed the same lament in action, by demolishing the very idea of socialism.

Soon Lenin was to decree that the leadership must assume "dictatorial powers" over the workers, who must accept "*unquestioning submission* to a single will" and "in the interests of socialism," must "*unquestioningly obey the single will* of the leaders of the labour process." As Lenin and Trotsky proceeded with the militarization of labour, the transformation of the society into a labour army submitted to their single will, Lenin explained that subordination of the worker to "individual authority" is "the system which more than any other assures the best utilization of human resources" — or as Robert McNamara expressed the same idea, "vital decision-making... must remain at the top... the real threat to democracy comes not from overmanagement, but from undermanagement"; "if it is not reason that rules man, then man falls short of his potential," and management is nothing other than the rule of reason, which keeps us free. At the same time, 'factionalism' — i.e., any modicum of free expression and organization — was destroyed "in the interests of socialism," as the term was redefined for their purposes by Lenin

and Trotsky, who proceeded to create the basic proto-fascist structures converted by Stalin into one of the horrors of the modern age.<sup>1</sup>

Failure to understand the intense hostility to socialism on the part of the Leninist intelligentsia (with roots in Marx, no doubt), and corresponding misunderstanding of the Leninist model, has had a devastating impact on the struggle for a more decent society and a liveable world in the West, and not only there. It is necessary to find a way to save the socialist ideal from its enemies in both of the world's major centres of power, from those who will always seek to be the State priests and social managers, destroying freedom in the name of liberation.

<sup>1</sup> On the early destruction of socialism by Lenin and Trotsky, see Maurice Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*. Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1978, and Peter Rachleff, *Radical America*, Nov. 1974, among much other work.

## LOOKING BACK AT SPAIN

*Murray Bookchin*

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In the morning hours of July 18, 1936, General Francisco Franco issued the *pronunciamiento* from Las Palmas in Spanish North Africa that openly launched the struggle of Spain's reactionary military officers against the legally elected Popular Front Government in Madrid.

The Franco *pronunciamiento* left little doubt that, in the event of victory by the Spanish generals, a parliamentary republic would be replaced by a clearly authoritarian State, modelled institutionally on similar regimes in Germany and Italy. The Francista forces, or 'nationalists,' as they were to call themselves, exhibited all the trappings and ideologies of the fascist movements of the day: the raised open-palm salute, the appeals to a 'fold-soil' philosophy of 'order, duty, and obedience,' the avowed commitments to smash the labour movement and end all political dissidence. To the world, the conflict initiated by the Spanish generals seemed like another of the classic struggles waged between the 'forces of fascism' and the 'forces of democracy' that had reached such acute proportions in the thirties.

What distinguished the Spanish conflict from similar struggles in Italy, Germany, and Austria was the massive resistance of the 'forces of democracy' to the Spanish military. Franco and his military co-conspirators, despite the wide support they enjoyed

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among the officer cadres in the army, had grossly miscalculated the popular opposition they would encounter. The so-called Spanish Civil War lasted nearly three years — from July 1936 to March 1939 — and claimed an estimated one million lives.

For the first time, so it seemed to many of us in the thirties, an entire people with dazzling courage had arrested the terrifying success of fascist movements in central and southern Europe. Scarcely three years earlier, Hitler had pocketed Germany without a shred of resistance from the massive Marxist-dominated German labour movement. Austria, two years before, had succumbed to an essentially authoritarian State after a week of futile street-fighting by Socialist workers in Vienna. Everywhere fascism seemed 'on the march' and 'democracy' in retreat.

But Spain had seriously resisted — and was to resist for years despite the armaments, aircraft, and troops which Franco acquired from Italy and Germany. To radicals and liberals alike, the Spanish Civil War was being waged not only on the Iberian peninsula but in every country where 'democracy' seemed threatened by the rising tide of domestic and international fascist movements. The cloak of ideological legitimacy which was shrewdly cast over this conflict is betrayed by the journalistic vernacular that surfaced from the struggle in the liberal press of the thirties. The opponents of the Franco forces were called 'loyalists' as well as 'republicans'; the Franco forces, 'rebels' as well as 'nationalists.' The Spanish Civil War, we were led to believe, was a struggle of a liberal republic that was valiantly and with popular support trying to defend a democratic parliamentary State against authoritarian generals — an imagery that is conveyed to this very day by most books on the subject and by that shabby cinematic documentary "To Die in Madrid."

What so very few of us outside Spain knew, however, is that the Spanish Civil War was in fact a sweeping social revolution by millions of workers and peasants who were determined, not to rescue a treacherous republican regime, but to reconstruct Spanish society along revolutionary lines. We would scarcely have learned from the press that these workers and peasants viewed the republic with almost as much animosity as they did the Francoists; indeed, acting largely on their own initiative against republican ministers who were trying to betray them to the generals, they had

raided arsenals and sports-goods stores for weapons and with incredible valour had aborted the military conspiracies in most of the cities and towns of Spain. We were almost totally oblivious to the fact that these workers and peasants had seized and collectivized many of the factories and farms in 'republican'-held areas, establishing a new social order based on direct control of the country's productive resources by workers' committees and peasant assemblies.

While the republic's institutions lay in debris, abandoned by most of its military and police forces, the workers and peasants had created their own institutions to administer the cities in 'republican' Spain, formed their own armed workers' squads to patrol the streets, and established a remarkable revolutionary militia force to fight the Francoists — a voluntaristic militia in which men and women elected their own commanders and in which military rank conferred no social, material, or symbolic distinctions.

Largely unknown to us at this time, the Spanish workers and peasants had made a sweeping social revolution. They had created their own revolutionary social forms to administer the country as well as to wage war against a well-trained and well-supplied army.

The Spanish Civil War was not a political conflict between liberal democracy and a fascistic military corps, but a far-reaching socio-economic conflict between the workers and peasants of Spain and their historic class enemies, ranging from the land-owning grandes and clerical overlords inherited from the past to the rising industrial bourgeoisie and bankers of more recent times.

How had the revolutionary scope of this conflict been kept from us? And by 'us' I refer to the many thousands of largely Communist-influenced radicals of the 'red' thirties who responded to the struggle in Spain with the same fervour and agony that young people of the sixties responded to the struggle in Indochina. We need not turn to Orwell or Borkenau, radicals of obviously strong anti-Stalinist convictions, for an explanation. Burnett Bolloten, a rather politically innocent United Press reporter who happened to be stationed in Madrid at the time, conveys his own sense of moral outrage at the misrepresentation of the Spanish conflict in the opening lines of his superbly documented study *The Grand Camouflage*:

Although the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July, 1936, was followed by a far-reaching social revolution in the anti-Franco camp — more profound in some respects than the Bolshevik Revolution in its early stages — millions of discerning people outside of Spain were kept in ignorance, not only of its depth and range, but even of its existence, by virtue of a policy of duplicity and dissimulation of which there is no parallel in history.

Foremost in practicing this deception upon the world, and in misrepresenting in Spain itself the character of the revolution, were the Communists, who, although but an exiguous minority when the Civil War began, used so effectually the manifold opportunities which that very upheaval presented that before the close of the conflict in 1939 they became, behind a democratic front piece, the ruling force in the left camp.<sup>1</sup>

The details of this deception — one may reasonably call it a conscious Stalinist counter-revolution comparable only to the treachery of Ebert and Noske in the German Revolution of 1918-19 — would fill several large volumes. Bolloten, whose *The Grand Camouflage* examines the revolution and counter-revolution up to May 1937, a period of less than a year, requires more than 300 pages to narrate the most salient events. Many details can be further gleaned from works in French and Spanish. To contemporary radicals, however, the Spanish revolution and counter-revolution are virtually a closed book, even to those who were active in the thirties. Bolloten's book seems to be a victim of the very camouflage it was written to disclose; much the same could be said for Borkenau's and Brenan's books. Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, while better known, tends to be dismissed as sentimental and 'personalistic.'

The silence that gathers around Spain, like a bad conscience, attests to the fact that the events are very much alive — together with the efforts to misrepresent them. After fifty years the wounds have not healed. In fact, as the recent revival of Stalinism suggests, the disease that produced the purulence of counter-revolution in Spain still lingers on in the contemporary left.

<sup>1</sup> Burnett Bolloten, *The Grand Camouflage*. London, 1961, p. 17. (Republished by Russell and Russell in N.Y.) Bolloten has since expanded and revised this work into *The Spanish Revolution*, University of Carolina Press, 1979.

But to deal with the Stalinist counter-revolution in Spain is beyond the scope of this article. It might be useful, however, to examine the revolutionary tendencies that unfolded prior to July 1936 and explore the influence they exercised on the Spanish working class and peasantry. The Spanish revolution was not the result of virginal popular spontaneity, important as popular spontaneity was, nor was it nourished exclusively by the collectivist legacy of traditional Spanish village society. Revolutionary ideas and movements played a crucial role of their own and their influence deserves the closest examination.

### The Social Revolution

The Spanish generals started a military rebellion in July 1936; the Spanish workers and peasants answered them with a social revolution — and this revolution was largely anarchist in character. I say this provocatively even though the Socialist UGT was numerically as large as the anarchosyndicalist CNT.<sup>2</sup>

During the first few months of the military rebellion, Socialist workers in Madrid often acted as radically as anarchosyndicalist workers in Barcelona. They established their own militias, formed street patrols, and expropriated a number of strategic factories, placing them under the control of workers' committees. Socialist peasants in Andalusia and Estramadura formed collectives, many of which were as libertarian as those created by anarchist peasants in Aragon and the Levant. In the opening 'anarchic' phase of the revolution, so similar to the opening phases of earlier revolutions, the 'masses' tried to assume direct control over society and exhibited a remarkable elan in improvising their own libertarian forms of social administration.

Looking back beyond this opening phase, however, it is fair to

<sup>2</sup> Both the UGT (*Union General de Trabajadores* or General Workers' Union) and the CNT (*Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo* or National Confederation of Labour) probably numbered over a million members each by the summer of 1936. The officious, highly bureaucratic UGT tended to overstate its membership figures; the more amorphous, decentralized CNT — and the most persecuted of the two labour federations — often exercised much greater influence on the Spanish working class than its membership statistics would seem to indicate.

say that the durability of the collectives in Spain, their social scope, and the resistance they offered to the Stalinist counter-revolution, depended largely on the extent to which they were under anarchist influence. What distinguishes the Spanish Revolution from those which preceded it is not only the fact that it placed much of Spain's economy in the hands of workers' committees and peasant assemblies or that it established a democratically elected militia system. These social forms, in varying degrees, had emerged during the Paris Commune and in the early period of the Russian Revolution.

What made the Spanish Revolution unique is that workers' control and collectives had been advocated for nearly three generations by a massive libertarian movement and, together with the fate of the militia system, became the most serious issues to divide the so-called 'republican' camp. Owing to the scope of its libertarian social forms, the Spanish Revolution proved not only to be 'more profound' (to borrow Bollothen's phrase) than the Bolshevik Revolution, but the influence of a deeply rooted anarchist ideology and the intrepidity of anarchist militants virtually produced a civil war within the civil war.

Indeed, in many respects the revolution of 1936 marked the culmination of more than sixty years of anarchist agitation and activity in Spain. To understand the extent to which this was the case, we must go back to the early 1870's, when the Italian anarchist Giuseppe Fanelli introduced Bakunin's ideas to groups of workers and intellectuals in Madrid and Barcelona. Fanelli's encounter with young workers of the *Fomento de las Artes* in Madrid, a story told with great relish by Brenan, is almost legendary: the volatile speech of the tall, bearded Italian anarchist who hardly knew a word of Spanish, to a small but enthusiastic audience that scarcely understood his free-wheeling mixture of French and Italian.<sup>3</sup> By dint of sheer mimicry, tonal inflections, and a generous use of cognates, Fanelli managed to convey enough of Bakunin's ideals to gain the group's adherence and to establish the founding Spanish section of the International Working Men's

<sup>3</sup> See Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964, pp. 139-40.

Association (IWMA) or so-called First International. Thereafter, the 'internationalists,' as the early Spanish anarchists were known, expanded rapidly from their circles in Madrid and Barcelona to Spain as a whole, taking strong root especially in Catalonia and Andalusia.

Following the definitive split between the Marxists and Bakuninists at the Hague Congress of the IWMA in September 1872, the Spanish section remained predominantly Bakuninist in its general outlook. Marxism did not become a significant movement in Spain until the turn of the century, and even after it became an appreciable force in the labour movement it remained largely reformist until well into the thirties. During much of its early history, the strength of the Spanish Socialist Party and the UGT lay in administrative areas such as Madrid rather than in predominantly working-class cities like Barcelona. Marxism tended to appeal to the highly skilled, pragmatic, rather authoritarian Castilian; anarchism, to the unskilled, idealistic Catalans and the independent, liberty-loving mountain villagers of Andalusia and the Levant. The great rural masses of Andalusian day-workers, or *braceros*, who remain to this day among the most oppressed and impoverished strata of European society, tended to follow the anarchists. But their allegiances varied with the fortunes of the day. In periods of upheaval, they swelled the ranks of the Bakuninist IWMA and its successor organizations in Spain, only to leave it in equally large numbers in periods of reaction.

Yet, however much the fortunes of Spanish anarchism varied from region to region and from period to period, whatever revolutionary movement existed in Spain during this sixty-year period was essentially anarchist. Even as anarchism began to ebb before Marxian social-democratic and later Bolshevik organizations after the First World War period, Spanish anarchism retained its enormous influence and its revolutionary elan. Viewed from a radical standpoint, the history of the Spanish labour movement remained libertarian and often served to define the contours of the Marxist movements in Spain. "Generally speaking, a small but well-organized group of Anarchists in a Socialist area drove the Socialists to the Left," observes Brenan, "whereas in predominantly Anarchist areas, Socialists were outstandingly



reformist”<sup>4</sup> it was not socialism but rather anarchism that determined the metabolism of the Spanish labour movement — the great general strikes that repeatedly swept Spain, the recurring insurrections in Barcelona and in the towns and villages of Andalusia, and the gun battles between labour militants and employer-hired thugs in the Mediterranean coastal cities.

It is essential to emphasize that Spanish anarchism was not merely a programme embedded in a dense theoretical matrix. It was a way of life: partly, the life of the Spanish people as it was lived in the closely knit villages of the countryside and the intense neighbourhood life of the working-class *barrios*; partly, too, the theoretical articulation of that life as projected by Bakunin’s concepts of decentralization, mutual aid, and popular organs of self-management.

That Spain had a long tradition of agrarian collectivism is examined in some detail in Joaquin Costa’s *Colectivismo Agrario en España*. Inasmuch as this tradition was distinctly precapitalist, Spanish Marxism regarded it as anachronistic, in fact as ‘historically reactionary.’ Spanish socialism built its agrarian programme around the Marxist tenet that the peasantry and its social forms could have no lasting revolutionary value until they were ‘proletarianized’ and ‘industrialized.’ Indeed, the sooner the village decayed the better and the more rapidly the peasantry became a hereditary proletariat, “disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself” (Marx) — a distinctly hierarchical and authoritarian ‘mechanism’ — the more rapidly Spain would advance to the tasks of socialism.

Spanish anarchism, by contrast, followed a decisively different approach. It sought out the precapitalist collectivist traditions of the village, nourished what was living and vital in them, evoked their revolutionary potentialities as liberatory modes of mutual aid and self-management, and deployed them to vitiate the obedient, hierarchical mentality and authoritarian outlook fostered by the factory system. Ever mindful of the *embourgeoisement* of the proletariat (a term continually on Bakunin’s lips in the later years of his life), the Spanish anarchists tried to use the

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

precapitalist traditions of the peasantry and working class against the assimilation of the workers’ outlook to an authoritarian industrial rationality. In this respect, their efforts were favoured by the continuous fertilization of the Spanish proletariat by rural workers who renewed these traditions daily when they migrated to the cities. The revolutionary elan of the Barcelona proletariat — like that of the Petrograd and Parisian proletariat — was due in no small measure to the fact that these workers never solidly sedimented into a hereditary working class, totally removed from precapitalist traditions, whether of the peasant or the craftsman. Along the Mediterranean coastal cities of Spain, many workers retained a living memory of a non-capitalist culture — one in which life was not strictly governed by the punch clock, the factory whistle, the foreman, the machine, the highly regulated workday, and the atomizing effects of the large city.

Spanish anarchism flourished within the tension created by these antagonistic traditions and sensibilities. Indeed, where a ‘germanic proletariat’ (to use another of Bakunin’s cutting phrases) emerged in Spain, it drifted toward either the UGT or the Catholic unions. Its political outlook, reformist when not overtly conservative, often clashed with the more *déclassé* working class of Catalonia and the Mediterranean coast, leading to conflicting tendencies within the Spanish proletariat as a whole.

Ultimately, in my view, the destiny of Spanish anarchism depended upon its ability to create libertarian organizational forms that could synthesize the precapitalist collectivist traditions of the village with an industrial economy and a highly urbanized society. I speak here of no mere programmatic ‘alliance’ between the Spanish peasantry and proletariat, but more organically, of new organizational forms and sensibilities that imparted a revolutionary libertarian character to two social classes who lived in conflicting cultures. That Spain required a well organized libertarian movement was hardly a matter of doubt among the majority of Spanish anarchists. But would this movement reflect a village society or a factory society? Where a conflict existed, could the two be melded in the same movement without violating the libertarian tenets of decentralization, mutual aid, and self-administration? In the classical era of ‘proletarian socialism’ between 1848 and 1939, an era that stressed the ‘hegemony’ of the industrial

proletariat in all social struggles, Spanish anarchism followed a historic trajectory that at once revealed the limitations of the era itself and the creative possibilities for anarchist forms of organization.

### Anarchist Organization

By comparison with the cities, the Spanish villages committed to anarchism raised very few organizational problems. Brennan's emphasis on the *braceros* notwithstanding, the strength of agrarian anarchism in the south and the Levant lay in the mountain villages, not among the rural proletariat that worked the great plantations of Andalusia. In these relatively isolated villages, a fierce sense of independence and personal dignity whetted the bitter social hatreds engendered by poverty, creating the rural 'patriarchs' of anarchism whose entire families were devoted almost apostolically to 'the Idea.' For these sharply etched and rigorously ascetic individuals, defiance of the State, the Church, and conventional authority in general, was almost a way of life. Knitted together by the local press — and, at various times, there were hundreds of anarchist periodicals in Spain — they provided the sinews of agrarian anarchism from the 1870's onwards, and, to a large extent, the moral conscience of Spanish anarchism throughout its history.

The revolution, in fact, essentially enlarged old IWMA and later CNT nuclei, membership groups or quite simply clans of closely knit anarchist families into popular assemblies. These usually met weekly and formulated the policy decisions of the community as a whole. The assembly form comprised the organizational ideal of village anarchism from the days of the first truly Bakuninist congress of the Spanish IWMA in Cordova in 1872, almost echoing the immemorial traditions of Spanish village life.<sup>5</sup> Where such popular assemblies were possible, their decisions

<sup>5</sup> I would not want to argue here that the Spanish village formed a paradigm for a libertarian society. Village society differed greatly from one region of Spain to another — in some areas retaining undisturbed its local quasi-democratic traditions, in others ruled tyrannically by the Church, the nobility, caciques, and custom. Quite often, both tendencies co-existed in a very uneasy equilibrium, the democratic still vital but submerged by the

were executed by a committee elected from the assembly. Apparently, the right to recall committee members was taken for granted and they certainly enjoyed no privileges, emoluments, or institutional power. Their influence was a function of their obvious dedication and capabilities. It remained a cardinal principle of Spanish anarchists never to pay their delegates, even when the CNT numbered a million members.<sup>6</sup> Normally, the responsibilities of elected delegates had to be discharged after working hours.

Almost all the evenings of anarchist militants were occupied with meetings of one sort or another. Whether at assemblies or committees, they argued, debated, voted, and administered, and when time afforded, they read and passionately discussed 'the Idea' to which they dedicated not only their leisure hours but their very lives. For the greater part of the day, they were working men and women, *obrero consciente*, who abjured smoking and drinking, avoided brothels and the bloody bull ring, purged their talk of

authoritarian. The anarchists tried to develop the former at the expense of the latter. The myth, so widely disseminated by the current sociological literature on the subject, that agrarian anarchism in Spain was anti-technological in spirit and atavistically sought to restore a neolithic 'Golden Age' can be quite effectively refuted by a close study of the unique educational role they played in the countryside. It was the anarchists, with inexpensive, simply written brochures, who brought the French enlightenment and modern scientific theory to the peasantry, not the arrogant liberals or the disdainful Socialists. Together with pamphlets on Bakunin and Kropotkin, the anarchist press published simple accounts of the theories of natural and social evolution and elementary introductions to the secular culture of Europe. They tried to instruct the peasants in advanced techniques of land management and earnestly favoured the use of agricultural machinery to lighten the burden of toil and provide more leisure for self-development. Far from being an atavistic trend in Spanish society, as Hobsbawm and even Brennan would have us believe, I can say with certainty from a careful review of the issue that anarchism more closely approximated a radical popular enlightenment.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of the CNT there were exceptions to this rule. The National Secretary was paid an average worker's salary, as were the clerical staff of the National Committee and the editors and staff of daily newspapers. But delegates to the national, regional, and local committees of the CNT were not paid and were obliged to work at their own trades except when they lost time during working hours on union business. Which is not to say that there were no individuals who devoted most of their time to the dissemination of anarchist ideas. "Travelling about from place to place, on foot or mule or on the hard seats of third-class railway carriages, or even like tramps or ambulant bullfighters under the tarpaulins of goods wagons," observes Brennan, "whilst they organized new groups or carried on propagandist campaigns, these 'apostles of the idea,' as they were called, lived like mendicant friars on the hospitality of the more prosperous workers" — and, I would add, 'villagers' (pp. 145-46). This tradition of organizing, which refers to the 1870's, did not disappear in later decades; to the contrary, it became more systematic and perhaps more securely financed as the CNT began to compete with the UGT for the allegiance of the Spanish workers and peasants.

'foul' language, and by their probity, dignity, respect for knowledge, and militancy, tried to set a moral example for their entire class. They never used the word 'god' in their daily conversations (*salud* was preferred to *adios*), and avoided all official contact with clerical and State authorities, indeed, to the point where they refused to legally validate their life-long 'free unions' with marital documents and never baptized or confirmed their children. One must know Catholic Spain to realize how far-reaching were these self-imposed mores — and how quixotically consistent some of them were with the puritanical traditions of the country.<sup>7</sup>

In their personal qualities, dedicated urban anarchists were not substantially different from their rural comrades. But in the towns and cities of Spain, these urban anarchists faced more difficult organizational problems. Their efforts to create libertarian forms of organization were favoured, of course, by the fact that many Spanish workers were either former villagers or were only a generation or so removed from the countryside. As Brennan observes, these workers viewed their local unions as 'industrial villages' from which they expected a system of self-government, placing liberty, leisure, and dignity above demands for higher wages.

In 'black' Saragossa, where the working class was even more firmly committed to anarchist principles than the Barcelona proletariat, Raymond Carr quite accurately emphasizes that "strikes were characterized by their scorn for economic demands and the toughness of their revolutionary solidarity: strikes for comrades in prison were more popular than strikes for better conditions."<sup>8</sup> Yet within the factory itself — the realm of toil,

<sup>7</sup> Yet here I must add that to abstain from smoking, live by high moral standards, and to especially abjure the consumption of alcohol, was very important at the time. During the period of anarchist ascendancy Spain was going through her own belated industrial revolution with all its demoralizing features. The collapse of morale among the proletariat, with rampant drunkenness, venereal disease, and the breakdown of sanitary facilities, was the foremost problem which Spanish revolutionaries had to deal with, just as Black radicals today must deal with these problems in the ghetto. On this score, the Spanish anarchists were eminently successful. Few CNT workers, much less committed anarchists, would have dared show up drunk at meetings or misbehave overtly among their comrades. If one considers the terrible working and living conditions of the period, alcoholism was not as serious a problem in Spain as it was in England during the industrial revolution.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond Carr, *Spain: 1808-1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 515.

hierarchy, and brute material necessity — 'community' was more a function of the bourgeois division of labour and command with its exploitative, even competitive connotations, than of humanistic cooperation, playfully creative work, and mutual aid. Working-class solidarity depended less upon a shared meaningful life nourished by self-fulfilling work than the common enemy — the boss — who exploded any illusion that under capitalism the worker was more than an industrial resource, an object to be coldly manipulated and ruthlessly exploited.

If anarchism can be partly regarded as a revolt of the individual against the industrial system, the profound truth that lies at the heart of that revolt is that the factory routine not only blunts the sensibility of the worker's image of his or her human potentialities, of his or her capacities to take direct control of the means for administering social life.

What uniquely distinguished the Spanish anarchists from the socialists was their attempt to transform that factory domain — in the long run, by their demand for workers' control of production; more immediately, by their attempt to form libertarian organizations that culminated in the syndicalist CNT.

The extent to which workers' control can eliminate alienated labour and alter the impact of the factory system on the worker's sensibilities requires, in my view, a more probing analysis than it has yet received. The Spanish anarchists were spared the need to deal practically with this problem until 1936. Until then, one of the main issues confronting their movement was to evolve those forms of working-class organization that could assimilate and elaborate the Spanish collectivist tradition along libertarian lines. How could it be applied to the world of factories and cities? How could it vitiate the spirit of obedience, of hierarchical organization, of leader-and-led relationships, of authority and command instilled by capitalist industry? For only if the authoritarian consequences of capitalist industry could be blocked, or, where necessary, uprooted in the Spanish proletariat would it be possible to achieve a libertarian society, based on self-management and self-realization.

## Syndicalism and the Unions

Spanish anarchism dealt with these issues ambiguously. No sizable radical movement in modern times had seriously asked itself if organizational forms had to be developed which promoted changes in the most fundamental behavioural patterns of its members. It is to the lasting credit of Spanish anarchism — and of anarchism generally — that it posed this question.<sup>9</sup> The term 'integral personality' appears repeatedly in Spanish anarchist documents, and tireless efforts were made to develop individuals who not only cerebrally accepted libertarian principles but tried to practise them. Accordingly, the organizational framework of the movement was meant to be decentralized, to allow for the greatest degree of initiative and decision-making at the base, and to provide structural guarantees against the formation of a bureaucracy.

These requirements, on the other hand, had to be balanced against the need for coordination, mobilized common action, and effective planning. The organizational history of anarchism in the cities and towns of Spain — the forms which the anarchists created and those which they discarded — is largely an account of the pull between these two requirements and the extent to which one prevailed over the other. But this tension was not merely a matter of experience and structural improvisation. In the long run, the outcome of the pull between decentralization and coordination depended on the ability of the most dedicated anarchists to affect the consciousness of the workers who entered anarchist-influenced unions.

Before we discuss the extent to which these unions provided an arena for the realization of libertarian ideals, let us examine their

<sup>9</sup> For Marx and Engels, organizational forms to change the behavioural patterns of the proletariat were not a problem. This could be postponed until 'after the revolution.' Indeed, Marx viewed the authoritarian impact of the factory ("the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself") as a positive factor in producing a "disciplined, united" proletariat. Engels, in an atrocious diatribe against the anarchists titled "On Authority," explicitly used the factory structure — its hierarchical forms and the obedience it demanded — to justify his commitment to authority and centralization in working-class organizations. What is of interest here is not whether Marx and Engels were 'authoritarians' but the way in which they thought out the problem of proletarian organization — the extent to which the matrix for their organizational concepts was the very economy which the social revolution was meant to revolutionize.

basic structure. Long before syndicalism became a popular term in the French labour movement of the late nineties, it already existed in the Spanish labour movement of the early seventies. The anarchist-influenced Spanish Federation of the old IWMA was, in my opinion, distinctly syndicalist. At the founding congress of the Spanish Federation at Barcelona in June 1870, the 'commission on the theme of the social organization of the workers' proposed a structure that was to form a model for all later anarcho-syndicalist labour unions in Spain, including the CNT.

The commission suggested a typical syndicalist dual structure: organization by trade and organization by locality. Local trade organizations (*Secciones de oficio*) grouped together all workers from a common enterprise and vocation into a large occupational federation (*Uniones de oficio*) whose primary function was to struggle around economic grievances and working conditions. A local organization of miscellaneous trades gathered up all those workers from different vocations whose numbers were too small to constitute effective organizations along vocational lines. Paralleling these vocational organizations, in every community and region where the IWMA was represented, the different local *Secciones* were grouped together, irrespective of trade, into local geographic bodies (*Federaciones locales*), whose function was avowedly revolutionary — the administration of social and economic life on a decentralized libertarian basis.

This dual structure forms the bedrock of all syndicalist forms of organization. In Spain, as elsewhere, the structure was knitted together by workers' committees, which originated in individual shops, factories, and agricultural communities. Gathering in assemblies, the workers elected the committees that presided over the affairs of the vocational *Secciones de oficio* and the geographic *Federaciones locales*; these were federated into regional committees for nearly every large area of Spain. Every year, when possible, the workers elected the delegates to the annual congresses of the Spanish Federation of the IWMA, which in turn elected a national Federal Council.

With the decline of the IWMA, syndicalist union federations surfaced and disappeared in different regions of Spain, especially Catalonia and Andalusia. The IWMA of the 1870's was followed by the rather considerable Workers' Federation of the 1880's.

After the suppression of the latter, Spanish anarchism contracted either to non-union ideological groups such as the Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region or to essentially regional union federations like the Catalan-based Pact of Union and Solidarity of the 1890's and Workers' Solidarity of the early 1900's. Except for the short-lived Federation of Workers' Societies of the Spanish Region, established in 1900 on the initiative of a Madrid bricklayers' union, no major national syndicalist federation appeared in Spain until the organization of the CNT in 1911. With the establishment of the CNT, Spanish syndicalism entered its most mature and decisive period. Considerably larger than its rival, the UGT, the CNT became the essential arena for anarchist agitation in Spain.

Yet in none of the federations cited here was the structural form very different from the old Spanish Federation of the IWMA. The CNT was not merely 'founded'; it developed organically out of the Catalan Workers' Solidarity and its most consolidated regional federation, the Catalan Federation (*Confederacion Regional del Trabajo de Cataluna*). Later, other regional federations were established from local unions in each province — many of them lingering on from the Federation of Workers' Societies of the Spanish Region — until there were eight by the early 1930's. The national organization, in effect, was a loose collection of regional federations which were broken down into local and district federations, and finally, into *sindicatos*, or individual unions. These *sindicatos* (earlier, they were known by the dramatic name of *sociedades de resistencia al capital* — societies of resistance to capital) were established on a vocational basis and, in typical syndicalist fashion, grouped into geographic and trade federations (*Federaciones locales* and *sindicatos de oficio*). To coordinate this structure, the annual congresses of the CNT elected a National Committee which was expected to occupy itself primarily with correspondence, collection of statistics, and aid to prisoners.

The statutes of the Catalan regional federation provide us with the guidelines for the national movement as a whole. According to these statutes, the organization was committed to 'direct action,' rejecting all "political and religious interference." Affiliated district and local federations were to be "governed by the greatest autonomy possible, it being understood by this that they have

complete freedom in all the professional matters relating to the individual trades which integrate them." Each member was expected to pay monthly dues of ten centimes (a trifling sum) which was to be divided equally among the local organization, Regional Confederation, National Confederation, the union newspaper (*Solidaridad Obrera* — Workers' Solidarity), and the all-important special fund for 'social prisoners.'

By statute, the Regional Committee — the regional equivalent of the CNT's National Committee — was expected to be merely an administrative body. Although it clearly played a directive role in coordinating action, its activities were to be bound by policies established by the annual regional congress. In unusual situations, the committee could consult local bodies, either by referenda or by written queries. In addition to the annual regional congresses at which the Regional Committee was elected, the committee was obliged to call extraordinary congresses at the request of the majority of the local federations. The local federations, in turn, were given three months notice of a regular congress so that they could "prepare the themes for discussion." Within a month before the congress, the Regional Committee was required to publish the submitted 'themes' in the union newspaper, leaving sufficient time for the workers to define their attitudes toward the topics to be discussed and instruct their delegates accordingly. The delegations to the congress, whose voting power was determined by the number of members they represented, were elected by general assemblies of workers convened by the local and district federations.

These statutes formed the basis for the CNT's practice up to the revolution of 1936. Although they notably lacked any provision for the recall of the committee members, the organization in its heroic period was more democratic than the statutes would seem to indicate. A throbbing vitality existed at the base of this immense organization, marked by active interest in the CNT's problems and considerable individual initiative. The workers' centres (*centros obreros*), which the anarchists had established in the days of the IWMA, were not only the local offices of the union; they were also meeting places and cultural centres where members went to exchange ideas and attend lectures. All the affairs of the local CNT were managed by committees of ordinary unpaid

workers. Although the official union meetings were held only once in three months, there were "conferences of an instructive character" every Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. The solidarity of the *sindicatos* was so intense that it was not always possible to maintain an isolated strike. There was a strong tendency for a strike to trigger others in its support and generate active aid by other *sindicatos*.

In any case, this is the way the CNT tried to carry on its affairs and during favourable periods actually functioned. But the picture I have described here should not be idealized. Repression and sudden, often crucial turns in events made it necessary to suspend annual or regional congresses and confine important policy-making decisions to plenums of leading committees or to 'congresses' that were little more than patchwork conferences. Charismatic leaders at all levels of the organization came very close to acting in a bureaucratic manner. Nor is the syndicalist structure itself immune to bureaucratic deformations. It was not very difficult for an elaborate network of committees, building up to regional and national bodies, to assume all the features of a centralized organization and circumvent the wishes of the workers' assemblies at the base. This actually happened in France when the syndicalist CGT (General Confederation of Labour) fell under the control of opportunists, socialists, and finally the Communist Party.

Finally, the CNT, despite its programmatic commitment to libertarian communism, was primarily a large trade union federation rather than an anarchist organization. Angel Pestana, one of its most pragmatic leaders, recognized that roughly a third of the CNT membership could be regarded as anarchists. The great majority of *cenetistas* probably avowed ambiguous libertarian views, but the extent to which they took them seriously is questionable. Many were militants rather than revolutionaries; others simply joined the CNT because it was the dominant union in their area or shop. And by the 1930's, the great majority of CNT members were workers rather than peasants. Andalusians, once the largest percentage of members in the anarchist-influenced unions of the previous century, had dwindled to a minority. Despite the sentimental accounts of Spanish anarchism as an atavistic rural movement, the CNT had become overwhelmingly proletarianized.

To the degree that the CNT had rooted itself in the factories, its collectivist ideals began to lose the deeply humanistic communitarian content imparted to them by the village. It would have been difficult before the 1930's to find a leading Spanish anarchist like Santillan dealing with internal factory relations in crassly utilitarian, alienating, and coldly rationalistic terms. "We believe there is a little confusion in some libertarian circles between social conviviality, group affinity and the economic functions," observed Santillan in *After the Revolution*, a highly influential book that was to appear shortly before the 1936 uprising.

Visions of happy Arcadias or free communes were imagined by the poets of the past; for the future, conditions appear quite different. In the factory we do not seek the affinity of friendship but the affinity of work. It is not an affinity of character, except on the basis of professional capacity and quality of work, which is the basis of conviviality in the factory. The 'free commune' is the logical product of group affinity, but there are no such free communes in economy, because that would presuppose independence, and there are no independent communes.<sup>10</sup>

The contrast which Santillan draws between past and present concepts of 'free communes' is unerring: Salvochea, the venerable patriarch of early Andalusian anarchism, would never have recognized his own ideals in Santillan's description of work.<sup>11</sup>

With the slow change in the social composition of the CNT and the growing supremacy of industrial over village values in its leadership and membership, it is my view that the confederation would have eventually turned into a fairly conventional Latin-type of trade union. Famous CNT leaders like Salvador Seguí,

<sup>10</sup> Diego Abad de Santillan, *After the Revolution*. New York, 1937, p. 99 (now out of print).

<sup>11</sup> This is not to say that Santillan's work was a total denial of libertarian communist principles. His book tries to establish a pragmatic — and, on this score, interesting — balance between a libertarian communist approach and the need for economic coordination. It blends Marxist and anarchocommunist, especially in dealing with the material preconditions for a communist society. For example, "Communism will be the natural result of abundance, without which it will remain only an ideal." This distinctly Marxian formulation is balanced immediately afterward by a libertarian one: "In each locality the degree of communism, collectivism or mutualism will depend on the conditions prevailing. Why dictate rules? We who make freedom our banner, cannot deny it in economy. Therefore there must be free experimentation, free show of initiative and suggestions, as well as the freedom of organization."

Angel Pestana, and Juan Peiro were syndicalists rather than anarchists; others were trade unionists rather than syndicalists. But employer intransigence and UGT rivalry of the most crassly back-stabbing type made it difficult for these elements to gain exclusive control over the union. Seguí, perhaps the most influential CNT leader of the First World War period, earnestly tried to collaborate with the UGT and work out practical compromises with the Catalan bourgeoisie. His efforts were continually frustrated by all the parties to the compromises he sought — and with every betrayal, anarchist militants surged to the surface and played a decisive role in orchestrating the union's angry reaction. But sedimenting below them was a large syndicalist confederation of leaders and led — in some cases even of canny Latin-type labour politicians whose fiery rhetoric concealed a proclivity for manipulation, and for docile followers who were being conditioned by their factory lives to leave decisions in the hands of their 'superiors.' This sedimentation did not take place suddenly; it occurred very slowly, often perhaps imperceptibly as stormy periods of struggle and repression interrupted it. But the appearance of CNT and 'anarchist' ministers in Largo Caballero's coalition government during the first year of the 1936 revolution was not an impulsive episode. This event had been in the making for years.

### The Anarchist Response to Syndicalism

The Spanish anarchists were not oblivious to these developments. Although syndicalist unions formed the major arena of anarchist activity in Europe, anarchist theorists were mindful that it would not be too difficult for reformist leaders in syndicalist unions to shift organizational control from the bottom to the top. They viewed syndicalism as a change in focus from the commune to the trade union, from all of the oppressed to the industrial proletariat, from the streets to the factories, and, in emphasis at least, from insurrection to the general strike.

Malatesta, fearing the emergence of a bureaucracy in the syndicalist unions, warned that "the official is to the working class a danger only comparable to that provided by the parliamentarian;

both lead to corruption and from corruption to death is but a short step." Although Malatesta was to change his attitude toward syndicalism, he accepted the movement with many reservations and never ceased to emphasize that "trade unions are, by their very nature, reformist and never revolutionary." To this warning he added that the "revolutionary spirit must be introduced, developed and maintained by the constant actions of revolutionaries who work from within their ranks as well as from outside, but it cannot be the normal, natural definition of the Trade Union's function."<sup>12</sup>

The soundness of Malatesta's criticism is, in my view, beyond question: to see in trade unions (whether syndicalist or otherwise) an inherent potentiality for revolutionary struggle is to assume that the interests of workers and capitalists, *merely as classes*, are intrinsically incompatible. This is demonstrably untrue if one is willing to acknowledge the obvious capacity of the system to remake or to literally create the worker in the image of a repressive industrial culture and rationality. From the family, through the school and religious institutions, the mass media, to the factory, and, finally, trade union and 'revolutionary' party, capitalist society conspires to foster obedience, hierarchy, the work ethic, and authoritarian discipline in the working class as a whole, indeed, in many of its 'emancipatory' movements.

The factory and the class organizations that spring from it play the most compelling role in promoting a well-regulated, almost unconscious docility in mature workers — a docility that manifests itself not so much in characterless passivity, but in a pragmatic commitment to hierarchical organizations and authoritarian leaders. Workers can be very militant and exhibit strong, even powerful character traits in the most demanding social situations; but these traits can be brought just as readily, if not more so, to the service of a reformist labour bureaucracy as to a libertarian revolutionary movement. They must break with the hold of bourgeois culture on their sensibilities — specifically, with the hold of the factory, the locus of the workers' very *class* existence — before they can move into that supreme form of direct action

<sup>12</sup> See Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism*. Monthly Review Press, 1970, pp. 79-80, for a rounded discussion of Malatesta's views on syndicalism.

called 'revolution,' and, further, construct a society they will *directly* control in their workshops and communities.

This amounts to saying that workers must see themselves as human beings; not as class beings; as creative personalities, not as 'proletarians,' as self-affirming individuals, not as 'masses.' And the destiny of a liberated society must be the free commune, not a confederation of factories, however self-administered; for such a confederation takes a part of society — its economic component — and reifies it into the totality of society. Indeed, even that economic component must be humanized precisely by bringing an 'affinity of friendship' to the work process, by diminishing the role of onerous work in the lives of the producers, indeed, by a total 'transvaluation of values' (to use Nietzsche's phrase) as it applies to production and consumption as well as social and personal life.

Syndicalism had divided the Spanish anarchist movement without really splitting it. Indeed, until the establishment of the *Federation Anarquista Iberica* there was rarely a national anarchist organization to split. The disappearance of Bakunin's Alliance for Social Democracy in Spain scattered the forces of Spanish anarchism into small local nuclei which related on a regional basis through conferences, periodicals, and correspondence. Several regional federations of these nuclei were formed, mainly in Catalonia and Andalusia, only to disappear as rapidly as they emerged.<sup>13</sup>

Yet a Spanish anarchist movement held together on two levels: by means of well-known periodicals like *La Revista Blanca* and *Tierra y Libertad* and in the form of small circles of dedicated anarchists, both inside and outside the syndicalist unions. Dating as far back as the eighties, these typically Hispanic groups of intimates, traditionally known as *tertulias*, met at favourite cafés to discuss ideas and plan actions. They gave themselves colourful names expressive of their high-minded ideals (*Ni Rey Ni Patria*) or

<sup>13</sup> Madrid, although with a largely Socialist labour movement, was the home of an intensely active anarchist movement. Not only were the Madrid construction workers strongly anarchosyndicalist, but at the turn of the century many Madrid intellectuals were committed to anarchism and established a renowned theoretical tradition for the movement that lingered on long after anarchist workers had cut their ties with the Spanish intelligentsia.

their revolutionary spirit (*Los Rebeldes*) or quite simply their sense of fraternity (*Los Afines*). The Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region to which I have already alluded, founded in Valencia in 1888, consciously made these *tertulias* the strands from which it tried to weave a coherent movement. Decades later, they were to reappear in the FAI as *grupos de afinidad* with a more formal local and national structure.

Although Spanish anarchism did not produce an effective national movement until the founding of the FAI, the divisions between the anarchosyndicalists and the anarchocommunists were highly significant. The two tendencies of Spanish anarchism worked in very different ways and were disdainful of each other.

The anarchosyndicalists functioned directly within the unions. They accepted key union positions and placed their emphasis on organizing, often at the expense of propaganda and ideological commitment. As 'practical' men, they were ready to make compromises with 'pure-and-simple' trade unionists. Catalan anarchosyndicalists such as José Rodríguez Romero and Tomás Herreros were largely responsible for the fact that Workers' Solidarity in Barcelona did not fall into the hands of the UGT during the first decade of the century and thereby laid the basis for the founding of the CNT a few years later.

The anarchocommunists were the 'fanatics over there' — in the editorial offices of *Tierra y Libertad* — 'purists' like Juan Baron and Francisco Cardinal, who regarded the anarchosyndicalists as deserters to reformism and held faithfully to the communist doctrines that formed the basis of the old Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region. They were not disposed to trade union activism, and they stressed commitment to libertarian communist principles. It was not their goal to produce a large 'mass movement' of workers who wore lightly the trappings of libertarian ideals, but to help create dedicated anarchists in an authentically revolutionary movement, however small its size or influence. Once fairly influential, their terrorist tactics at the turn of the century and the ensuing repression had greatly depleted their numbers.

The founding of the FAI in the summer of 1927 was expected to unite these two tendencies. Anarchosyndicalist needs were met by requiring that every *faista* become a member of the CNT and by



making the union the principal arena of anarchist activity in Spain. The needs of the anarchocommunists were met by the very fact that an avowedly anarchist organization was established nationally, apart from the CNT, and by making the affinity group the basis for a vanguard movement firmly dedicated to the achievement of libertarian communism.<sup>14</sup> *Tierra y Libertad* was adopted as the FAI's organ. But by establishing an anarchist organization for the express purpose of controlling the CNT, or at least to keep it from falling into the hands of reformists or infiltrators from the newly founded Spanish Communist Party, the anarchosyndicalists had essentially enveloped the anarchocommunists in syndicalist activity.

By 1933 the FAI's control over the CNT was fairly complete. Systematic organizational work had purged the union of Communists, while its reformist leaders either left on their own accord or had defensively camouflaged themselves with revolutionary rhetoric. No illusion should exist that this success was achieved with an overly sensitive regard for democratic niceties, although the militancy of the *faistas* unquestionably attracted the great majority of CNT workers. But the FAI's best known militants — Durruti, the Ascaso brothers, Garcia Oliver — included terrorism in their repertory of direct action. Gun play, especially in 'expropriations' and in dealing with recalcitrant employers, police agents, and blacklegs, was not frowned upon. These *atentados* almost certainly intimidated the FAI's less prominent opponents in the CNT, although 'reformists' like Pestana and Peiro did not hesitate to publicly criticize the FAI in the harshest terms.

<sup>14</sup> I employ the word 'vanguard' provocatively, despite its unpopularity in many libertarian circles today, because this term was widely used in the traditional anarchist movement. Some anarchist publications even adopted it as a name. There can be no doubt that an anarchist *obrero consciente* regarded himself or herself as an 'advanced' person and part of a small *avant-garde* in society. In its most innocuous sense, this term meant that such a person merely enjoyed a more advanced social consciousness than the majority of less developed workers and peasants, a distinction that had to be overcome by education. In a less innocuous sense, the word provided a rationale for elitism and manipulation, to which some anarchist leaders were no more immune than their authoritarian Socialist opponents.

The word 'leader,' on the other hand, was eschewed for the euphemism 'influential militant,' although in fact the more well-known anarchist 'influential militants' were certainly leaders. This self-deception was not as trifling as it may seem. It prevented the Spanish anarchists from working out the serious problems that emerged from real differences in consciousness among themselves or between themselves and the great majority of undeveloped *cenetistas*.

Despite its influence in the CNT, this remarkable anarchist organization remained semi-secret up to 1936 and its membership probably did not exceed 30,000. Structurally, it formed a remarkable example of libertarian organization. Affinity groups were small nuclei of intimate friends which generally numbered a dozen or so men and women. Wherever several of these affinity groups existed, they were coordinated by a local federation and met, when possible, in monthly assemblies. The national movement, in turn, was coordinated by a Peninsular Committee, which ostensibly exercised very little directive power. Its role was meant to be strictly administrative in typical Bakuninist fashion.

Affinity groups were in fact remarkably autonomous during the early thirties and often exhibited exceptional initiative. The intimacy shared by the *faistas* in each group made the movement very difficult for police agents to infiltrate and the FAI as a whole managed to survive the most severe repression with surprisingly little damage to its organization. As time passed, however, the Peninsular Committee began to grow in prestige. Its periodic statements on events and problems often served as directives to the entire movement. Although by no means an authoritarian body, it eventually began to function as a central committee whose policy decisions, while not binding on the organization, served as more than mere suggestions. Indeed, it would have been very difficult for the Peninsular Committee to operate by fiat; the average *faista* was a strong personality who would have readily voiced disagreement with any decision that he or she found particularly unpalatable. But the FAI increasingly became an end in itself and loyalty to the organization, particularly when it was under attack or confronted with severe difficulties, tended to mute criticism.

There can be no question that the FAI raised enormously the social consciousness of the average *cenetista*. More than any single force apart from employer recalcitrance, it made the CNT into a revolutionary syndicalist organization, if not a truly anarchosyndicalist one. But it never succeeded in completely ridding the CNT of its reformist elements, nor could it prevent the sedimentation of the union along increasingly hierarchical lines. Loose and decentralized as the CNT tried to be, it attracted workers primarily because it militantly fought for improved

economic conditions, not primarily because of its commitment to revolution and libertarian communism. Although the FAI stressed the latter over the former and gained a considerable following within the CNT (indeed, a more dedicated following in anarchist Saragossa than in syndicalist Barcelona), the sedimentation continued nevertheless.

In its attempt to control the CNT, the FAI in fact became a victim of the less developed elements in the union. Peirats quite rightly emphasizes that the CNT took its own toll on the FAI. Just as the less outspoken reformists inside the union were predisposed to compromise with the bourgeoisie and the State, so the FAI was compelled to compromise with these reformists in order to retain its control over the CNT. This process affected the very nature of the FAI's influence. To deal with covert unprincipled opportunists in order to root out the more visible principled reformists such as Pestana, the FAI began to rely on manipulation as well as conviction. Even *faista* theoreticians like Santillan learned to defer to the prevailing tendencies in the CNT and justify the surrender of basic principles in the interests of expediency. Among the younger, less experienced *faistas*, the situation was even worse. Extravagant militancy which fetishized action over theory and daring over insight rebounded after failure in the crudest opportunism. Garcia Oliver, one of the most admired of the FAI militants, did not hesitate to 'modify' his anarchist principles and become minister of justice in the Largo Caballero government.

In the balance: the CNT had provided a remarkably democratic arena for the most militant working class in Europe; the FAI added the leavening of a libertarian orientation and revolutionary deeds within the limits that a trade union could provide. By 1936, both organizations had created authentically libertarian structures to the extent that any strictly proletarian class movement could be truly libertarian. If only by dint of sheer rhetoric — and, doubtless, considerable conviction and daring actions — they had keyed the expectations of their memberships to a revolution that would yield workers' control of the economy and syndicalist forms of social administration.

This process of education and class organization, more than any single factor in Spain, produced the famous collectives that

followed the 1936 uprising. And to the degree that the CNT-FAI (for both organizations became fatally coupled after July 1936) exercised the major influence in an area, the collectives proved to be generally more durable, communistic, and resistant to Stalinist counter-revolution than other 'republican'-held areas of Spain.

Moreover, in the CNT-FAI areas, workers and peasants tended to show the greatest degree of popular initiative in resisting the military uprising. It was not Socialist Madrid that first took matters into its own hands and defeated its rebellious garrison; it was anarchosyndicalist Barcelona that could lay claim to this distinction among all the large cities of Spain. Madrid rose against the Montana barracks only after sound trucks broadcast the news that the army had been defeated in the streets and squares of Barcelona. And even in Madrid, perhaps the greatest initiative was shown by the local CNT organization, which enjoyed the allegiance of the city's militant construction workers.

The CNT-FAI, in effect, revealed all the possibilities of a highly organized and extremely militant working class — a 'classical' proletariat, if you will, whose basic economic interests were repeatedly frustrated by a myopic intransigent bourgeoisie. It was out of such 'irreconcilable' struggles that anarchosyndicalism and revolutionary Marxism had developed their tactical and theoretical armamentarium.

But the CNT-FAI also revealed the limitations of that type of classical struggle — and it is fair to say that the Spanish Revolution marked the end of a century-long era of so-called proletarian revolutions which began with the June uprising of the Parisian workers in 1848. The era has passed into history and, in my view, will never again be revived. It was marked by bitter, often uncompromising struggles between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, an era in which the working class had not been admitted into its 'share' of economic life and had been virtually denied the right to form its own protective institutions. Industrial capitalism in Spain was still a relatively new phenomenon, neither affluent enough to mitigate working-class unrest nor sure of its place in political life — yet still asserting an unqualified right to ruthlessly exploit its 'hired hands.'

But this new phenomenon was already beginning to find its way if not toward traditional European liberal political forms, then to

authoritarian ones which would give it the breathing space to develop. The bureaucratic UGT already commanded the allegiance of the organized skilled workers, railroad workers, and the politically sophisticated Asturian miners; it had grown enormously at the expense of the CNT among the agricultural proletariat of Southern Spain. The Socialists predominated in heavy industrial areas, such as the Basque cities, where their main rivals were Catholic unions rather than anarchosyndicalists. This kind of working class, assimilated to the factory routine, industrial hierarchy, and the work ethic, tended to favour bureaucratic and authoritarian forms of organization. It was trained to accept orders and leaders; its goals were largely economic rather than social, even if the rhetoric of the day was filled with hortatory demands for a socialist republic.

I have already expressed the view that time would have favoured the development of the CNT along the same lines, perhaps leading to a merger of the two organizations. But the economic crisis of the thirties (which radicals throughout the world viewed as the final 'chronic crisis' of capitalism), coupled with the myopic policies of the Spanish liberals and ruling classes, turned the class struggle in Spain into an explosive class war.

The agrarian reform policies of the early thirties republic turned out to be farcical; the liberals were more preoccupied with baiting the Church than dealing seriously with the long-range economic problems of the peninsula. The Socialists, who joined the liberals in governing the country, were more concerned with promoting the growth of the UGT at the expense of the CNT than in improving the material conditions of the working class as a whole. The CNT, strongly influenced by volatile *faistas* whose radical education had been acquired in the *pistolero* battles of the early twenties, exploded into repeated insurrections — uprisings which its leaders probably knew were futile, but which were meant to stimulate the revolutionary spirit of the working class.

These failures by all social elements in Spain during the early republican years to meet the promise of reform left no recourse but revolution and civil war. Except for the most dedicated anarchists, it was a conflict that no one really wanted; but between 1931, when the monarchy was overthrown, and 1936, when the generals rebelled, everyone was sleep-walking into the last of the

great proletarian revolutions — perhaps the greatest in terms of its social programmes and the initiative shown by the oppressed. The century-long era seemed to have collected all its energies, its traditions, and its dreams for its last great historic confrontation, thereafter to disappear forever.

### Evaluating the Anarchist Movement

Could there have been an anarchist society in Spain if the revolution had been successful? Very few serious anarchist theoreticians seem to have thought so. A mixed economy, yes — although how long the revolutionary fervour of the more ascetic communistic collectives might have resisted the temptations and demands of a co-existing market economy is difficult to predict. It has never been an arguable issue between Marx and the anarchists whether a communist revolution could *occur* in an industrially undeveloped country, indeed whether such a revolution might temporarily succeed under materially demanding, even ascetic conditions of life.<sup>15</sup> Whether such a revolution could *permanently* establish a communist society, however, is another matter. Santillan was quite realistic about this problem. "We are cognizant of the fact that the grade of economic development and material conditions of life influence powerfully human psychology," he observes in *After the Revolution*.

Faced with starvation, the individual becomes an egoist; with abundance he may become generous, friendly and socially disposed. All periods of privation and penury produce brutality, moral regression and a fierce struggle of all against all, for daily bread. Consequently, it is plain that economics influence seriously the

<sup>15</sup> Toward the end of his life, Marx in fact tended to accept the possibility that the European socialist revolution would be initiated by 'backward' Russia rather than France or Germany. In his correspondence with Vera Zasulich of 1881 he even entertains the possibility that a timely revolution in Russia might make it possible for the collectivistic peasant village or *mir* to bypass the capitalist development of the West and "gradually slough off its primitive characteristics and develop as the direct basis of collective production on a national scale." The Government institution of the *Volost*, which "links a fair number of villages together," could be replaced by a "peasant assembly elected by the commune itself and serving as the economic and administrative organ of their interests." For an interesting discussion of this correspondence, see Martin Buber's *Paths in Utopia*, pp. 90-94.

spiritual life of the individual and his social relations. That is precisely why we are aiming to establish the best possible economic conditions, which will act as a guarantee of equal and solid relationships among men.<sup>16</sup>

The problem of material scarcity is not merely that "man pitted against man is a wolf and he can never become a real brother to man, unless he has material security," to use Santillan's words again (p. 96). With material security, indeed with abundance, 'man' can also discover what he or she does *not* need. I refer here not only to material needs but also to spiritual ones — notably competition, money, even contracts and social institutions that underwrite systems of justice based on equivalences and reciprocity.

No longer driven by material insecurity, no longer a creature of brute necessity, the individual can advance from the realm of justice to the more humanly fulfilling realm of freedom. And perhaps most significantly, in an abundant economy that can provide for the individual's needs with minimal toil, he or she can acquire the free time for self-cultivation and full participation in the direct management of social life.

Quixotically, communist values tend to emerge in the least industrialized of areas, where survival demands the utmost social cooperation, or the most industrially advanced, where abundance tends to bring into question all the egotistical mores generated by material want. Indeed, the repressive values we associate with material want, insecurity, and hierarchy develop in the social space between these two historic poles where material surpluses are large enough to allow for the development of privilege for a few but are not large enough to permit security and a life freed from onerous toil for all.

It is not surprising that the most communistic collectives appeared in the countryside rather than in the cities, among villagers who were still influenced by archaic collectivistic traditions and were less ensnared than their urban cousins in a market economy. The ascetic values which so greatly influenced these highly communistic collectives often reflected the extreme

<sup>16</sup> Diego Abad de Santillan, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

poverty of the areas in which they were rooted. Cooperation and mutual aid in such cases formed the preconditions for survival of the community. Elsewhere, in the more arid areas of Spain, the need for sharing water and maintaining irrigation works was an added inducement to collective farming. Here, collectivization was also a technological necessity, one which even the republic did not interfere with.

What makes these rural collectives important is not only that many of them practised communism, but that they functioned so effectively under a system of popular self-management. Accounts of these collectives totally belie the notion held by so many authoritarian Marxists that economic life must be scrupulously 'planned' by a highly centralized State power and the odious canard that popular collectivization, as distinguished from statist nationalization, necessarily pits collectivized enterprises against each other in competition for profits and resources. Certainly owing to the terrible scarcity of resources that developed with the civil war, such competition tended to occur in a number of cases, but here the anarchists played a decisive role in mitigating its effects and diminishing its significance.

In the cities, however, collectivization of the factories, communications systems, and transport facilities took a very different form. Initially, nearly the entire economy in CNT-FAI areas had been taken over by committees elected from among the workers and were loosely coordinated by higher union committees. As time went on, this system was increasingly tightened. The higher committees began to pre-empt the initiative of the lower, although their decisions still had to be ratified by the workers of the facilities involved. The effect of this process was to centralize the economy of CNT-FAI areas in the hands of the union. The extent to which this process unfolded varied greatly from industry to industry and area to area, and with the limited knowledge we have at hand, generalizations are very difficult to make.

After the famous May Days of 1937, when the Barcelona proletariat raised barricades to resist a Stalinist attempt to seize the *Telefonica*, or central telephone building, the process of centralization followed an unrelenting course. The entry of the CNT-FAI into the Catalan government in 1936 had already wedded the union-controlled facilities to the State; the failure of

syndicalist workers to take Barcelona in May 1937 indissolubly cemented the ties between the economy and the newly strengthened government. Outside Barcelona, overt or *de facto* nationalization of industry occurred even more rapidly. By early 1938, a political bureaucracy had largely supplanted the authority of the workers' committees in most 'republican'-held cities. Although workers' control existed in theory, it had essentially disappeared in fact.

If the commune formed the basis for the rural collectives, the committee formed the basis for the industrial collectives. Indeed, apart from the rural communes, the committee system predominated wherever State power had collapsed — in villages and towns as well as factories and urban neighbourhoods. "All had been set up in the heat of action to direct the popular response to the military *coup d'état*," observe Broué and Témime in *Revolution and Civil War in Spain*.

They had been appointed in an infinite number of ways. In the villages, the factories, and on the work sites, time had sometimes been taken to elect them, at least summarily, at a general meeting. At all events, care had been taken to see that all parties and unions were represented on them, even if they did not exist before the Revolution, because the Committee represented at one and the same time as the workers, a whole and the sum total of their organizations: in more than one place those elected came to an 'understanding' as to who was to represent one or another union, who would be the 'Republican' and who the 'Socialist.' Very often, in the towns, the most active elements appointed themselves. It was sometimes the electors as a whole who chose the men to sit on the Committee of each organization, but more often the members of the Committee were elected either by a vote within their own organization or were quite simply appointed by the local governing committees of the parties and unions."<sup>17</sup>

Broué and Témime, to be sure, are referring mainly to the municipal committees that appeared throughout the 'republican'-held territories, rather than the factory committees, which were elected by workers' assemblies. But their description indicates a very significant feature of the Spanish Revolution. The revolution

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Broué and Emile Témime, *Revolution and Civil War in Spain*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970, pp. 127-128.

was unique not only as evidence that workers and peasants could manage a national economy along collectivist lines; it was also unique in the extent to which it reflected the power of organized radical movements like the CNT and the UGT, the FAI and the Socialist Party, the official Communists and the dissident communists such as the POUM. This extraordinary patchwork of radical organizations gave the revolution an intensely ideological character, to a degree perhaps unprecedented in 'proletarian revolutions,' and simultaneously vitiated popular initiative.

The outcome of the revolution was decided not by new social forms created by the workers and peasants themselves, but largely by pre-existing parties, unions, and libertarian federations. Precisely because the Spanish workers and peasants had been organized for years in highly institutionalized mass organizations of one type or another, the destiny of their revolution depended more on the resoluteness of the movements to which they adhered than on their own initiative.

On this score the CNT-FAI was far from successful. The power it received from working-class uprisings in Barcelona, Valencia, Malaga, and other Mediterranean cities, acquired a curious function: it served to bring into sharp relief the opportunist tendencies that had slowly marbled the organization for years.

The CNT-FAI, on the excuse that it refused to establish an 'anarchist dictatorship,' permitted the bourgeois State to re-establish its own dictatorship over the Spanish working class. The process of CNT-FAI collaboration with the State had already begun as far back as February 1936, when *cenetistas* were not 'discouraged' by their organization from voting for Popular Front candidates. By all accounts, it was the heavy syndicalist vote in Catalonia that carried the day for the new Madrid government. CNT-FAI collaboration gained momentum when its leaders entered the Catalan government and finally Largo Caballero's cabinet in Madrid. Frozen in the defensive posture of 'everything for the war,' CNT-FAI ministers and leaders surrendered one conquest of the revolution after another — some with an odious alacrity that verged on overt counter-revolution.

The knell of Spanish anarchism was sounded when the Barcelona proletariat was cajoled by its 'ministers' into abandoning the May Day barricades. Its complete demise was symbolized by the virtual

conversion of the FAI into a conventional political party when the affinity group structure was replaced by geographic branches.

The fact that Spanish anarchism was confronted by terrifying enemies on every side — by a horribly bloody civil war initiated by the generals and ruthless Stalinist subversion of the revolution — does not excuse the behaviour exhibited by its leaders. Vernon Richards points out that if the movement had tried to persuade its considerable following to abstain from voting, the Popular Front would have certainly been defeated. In that case, a rightist government, although bitterly repressive, would have obviated the need for a military uprising. Certainly this kind of regime would have driven the Spanish labour movement underground, but it would have survived; a military defeat after three years of bloody civil war destroyed it completely.

Yet even if one assumes that with the deadly polarization of political forces in 1936 the Barcelona workers would have voted for the Popular Front irrespective of a strong 'no vote' campaign, the anarchists had no business entering the Catalan and Madrid governments. Their entry into these governments contributed nothing to the defeat of the Franco forces or to the weakening of the Stalinist counter-revolution. The 'anarchist' ministers were compelled by the growing tensions in the cabinet to become mere minions of Largo Caballero — a 'lesser evil,' to be sure, when compared with the Stalinists, but the man who more than any other in Spain restored the authority of the State and initiated the demolition of the revolutionary institutions.

Underlying all these errors, at least in theoretical terms, was the CNT-FAI's absurd notion that if it assumed power in the areas it controlled, it was establishing a 'State.' As long as the institutions of power consisted of armed workers and peasants as distinguished from a professional bureaucracy, police force, army, and cabal of politicians and judges, they were no more a State than the Paris Commune or the Soviets of 1905 and 1917. These institutions, in fact, comprised a revolutionary people in arms — a minority of the Spanish people, to be sure, but still a people, not a professional apparatus that could be regarded as a State in any meaningful sense of the term.

This fact must have flashed across the minds of many 'influential militants' in the CNT and the FAI. That the 'taking of power' by

an armed people in militias, libertarian unions and federations, peasant communes, and industrial collectives could be viewed as an 'anarchist dictatorship' reveals the incredible confusion that filled the minds of the 'influential militants.' What these 'militants' clearly feared was the civil war within the civil war and the ensuing Franco victory that would have followed the establishment of such a separate libertarian power. To anyone who recalls the mass executions that followed in the wake of Franco's army, this fear is understandable enough. None of the revolutionary gains in Spain could have been stabilized while 'Nationalist' guns were trained on Madrid, Malaga, and Teruel. Broué and Témime rightly observe that the

great weakness of the Spanish workers' revolutionary gains was, even more than their improvised character, their incompleteness. The Revolution, still in its infancy, had to be defended. It was the war that reduced the revolutionary gains to rubble before they had time to mature and prove themselves in a day-to-day experiment compounded of progress and retreat, of groping and discovery.<sup>18</sup>

It was the war, too, that provided a favourable setting for the Stalinist counter-revolution, leaning on the manipulation of Russian military aid to score its piecemeal triumphs. The assumption that Franco could have been defeated by guerrilla warfare or by revolutionary propaganda is simply preposterous if one recalls the massive aid the 'Nationalists' received from Italy and Germany. The Spanish Legionaires and Moslem mercenaries who formed the core of Franco's army were not susceptible to propaganda. Even the Moslem troops were not likely to respond to a government declaration that liberated Spanish Morocco from the mainland's control. These backward hill troops had been used for years to police their own countrymen.

In the absence of the paralyzing rivalries between the great powers and workers' revolutions in Europe which ultimately rescued the Bolshevik revolution from military defeat, the Spanish Revolution was doomed once Italy, Germany, and Russia entered into it. Lacking support from the international working class, lacking even the territorial space in which to manoeuvre, the revolution was totally isolated. However fervent its spirit, the

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

bared flesh of the Spanish Revolution could not stop massed artillery, tanks, machine guns, and aircraft. The only significant aid it received from abroad carried the price tag of surrender of the revolutionary conquests; and it is clear that the CNT-FAI, in the vain hope that this payment would arrest a Franco victory, was willing to pay the toll. Only from hindsight do we now realize that the payment would not have prevented a 'Nationalist' victory. The real tragedy of Spanish anarchism is not that it miscalculated the odds, but that it paid the price too readily, in violation of its principles.

What is no less disconcerting is the extent to which the working class deferred to this confused leadership. CNT-FAI workers, even with arms in hand, were obedient to the pleas of their 'anarchist' ministers, although organizations like the Friends of Durruti incessantly subjected the 'influential militants' to public criticism. But the Friends of Durruti never numbered more than a few hundred members. No great demonstrations in the streets of Barcelona protested the dissolution of the Antifascist Militias Committee or the entry of anarchists into the central government or the militarization of the militias. The conflicts that emerged from these grave compromises were generally fought within the CNT-FAI itself and usually concluded with attempts to allay popular concern.

Even the May Days of 1937, the most serious act of resistance by the Barcelona proletariat to the Stalinist counter-revolution, were marked by irresolution and despair. The action was entirely defensive; leaflets by the Friends of Durruti calling for the takeover of the city by the proletariat were ignored. Orwell accurately captures the nature of the May Day uprising in his *Homage to Catalonia* when he notes that the

workers went out into the street in a spontaneous gesture of defense, and there were only two things which they were wholly conscious of wanting: the handing back of the *Telefonica* [central telephone exchange] and the disarming of the *Asaltos* [Assault Guards] whom they hated.<sup>19</sup>

The May Days, moreover, were not as spontaneous as Orwell

<sup>19</sup> George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*. London: The Folio Society, 1970.

seemed to think. They were initiated by the CNT-FAI District Defense Committee, which, as Broué and Témime observe, "Played the leading role in the absence of any instructions [from the 'influential militants']". The discipline of the workers in laying down their arms on instructions from the CNT would prove this, were it necessary."<sup>20</sup>

Heroic as this uprising surely was, it was performed by workers who in the last analysis gave priority to organizational 'orders' over libertarian principles and to the organization itself over the revolution. That these workers would have fought to recover the gains of the revolution is more than likely, but not if it meant breaking with the organization they reified and the leaders they respected.

### Implications of the Spanish Experience

The fifty years that separate our own time from the Spanish Revolution have produced sweeping changes in Western Europe and America, changes that are also reflected in Spain's present social development. The classical proletariat that fought so desperately for the minimal means of life is giving way to a more affluent worker whose major concern is not material survival and employment, but a more human way of life and more meaningful work. The social composition of the labour force is changing as well — proportionately, more toward commercial, service, and professional vocations than unskilled labour in mass manufacturing industries. Spain, like the rest of Western Europe, is no longer predominantly an agricultural country; the majority of its people live in towns and cities, not in the relatively isolated villages that nourished rural collectivism. In a visit to Barcelona during the late sixties, I seemed to see as many American-style attaché cases as lunch boxes.

These changes in the goals and traits of the non-bourgeois classes in capitalist society are the products of the sweeping industrial revolution that followed the Second World War and of the relative affluence or expectations of affluence that have

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Broué and Emile Temime, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

brought all the values of material scarcity into question. They have introduced a historic tension between the irrationality of present lifeways and the utopian promise of a liberated society. In Spain, it is significant that the privileged university students, who played such a reactionary role in the thirties, were among the most radical elements of society in the sixties and seventies.

Anarchist concepts that can encompass, indeed fully express this 'post-scarcity mentality' (as I prefer to call it) could be more relevant to them than thirties-type authoritarian ideologies, despite the tendency of the latter to fill the vacuum left by the absence of meaningful libertarian alternatives and organizations. Such anarchist concepts could no longer rely in practical terms on the collectivist traditions of the countryside; these are virtually gone as living forces, although perhaps the memory of the old collectivist traditions lives among Spanish youth. Burgeoning urbanization has posed more sharply than ever the need for decentralistic alternatives to the megalopolis; the gigantism of the city, the need for the human scale. The grotesque bureaucratization of life, which in Camus' words reduces everyone to a functionary, has placed a new value on non-authoritarian institutions and direct action.

Slowly, even amidst the setbacks of our time, a new self is being forged. Potentially, this is a libertarian self that could intervene directly in the changing and administration of society — a self that could engage in the self-discipline, self-activity, and self-management so crucial to the development of a truly free society. Here, the values prized so highly by traditional anarchocommunist establish direct continuity with a contemporary form of anarchocommunist that gives consciousness and coherence to the intuitive impulses of this new sensibility.

But if these goals are to be achieved, contemporary anarchocommunist cannot remain a mere mood or tendency, wafting in the air like a cultural ambiance. It must be organized — indeed, *well-organized* — if it is to effectively articulate and spread this new sensibility; it must have a coherent theory and extensive literature; it must be capable of dueling with the authoritarian movements that try to denature the intuitive libertarian impulses of our time and channel social unrest into hierarchical forms of organization. On this score, Spanish anarchism is profoundly

relevant for our time and the Spanish Revolution still provides the most valuable lessons in the problem of self-management that we can cull from the past.

To deal with these problems, perhaps I can best begin by saying that there is little, in fact, to criticize in the *structural* forms that the CNT and the FAI tried to establish. Indeed, my principal criticism in the pages above have been not so much of the forms themselves, but of the departures the CNT and the FAI made from them. Perhaps even more significantly, I have tried to explain the social limitations of the period — including the mystique about the classical proletariat — that vitiated the realization of these structural forms. I have been concerned with showing how derelict anarchocommunist were in giving priority to developing 'integral personalities' over organizing a large and presumably 'powerful' but raw and undeveloped 'following'; the desperation of the FAI in trying to control the immense sprawling CNT at almost any cost. I have noted that the CNT-FAI was confused about the nature of leadership within the movement, the relationship of public power to State power, and the CNT-FAI's departure from libertarian principles. And, of course, I have examined some of the myths that I have collected around the Spanish anarchist movement and the revolution.

But the structure of the CNT as a syndicalist union and that of the FAI as an anarchist federation was, in many respects, quite admirable. The CNT, almost from the outset, organized its locals as factory rather than craft unions and the nationwide occupational federations (the *Uniones de oficio*, or 'internationals,' as we would call them) which emerged with the IWMA were abandoned for local federations (the *Federaciones locales*). This structure situated the factory in the community, where it really belonged if the 'commune' concept was to be realistic, rather than an easily manipulated industrial that so easily lent itself to statist nationalization. The restoration of the *Uniones de oficio* in the early thirties was a distinct setback; as Garcia Oliver was to point out, ironically enough, it fostered the centralization and bureaucratization of the CNT. Yet the *centros obreros*, the local federations, the careful mandating of delegates to congresses, the elimination of paid officials, the establishment of regional federations, regional committees, and even of a National Com-



mittee, would not have been transgressions of libertarian principles had all of these institutions lived up to their intentions. Where the CNT structure failed most seriously was in the need to convene assemblies of workers at the local level and in national or regional conferences in sufficient number to continually re-evaluate CNT policies and to prevent power from collecting in the higher committees. It also lacked a recall mechanism, one which workers should have been encouraged to use.

Confusion developed over the crucial problem of the locus for making policy decisions. The place for this process should have been shop assemblies, regular congresses, or, when events and circumstances dictated, conferences of clearly mandated and recallable delegates elected for this purpose by the membership. The sole responsibility of the regional and national committees should have been administrative — that is, the coordination and execution of policy decisions formulated by membership meetings and conference or congress delegates. Instead, both the policy decision-making process and the administrative process were often pre-empted by plenums of regional committees, the National Committee, and at times even by cliques in the Catalan regional committee.

A bureaucratic, centralized, hierarchical organization like the UGT would have produced such abuses at the very outset; indeed, they wouldn't have been regarded as abuses at all but rather as invaluable assets that make for 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness.' In the CNT, where such practices were theoretically regarded as abuses, their correction ultimately depended upon the membership's level of consciousness. We have already examined the limitations of a strictly proletarian movement, its predisposition to admire 'strong' leaders even when leadership is officially frowned upon as an authoritarian trait. Whether the predisposition of workers to be 'led,' an inclination fostered by the very nature of their lives, could have been overcome by an ever-vigilant anarchist movement is difficult to assess. The thirties did not favour such independence of mind in movements that spoke of 'masses' and the 'rank-and-file,' least of all among workers who knew no cultural environment other than the factory. And by the thirties, the Catalan CNT, the backbone of the national movement, was composed to a very large extent of such a classical working class.

In any case, the FAI was not the organization to adequately educate the CNT's membership, much less provide the vigilance to fully democratize it. It direly needed an education of its own. The disdain which many *faistas* had for theory, the emphasis they placed on activism and daring, the desperation with which they tried at all costs to control the CNT — these factors alone would have precluded the FAI from fulfilling the vital role that a dedicated anarchist movement was required to play in a sprawling mass syndicalist union.

Moreover, despite the admirable nature of the affinity group concept, the importance of the local federation, and granting even the need for a peninsular committee, the FAI also suffered from the structural defects of the CNT. Although its local federations were probably quite manageable, it too required frequent conferences and an effective recall mechanism to keep a check on the higher committees and the 'influential militants.' It too was confused over the distinction between the policy-making decision process and the administrative process, although FAI documents show a remarkable understanding of this issue. But perhaps even more than the CNT, the FAI failed to deal adequately with the problem of the 'influential militants' — the more informed, experienced, 'strong,' and oratorically gifted individuals who tended to formulate policy at all levels of the organization.

It will never be possible to eliminate the fact that human beings have different levels of knowledge and consciousness. Our prolonged period of dependence as children, the fact that we are largely the products of an acquired culture, and that experience tends to confer knowledge on the older person, would lead to such differences even in the most liberated society. In hierarchical societies, the dependence of the less-informed on the more-informed is commonly a means of manipulation and power. The older, more experienced person, like the parent, has this privilege at his or her disposal and, with it, an alternative: to use knowledge, experience, and oratorical gifts as means of domination and to induce adulation — or for the goal of lovingly imparting knowledge and experience, for equalizing the relationship between teacher and taught, and always leaving the less experienced and less informed individual free to make his or her decisions.

Hegel brilliantly draws the distinction between Socrates and

Jesus: the former, a teacher who sought to arouse a quest for knowledge in anyone who was prepared to discuss; the latter, an oracle who pronounced 'truth' for adoring disciples to interpret exegetically. The difference, as Hegel points out, lay not only in the character of the two men, but in that of their 'followers.' Socrates' friends had been reared in a social tradition that

developed their powers in many directions. They had absorbed that democratic spirit which gives an individual a greater measure of independence and makes it impossible for any tolerably good head to depend wholly and absolutely on one person. They loved Socrates because of his virtue and his philosophy, not his virtue and his philosophy because of him.<sup>21</sup>

The followers of Jesus, on the other hand, were submissive acolytes.

Lacking any great store of spiritual energy of their own, they had found the basis of their conviction about the teaching of Jesus principally in their friendship with him and dependence on him. They had not attained truth and freedom by their own exertions; only by laborious learning had they acquired a dim sense of them and certain formulas about them. Their ambition was to grasp and keep this doctrine faithfully and to transmit it equally faithfully to others without any addition, without letting it acquire any variations in detail by working on it themselves.<sup>22</sup>

The FAI, illegal by choice, often terrorist in its tactics, and aggressively 'macho' in its almost competitive daring — developed deeply personal ties within its affinity groups. Durruti's grief for the death of Francisco Ascaso revealed real love, not merely the friendship that stems from organizational collaboration. But in the FAI, friendship or love was often based on a demanding association, one that implicitly required conformity to the most 'heroic' standards established by the most 'daring' militants in the group. Such relationships are not likely to shatter over doctrinal disagreements or what often seem like 'mere' points of theory. Eventually, these relationships produce leaders and led; worse, the leaders tend to patronize the led and finally manipulate them.

To escape this process of devolution, an anarchist organization

<sup>21</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971, p. 82.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

must be aware of the fact that it *can* occur, and it must become vigilant against its occurrence. To be effective, the vigilance must eventually express itself in more positive terms. It cannot co-exist with an adulation of violence, competitive daring, and mindless aggressiveness, not to speak of an equally mindless worship of activism and 'strong characters.'

The organization must recognize that differences in experiences and consciousness *do* exist among its members and must handle these differences with a wary consciousness — not conceal them with euphemisms like the term 'influential militant.' The taught as well as the teacher must *first* be taught to ask himself or herself whether domination and manipulation is being practised — and not deny that a systematic teaching process is taking place. Moreover, everyone must be fully aware that this teaching process is unavoidable within the movement if relationships are eventually to be equalized by imparting knowledge and the fruits of experience. To a large extent, the conclusions at which one arrives about the nature of this process are almost intuitively determinable by the behaviour patterns that develop between comrades.

Ultimately, under conditions of freedom, social intercourse, friendship, and love would be of the 'free-giving' kind that Jacob Bachofen imputes to 'matriarchal' society, not the demanding censorious type he associates with patriarchy. Here, the affinity group or commune would achieve the most advanced and libertarian expression of its humanity. Merely to strive for this goal among its own brothers and sisters would qualitatively distinguish it from other movements and provide the most assurable guarantee that it would remain true to its libertarian principles.

Whether the FAI raised these issues in its midst I do not know. That it fostered many attitudes that were incompatible with truly 'free-giving' relationships is evident from the most cursory survey of its history. Given the workers' movement of the thirties and the formidable limitations that blocked its development, it may well be that the FAI had very limited choices. But we have much to learn from the organizational forms it developed — and those which it lacked. Had its commitment to libertarian goals and principles been reinforced by the frequency of 'grassroots' conferences convened by organizations such as SDS in the mid-

sixties, the FAI's organizational forms might have served as a model for our times.

Our period, which stresses the development of the individual self as well as social self-management, stands in a highly advantageous position to assess the authentic nature of libertarian organization and relationships. A European or American civil war of the kind that wasted Spain in the thirties is no longer conceivable in an epoch that can deploy nuclear weapons, supersonic aircraft, nerve gas, and a terrifying firepower against revolutionaries. Capitalist institutions must be hollowed out by a molecular historical process of disengagement and disloyalty to a point where any popular majoritarian movement can cause them to collapse for want of support and social substance. But the kind of development such a change will produce — whether it will occur consciously, whether it will have an authoritarian outcome or one based on self-management — will depend very much upon whether a conscious, well-organized libertarian movement can emerge.

Whatever its limitations in other spheres, Spanish anarchism's achievements in the economic sphere boggle all the conventional perspectives of liberal and socialist thought. In Spain, millions of people took immense segments of the economy into their own hands, collectivized them, administered them, even abolished money and lived by communistic principles of work and distribution — all of this in the midst of a terrible civil war, yet without producing the chaos or even serious dislocations that are anticipated by authoritarian 'radicals.' Indeed, in many collectivized areas, the efficiency with which an enterprise worked by far exceeded that of a comparable one in nationalized or private sectors. This 'green shoot' of revolutionary reality has more meaning for us than the most persuasive theoretical arguments to the contrary. On this score it is not the anarchists who are the 'unrealistic day-dreamers,' but their opponents who have turned their backs to the facts or shamelessly concealed them.

## ON GUSTAV LANDAUER

*Russell Berman and Tim Luke*

Today, nearly sixty years after his death at the hands of White troops engaged in the suppression of the poorly organized 1919 Bavarian Soviet Republic, Gustav Landauer's works are slowly being recovered from years of abuse and neglect.

Until quite recently,<sup>1</sup> he remained virtually unknown except for

<sup>1</sup> To be sure, Landauer studies are not to be found in any great number, especially in English. However, Eugene Lunn's excellent *Prophet of Community: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley, 1973) does give a detailed and complete analysis of Landauer's thought, in addition to blending the course of his philosophical development into a sophisticated discussion of Landauer's own personal life. A less involved and more narrowly focused treatment of Landauer's work can be found in Charles B. Maurer's *Call To Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer* (Detroit, 1971), which concentrates heavily upon Landauer's indebtedness to Fritz Mauthner's linguistic philosophy. An even briefer consideration of Landauer's writings, and one which looks more closely at his Jewish dimension, is available in *Gustav Landauer: Philosopher of Utopia* (Indianapolis, 1977) by Ruth Link-Salinger (Hyman). Clearly, Lunn's study remains the best of these three book-length investigations. Also available are shorter discussions, including Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston, 1958); Paul Breines, "The Jew as Revolutionary: The Case of Gustav Landauer," *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, XII, 1967; Thomas Espers, "The Anarchism of Gustav Landauer" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1961); Sterling Fishman, "Prophets, Poets and Priests: A Study of the Men and Ideas that Made the Munich Revolution" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1960); and C.M., "Gustav Landauer," *Freedom* (an anarchist weekly), Vol. 33, No. 16, April 15, 1972. Of particular importance to an understanding of Landauer's role in the Munich revolution is the anthology edited by Ulrich Linse, *Gustav Landauer und die Revolutionszeit. Die politischen Reden, Schriften, Erlasse und Briefe Landauers* (Berlin, 1974). In Germany, a short discussion of Landauer's political legacy is offered in Harry Pross, "Die Aktualität Gustav Landauers" in *Neues Hochland*, 66, 1974, pp. 517-533. See also Heinz Joachim Heydorn's introduction to the German republication of Landauer's *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1967). Indicative of current interest in Landauer's anarchism is the republication of a variety of literary and theoretical texts, for example his *Rechenschaft* (Bremen, 1977); *Entstaatlichung — für eine Herrschaftslose Gesellschaft* (Westbeuern, 1975); *Die Revolution* (Berlin, 1974). See also the anthologies edited by Heinz Joachim Heydorn, *Zwang und Befreiung* (Cologne, 1968) and Ruth Link-Salinger-Hyman, *Erkenntnis und Befreiung* (Frankfurt, 1976).

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his ridiculous appearance in Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*,<sup>2</sup> in which Mannheim uses Landauer as his whipping boy for the alleged blind extremism of anarchist utopianism. Indeed, after being prematurely thrown onto the theoretical scrap heap with the fall of the Bavarian Soviet, Landauer has been remembered characteristically as "one of those free spirits" unhappy in any organization,<sup>3</sup> as a proponent of "impractical romantic Anarchism,"<sup>4</sup> and as something of an "excessively romantic"<sup>5</sup> dreamer apparently destined to run afoul of hard political realities. For the most part, only Martin Buber's perennial efforts to keep Landauer's ideas alive as a genuine socialist alternative have done justice to the rich diversity and practical aims of Landauer's theoretical project.<sup>6</sup>

As his *For Socialism* clearly reveals, Landauer is anything but an 'impractical romantic anarchist.' Continuing the thoughts he first advanced in his *Skepsis und Mystik*<sup>7</sup> and *Die Revolution*,<sup>8</sup> he effectively criticizes the central social forces of modern European society — the Second International, advanced capitalism, modern science, the Social-Democratic Party, orthodox Marxism, and the economic vision of State socialism — while, at the same time, outlining an emancipatory, stateless, political order grounded in the traditions of organic community.

Landauer defines *socialism*, in the only manner that preserves its metatheoretical freedoms, as *faith*, as moral regeneration, and as creative individual activity within an intimate spiritual "community of communities."<sup>9</sup> As a moral idea that gains realization only through willed human activity, Landauer's concept of socialism generates a sophisticated critique of the classical Marxist orthodoxy. Instead of presenting the working classes with 'scientific

<sup>2</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York, 1936), pp. 197-198.

<sup>3</sup> George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York, 1962), p. 432.

<sup>4</sup> James Joll, *The Second International, 1889-1914* (New York, 1966), p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Woodcock, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

<sup>6</sup> Buber edited a collection of Landauer's articles, *Beginnen: Aufsätze über Sozialismus* (Cologne, 1924), and in addition to discussing Landauer in *Paths to Utopia*, he remembered him in his *Pointing the Way* (New York, 1957).

<sup>7</sup> *Skepsis und Mystik: Versuch im Anschluss an Mauthners Sprachkritik* (Berlin, 1903).

<sup>8</sup> *Die Revolution* (Frankfurt a.M., 1908).

<sup>9</sup> See Lunn, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-213.

socialist' blueprints that prescribe organizing to effect short-run reforms while waiting for historical contradictions to produce the inevitable class revolution, Landauer counsels the workers to act immediately, for "Socialism need not come.... But socialism can come and should come, when we wish it."<sup>10</sup>

### Landauer's Life

Landauer was born in 1870 to a prosperous Jewish family. He attended the gymnasium in Karlsruhe and then studied at the universities of Berlin, Heidelberg, and Strasbourg, only to return in 1891 to the more exciting life at the University of Berlin.<sup>11</sup> His strong interest in Nietzsche, his participation in the circles of the *Freie Volksbühne* (a theatrical organization founded by Bruno Wille to promote working-class cultural awareness), and his involvement with groups of radical socialist students all contributed to his growth during this period. Of particular importance, however, was the influence of the anarchist Benedikt Friedlander, who introduced him to the works of Eugen Dühring, Peter Kropotkin, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.<sup>12</sup>

Yet it was also during these years, 1892-93, that Landauer was coming to terms with Marxism. Associated with the *Berliner Jungen*, a group of anti-authoritarian radical students dissatisfied with the Social Democratic Party's (SPD) bureaucratic procedures, Landauer attempted to blend his anarchist and socialist leanings into a unified libertarian Marxism. Despite some early articles in *Die Neue Zeit*, the anarchist component soon prevailed, as can be seen in his first novel, *Der Todesprediger*, which is the earliest expression of his characteristic fusion of vitalist Nietzschean individualism with socialist communalism.<sup>13</sup> Within the *Jungen* group, Landauer increasingly sided with the anarchist members and attended the Second International's Zurich Congress in 1893.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Quote cited *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>11</sup> Maurer, *Call To Revolution*, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Lunn, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the Zurich Congress and its reception of the anarchists, see Joll, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-74.

Landauer returned to Berlin from Switzerland in February 1893 and took over the editing of *Der Sozialist*, a weekly newspaper originally set up by the Union of Independent Socialists which had grown out of the *Jungen* movement. Landauer soon set an entirely anarchist course but lost control of the journal in an internal editorial struggle in 1895-96.<sup>15</sup> He subsequently attended the 1896 International Socialist Congress in London as an anarchist delegate, but was expelled before delivering his speech against the SPD.<sup>16</sup>

He devoted himself to independent research and writing in the years 1898-1908, which were spent partially in prison due to his activities as an anarchist publisher.<sup>17</sup> After working on another novel, *Lebendig tot*, in 1899-1900, Landauer published his first major philosophical work, *Skepsis und Mystik*, in 1903, in which he treats the mysticism of Meister Eckhart.<sup>18</sup> Literary studies and translations of authors ranging from Walt Whitman to Kropotkin also followed. Landauer's thought matured considerably during this decade, and he soon gave it political expression in *Die Revolution* (1908), *Volk and Land: Thirty Socialist Theses* (1908), which led to the founding of the Socialist *Bund*,<sup>19</sup> and, most clearly, in *For Socialism* (1908-1911).

Here one finds an outstanding example of dissatisfaction with the rigid institutional structures characteristic of Germany during the period of rapid industrialization following national unification in 1870-71. Despite the broad range of turn-of-the-century cultural movements — naturalism, symbolism, neo-romanticism, *volkisch* thought — most were marked by an antagonism to forms of experience perceived to be antiquated, illegitimate, and oppressively hierarchical. Certainly not all of these voices

<sup>15</sup> Lunn, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-120. Ultimately, *Der Sozialist* died in 1899 after losing most of its financial support and audience.

<sup>16</sup> Gustav Landauer, *Social Democracy in Germany* (London, 1896). For an interesting treatment of how Landauer was refused the privilege of speaking to the Congress and was physically thrown out of the meeting hall in London, see Joll, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-76.

<sup>17</sup> Landauer's prison terms usually proved quite productive. During his short, six-month sentence for allegedly 'libelously' attacking the Berlin police commissioner, he wrote his short novel, *Lebendig tot*, and carefully edited the book by Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (Stuttgart, 1901), which was to profoundly reorient Landauer's own thinking.

<sup>18</sup> Landauer also translated the sermons of Meister Eckhart while in prison.

<sup>19</sup> See *Die Zukunft*, 58. Band 56-57.

advocated the emancipation of experience, matter, or the senses from the restrictive limits imposed by society. Nevertheless, the confrontation of form and content, of form and life, is the unifying figure of thought underlying the cultural crisis in turn-of-the-century Germany. For the symbolist poet Stefan George, the communicative and social concerns of Hugo von Hofmannsthal were tantamount to the worst apostasy: the betrayal of the exigencies of form. In a parallel, albeit very different situation, the young Georg Lukacs quite consistently defended a neo-classicist position; culture, as meaningful life, became possible only by way of the formative force provided by a renunciation of chaotic, immediate experience. Yet, even where the chaos of life seemed most threatening, its deductive power remained a force which an overly repressive culture increasingly had to confront. Gustav von Aschenbach, the classicist, the admirer of Frederick the Great, is drawn to Venice and his death; but this is not simply an individual's demise. It is also the crisis of nineteenth century European culture in general. For, as Thomas Mann realizes, European order cannot resist the temptations of the Venetian siren at the gateway to Asia.

This diffuse opposition to the forms of established society corresponded to a widespread dissatisfaction with the specific character of modernization in Germany. Not only industrialization, but also strengthening of bureaucracy and increased centralization of the political system disrupted traditional social ties and led to urban isolation, which all fed the flames of criticism.

Landauer's significance lies in his recognition of the issues, and, perhaps more importantly, his understanding that most of the German left would be utterly incapable of speaking to them. Consequently, in a political landscape increasingly monopolized on the left by the Social Democrats, Landauer reorganized the journal *Der Sozialist* in 1909 in order to further the cause of the Socialist *Bund* and, with the growing threat of war, to promote pacifism and combat chauvinism. In 1917, he left Berlin for the small Swabian town of Krumbach where he remained until November 1918 when Kurt Eisner summoned him to revolutionary Munich. After Eisner's assassination in February 1919, he was appointed Minister of Culture and Education in April. Within a

week, however, a military soviet government was established until the leadership of Eugene Leviné, who refused Landauer's services.<sup>20</sup> Counter-revolutionary troops overthrew the Bavarian Soviet at the end of April. Landauer was arrested on May 1, 1919, and was murdered the next day.<sup>21</sup>

### The Philosophical Bases of Libertarian Life

Derided as an anarchist and utopian socialist, Landauer, as his works immediately reveal, was an astute political thinker, an interesting philosophical mystic, a capable literary critic, as well as a perceptive opponent of positivist science and an advocate of art as the expression of objective forms of knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, his insights into science and art foreshadow his idea of socialism and his criticisms of Second International Marxism. For Landauer, modern science at its best is simply a useful ensemble of predictive abstractions. The value of these abstract constructs lies not in their alleged exact explications of reality as such, nor in their rationalized conception of the world. Rather, scientific generalizations are valid *only* as tentative observations and partial operational instruments. Anticipating certain arguments of the Frankfurt School, Landauer describes modern science's actual function as an identity theory that presumes to describe reality fully, while in fact abstractly manipulating the objective world into total conformity with its formal conceptualizations.

In this regard, Landauer deepens Fritz Mauthner's linguistic critique of science, which portrays science as a richer, but by no means qualitatively superior, form of dealing with everyday sense

<sup>20</sup> For further discussion of the chaotic events that led to the establishment of the Bavarian Soviet, see Erich Eyck, *A History of the Weimar Republic*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1962), pp. 78-79; S. William Halperin, *Germany Tried Democracy* (New York, 1946), pp. 122-125; and Richard M. Watt, *The Kings Depart. The Tragedy of Germany: Versailles and the German Revolution* (New York, 1968), pp. 294-297 and pp. 325-341.

<sup>21</sup> See Ernst Toller, *I Was a German* (London, 1934), pp. 244-245.

<sup>22</sup> Here, Landauer clearly anticipates many of the insights later made by Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno. See Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston, 1973), pp. 173-218, and Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (New York, 1977), pp. 122-135.

data.<sup>23</sup> For Landauer and Mauthner, all forms of knowledge are essentially culturally delimited sense data that individual thought captures in linguistic expressions; thus, the form and content of individual memory, collective culture, social history, or positive science are nothing more than the form and content of language and its metaphors.<sup>24</sup> Analytical abstractions, consequently, are individual projections used to understand the world, but these conceptual mediations — particularly the highly formalized abstractions of science that methodically restrict their own linguistic richness and metaphor — do not adequately grasp reality as such. Because all thought forms are arbitrary projections of historical traditions constituted by the language community's interaction with its sensual environs, Landauer sees scientific laws as necessarily failing to circumscribe the stuff of reality.

Although language does not provide a medium adequate to the claims of positivist science, it is nevertheless the most accurate human means for potentially understanding reality, because the metaphors of language can both project and retain the anthropomorphic constitution of the world. The real world of nature and society is knowable, but only through linguistic or artistic metaphors which base themselves in culturally projected sense data. Human will cannot alter the forms of human knowledge without abandoning the false mechanical concepts of science that impoverish human understanding by demanding the artificial maintenance of abstract, static and formal universals. Such pure rationalism leads to partial control of the external, objective world, but only at the cost of de-humanization and systematic misunderstanding of the human, interior, subjective world.

The growth of humanity depends, therefore, not on the progress of science, but rather on the metaphorical mediations of art which can lead to a regeneration of social spirituality, of *Geist*. Here, however, Landauer's distance from the 1980s creates certain terminological difficulties, the clearest example of which is this concept of 'spirit.' It would be mistaken to understand

<sup>23</sup> For a very exacting discussion of how Mauthner affected Landauer, see Maurer, *Call To Revolution*, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-76. See also Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York, 1973), for more discussion on Mauthner's general intellectual influence in turn-of-the-century German culture.

<sup>24</sup> Maurer, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-64.

Landauer as a traditional religious thinker and assume that his use of 'spirit' refers to a divine agency above humanity. Nor does the Hegelian spirit cast light on Landauer's term because of his radical rejection of the teleology intrinsic to Hegel's thought. A close approximation of Landauer's meaning would be 'consciousness,' but here, too, caution is called for. 'Spirit' certainly does not mean an arbitrarily defined consciousness, that is, *any* set of values and opinions. It also differs from the Marxist notion of consciousness as the superstructural reflection of the productive base. For Landauer, no material conditions necessitate particular forms of thought, nor does he, as Marxism can, claim to speak from the standpoint of history's end, from which other deviating forms of consciousness are proclaimed to be false.

Landauer's spirit is instead a folk consciousness or a full consciousness, an inner individual awareness of social ties that demand cooperative activity. Except during historical periods of atomistic isolation, it is less a quality of individuals than an entire mode of existence for a society able to recognize itself as such. The absence of this consciousness is not merely ideology, but rather social death. Organic social reciprocity is displaced, then, by forms of State domination to which the individual, no longer an active participant in the folk consciousness, is subordinated. For Landauer, folk consciousness was anything but the chauvinistic élan of nation-state worship that the right-wing *volkisch* movements touted in Wilhelmine Germany.<sup>25</sup> He saw the folk consciousness as the generic memory and historical essence of all a people's past ancestors imbedded deeply in the common language as well as in the psychic make-up of every individual formed in the cultural interaction of the group with its milieu.<sup>26</sup> Thus, spirit is the cornerstone of Landauer's anarchism, both as his notion of subjectivity and as his alternative to bureaucratic administration.

<sup>25</sup> Rather, as Eugene Lunn argues, Landauer represents a left-wing form of the *volkisch* current of thought. The turn of *volkisch* thought to the right is ultimately not indicative of the quality of such thought, but rather of the self-imposed constraints of the traditional Marxist left, which failed to appropriate the leftist potential of the *volkisch* movement.

<sup>26</sup> The ultimate source of these notions is Johann Gottfried von Herder, especially his *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, abridged with introduction by Frank E. Manuel (Chicago, 1968).

Hence, Landauer sees the folk as living communities of thought and experience which are not explicable in positivist scientific statements. Human essence resides in each individual as communal consciousness, or social individuality; personal individuality is formed within the linguistic-metaphorical content of the shared experience. Art, music, and poetry effectively can interpret this consciousness as a form of worldly understanding. Here, Landauer's life-long interest in poets of folk consciousness — Shakespeare in England, Whitman in the United States, or Holderlin in Germany — illustrates his understanding of the folk spirit as well as each individual poet's artistry which articulates his social individuality. The poet, as in Whitman's "Song of Myself," speaks not for his *own* self, but for his *folk* self, embedded in his individual consciousness, his language, culture, society, and communal order. Thus, spirit corresponds to the pre-categorical and metatheoretical essence which is embodied in the artistic creations of poets and the communal praxis of socialists. Similarly, as Landauer asserts in *Skepsis und Mystik*, individuals must assume the spirit of their social individuality in activity because "we have been satisfied until now to transform the universe into the human spirit, or better, into human intellect; let us now transform ourselves into universal spirit."<sup>27</sup>

It follows, then, that for Landauer socialism is the communal regeneration of the individual's inner essence through creative activity, familial love, and social labour. Socialism is not the socialization of the means of production under the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the contrary, "socialism is an endeavor to create a new reality with the help of an ideal."<sup>28</sup> Thus, wholly in keeping with Landauer's anarchist designs, such socialism can never come to pass through *State* action. In fact, the modern State is the negation of a former folk consciousness whose waning spirit was replaced after the Middle Ages with the State's laws, police, and prisons. The spiritual basis of socialism is already present in each individual as folk consciousness, but it will become an emancipatory collective subjectivity only if it is created by dedicated people working to transform themselves. Here, the

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Maurer, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

socialist ideal set forth in *For Socialism* projects a prefigurative image of communal living that captures the essence of the full, folk consciousness practised as a *social revolution*, “a peaceful building, an organizing in a new spirit and to a new spirit and nothing more.”<sup>29</sup>

These premises, in turn, prompted Landauer to break almost entirely with the working class as the historically determined agent of socialist revolution. In fact, for Landauer, the dehumanization intrinsic to the forms of capitalist labour increasingly prevents the proletarians from becoming revolutionary as individualization becomes more deeply rooted. Here, Landauer turns to ‘outsiders’ —farmers, students, intellectuals, the surviving craftspeople, and small shop-owners — to serve as the revolutionary agents of moral regeneration. Consequently, he recommends that small, agrarian communes be established as an opposition to modern capitalism. In such intimate communal settings, he maintains, the folk consciousness can reassert itself fully and provide the truly revolutionary foundations of a new culture, a new society, and a new community of communities free from the exploitation of the advanced capitalist State. “Socialism,” then, “is the attempt to lead man’s common life to a bond of common spirit in freedom, that is, to religion.”<sup>30</sup>

### The Anarcho-Socialist Critique of Marxism

Marxism, the *scientific* expression of socialism, symbolizes the intrusion of the positive scientist’s manipulative consciousness into the struggle for socialist community. For Landauer, Marxism is part of the problem posed by industrialization. As he suggests, “the father of Marxism is steam.” In spite of Marxism’s alleged objectivity and systematicity, Landauer considers it a repressive mystification used by “professors who want to rule.” Indeed, as Landauer continues in *For Socialism*, “old wives prophesy from coffee dregs. Karl Marx prophesied from steam.” As a significant political force, Marxism developed a popular following only in the

1890s and presented neither the exclusive nor the most articulate critique of modern industry. Only a banally amnesiac misreading of the past portrays Marxism or Marxism-Leninism as the sole heir to the legacy of nineteenth century working-class struggle. What has been forgotten, or forcibly repressed, is that a wide range of tendencies, all offering opposition to aspects of capitalist industrialization, flourished during the period. In this sense, Landauer provides a cogent synthesis of Proudhon and Kropotkin, while highlighting the impossibility of an effective Marxist critique of capitalism. His arguments focus primarily on the central tenet of orthodox Marxism, namely, its own scientific character, i.e., the ability to describe objective laws of development within capitalism that lead inexorably to socialism. This teleological view of history forced the social democrats, from Landauer’s vantage, to applaud capitalist growth, for it was precisely that growth, that centralization, and that rationalization of the economy which would sooner or later blossom into socialism, regardless of whether the ballot box or a *coup d’état* ushered in the final phase of human maturation. Given this dogmatic faith in the inevitability of progress, social democracy was hardly in a position to articulate a fundamental critique of capitalist industrialization. Not only does Landauer jettison the sanguine trust in the beneficence of technology; he also renounces the objectivist teleology which is at the root of historical optimism.

Faith in progress coupled with materialist determinism debilitated the possibility of praxis within traditional Marxism. Inevitability displaced activism. A stop-gap measure was provided in democratic centralism by which the question of praxis was subordinated to acceptance of the party, but only at the cost of intellectual capitulation. Landauer, on the other hand, rescued the possibility of action in the present by lifting the weight of a rigid *telos* from the socialist’s shoulders. Socialism is not inevitable, he argued, but it could come if it were created. Similarly, no material base, no measure of industrial progress, no matter how great, could guarantee an end to history; but a socio-cultural movement concerned with socialist forms of living is possible everywhere and at all times. The subordination of the present to a promised land in the future could only spell defeat for the emancipatory forces. In *For Socialism*, this self-defeating teleology

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.



is presented as a cornerstone of the Marxist structure. Thus, Marxism, despite its revolutionary appearance, functions in fact as an impediment to socialism; or, as Landauer continually reaffirms, "Marxism... is the plague of our age and the curse of the socialist movement."<sup>31</sup>

In the light of Landauer's critique, nineteenth century scientific socialism ceases to appear as a radical critique of the *status quo*. Rather, behind its revolutionary pretenses, it buttresses the development of capitalist structures. Furthermore, the orthodox Marxism of social democracy mimics the practices of the oppressive regime that it seeks to destroy. It, too, sacrifices immediate experience in the present at the altar of progress understood as the expansion of administrative control. In discarding this teleological structure, then, Landauer was forced to articulate a concept of socialism independent of both historical determinism and the organizational authoritarianism that it engendered.

For Landauer, socialism was no longer a matter of history's endpoint, but rather a cultural movement, possible but never inevitable in the present. It meant overcoming the atomistic individualism which had been gnawing at the heart of European society for four centuries. It entailed the conscious decision to act socially. No god, and no scientifically determined *telos* would redeem a mankind unwilling to redeem itself. In highlighting the voluntary character of political praxis, Landauer underscores his commitment to existential subjectivity, vindicating it against the objectivist dialectic of nature characteristic of an earlier materialism. To the extent that he describes the organization of socialist society, it is by no means one in which a planning agency dominates the various parts. On the contrary, he calls for a decentralized, communal arrangement that could encourage active participation without necessitating total integration. Any political movement that attempted a total integration of its members into an objectively defined correct consciousness, like the SPD, could only conclude its project in an authoritarian collectivism.

To be sure, as soon as the SPD resumed its legitimate political activities in Germany with the lapse of the anti-socialist legislation

of 1878-1890,<sup>32</sup> it immediately reinforced its commitment to Marxism in the new Erfurt Programme.<sup>33</sup> Yet even as it reformed its ranks, many of its members resisted its all too obvious organizational authoritarianism under its political 'drillmaster,' August Bebel.<sup>34</sup> The anarchists, in particular, who had disrupted the founding sessions of the Second International in Paris during 1889,<sup>35</sup> and the anarcho-socialists who emerged from the *Jungen* movement, seriously challenged the party's essentially State-like operations. Hence, they promptly were expelled at the party congress in Erfurt in 1891.<sup>36</sup> Initially, the *Jungen* merely criticized the unrevolutionary methods of SPD parliamentarianism, while affirming the use of parliamentary tactics to demonstrate working-class intransigence and revolutionary spirit. Their personal attacks on the party leadership for sapping the party's revolutionary purpose, however, led to their immediate expulsion. This reaction by the SPD executive, in turn, nurtured the *Jungen* critique of the SPD as an authoritarian party-state acting out political tyranny within its working-class organization while hiding behind its mask of Marxist revolutionary theory.<sup>37</sup> By as early as 1893, Landauer had witnessed this official social democratic repression of both anarchist activists and spontaneous proletarian unrest, and he was able to draw the conclusion that the party's subordination of the present to a socialism in the future only spelled defeat for the emancipatory forces.

The *Jungen* and the anarcho-socialists, then, posed a basic challenge to the SPD's designs for building a socialist society. Initially, the anarchist presence in the SPD called into question the legitimacy of the SPD in the eyes of the ruling authorities, who crudely regarded all anarchists as 'propagandists of the deed' intent upon bombing and assassination.<sup>38</sup> Although the threat of

<sup>32</sup> Joll, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>33</sup> See Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1905-1917* (New York, 1972), pp. 3-6.

<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Bebel was legendary for never passing up an opportunity to compare his organizational creation, the German Social Democratic Party, to that other 'great' German organizational achievement, the Prussian army.

<sup>35</sup> See Joll, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-48.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>37</sup> As Eugene Lunn notes (p. 70), much of the *Jungen* critique later was adopted by Robert Michels in his 1915 work, *Political Parties*.

<sup>38</sup> In fact, the anarchists were so effective in their assassinations that Kaiser Wilhelm II seriously pressed reintroduction of anti-socialist legislation in 1894. See Joll, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-58.

<sup>31</sup> Lunn, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

renewed repression by the State was constantly on the minds of the SPD executive, it was the anarchists' attacks on the SPD's ideology and tactics that represented a more fundamental challenge both to its own success and to the success of the Second International, which the SPD dominated.<sup>39</sup> With regard to its ideology, most anarchists agreed with Landauer's characterization of official Marxism as a rationale to mask the political subordination of the working classes. Unwilling to accept Karl Kautsky's orthodox Marxist predictions, the anarchists questioned the Erfurt Programme and continually pushed the SPD toward 'revolution-making' strategies rather than submitting to its reforming liberal tactics that Kautsky considered 'revolutionary' at heart. While the anarchists continued to point out the increasing contradictions between the party's Marxist science and the actual course of political reality, the SPD grew even more repressive as an organization. By 1896, the anarchists were successfully ousted from the International, largely as a result of the SPD's manoeuvring, and they never again posed a serious internal threat to social democracy's bureaucratic authoritarianism.

Landauer's insights become even more interesting when juxtaposed with the revisionism debates that racked the SPD at the turn of the century. As he had foreseen, when confronted by the liberalizing elements of Bernstein's anti-Marxist critiques, the SPD dogmatically rededicated itself to the Marxist ideology in order to maintain the 'revolutionary' character of the party's challenge to the established order. Yet, given the fact that Marxism failed to account for Germany's and Europe's rising economic prosperity, the ideology simply served as the legitimization of political conformity with the SPD's continued orthodoxy in both Germany and the International.

Sensing this dogmatism, Bernstein almost totally rejected the orthodox analysis of Kautsky's Erfurt Programme. According to its principles, Marx's theoretical analysis of capitalist crisis was

wholly supported by the historical developments at the turn of the century. Bernstein ardently challenged these tenets and suggested instead that wealth was not becoming centralized, that class conflict was not mounting, and that economic misery was not spreading among the working classes.<sup>40</sup> On the contrary, the business cycle was becoming normalized; hence, class conflict was lessening in the general extension of economic well-being. Thus, he called for increasing acceptance of liberal policies: anti-protectionism, greater democratization, free trade, and peaceful settlement of international conflict.

In doing so, however, he also advocated less dependence upon Marxist science, a position that led, in turn, to greater reliance upon neo-Kantian ethics as an intellectual legitimation for divorcing theory and politics, science and ethics. Bernstein accordingly emphasized freedom in action as a result of an autonomous ethical decision, whereas Kautsky and the SPD directorate clung more closely to the causal determinations of party science to orient their political practice. Weakly paralleling Landauer, Bernstein also held that socialism was not inevitable, but that it was instead an ethical ideal: "something that ought to be, or a movement towards something that ought to be."<sup>41</sup> As they had also reacted to the anarchists' voluntarism, Kautsky and the SPD ridiculed Bernstein's ethical voluntarism as an unscientific reversion to pre-Marxian practices. For the SPD, historical necessity maintained its hold on bourgeois society and demanded renewed working-class intransigence to deal with the unexpected economic upturn. To them, socialism was not simply an extension of liberal reformist logic, as it apparently was to Bernstein, but instead represented a new historical moment demanding the constitution of new knowledge and a new morality possible only in a mass working-class party which would effectively blend, in Kautsky's analysis, theory and practice.

Plainly, the debate ended in deadlock and led to theoretical catastrophe for both factions. Kautsky, in reaction to Bernstein's neo-Kantian liberal idealism, was driven even further into his

<sup>39</sup> To be sure, it was the domination of the German Social Democratic Party in the Second International that led George Bernard Shaw to quip after the 1896 London Congress, "An International Congress that everybody laughs at and nobody fears is a gratifying step in advance." Quoted in Joll, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>40</sup> See Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation* (New York, 1961).

<sup>41</sup> George Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study*, revised edition (New York, 1965), p. 296.

Darwinistic materialist evolutionism. This crude scientific naturalism ultimately concluded in the denial of philosophy itself. On the other hand, Bernstein's neo-Kantian divorce of theory and practice progressively identified the 'socialist' ideal and the ethical freedom of the working classes as liberal politics and labourite social reformism, which failed to transcend the immediacy of everyday parliamentary politics. For the SPD organization, Bernstein's formula for gradual change and reform appeared quite ridiculous, as the transition to socialism necessarily required a sharp break into a new stage of history and a new class alliance that Bernstein failed to accept in his theoretical pronouncements. Here, Landauer's transitional strategy challenges both the orthodox and the revisionist as he argues for spiritual transformation through communal prefiguration of the future in present activity.

As Landauer also argued, the SPD orthodoxy remained hampered by its philosophy of history. By casting historical development as a deterministic causal chain, it left little discretion to human ethical will. Yet, as both Bernstein and Landauer maintained, even if the party's Marxist science *did* 'prove' socialism to be historical necessity, it failed to demonstrate its moral basis or its ethical superiority as a form of human emancipation. Landauer, in contradistinction to both the orthodox Marxist and the revisionist, addresses himself almost exclusively to precisely this task of concretizing the ethical desirability of socialism, while refuting and rebuking the materialism of the International.

### Landauer's Legacy

These debates within the Second International as well as the themes typical of the *fin-de-siècle* cultural crisis provide the background; they explain the genesis of Landauer's work. As he explicitly underscores in the preface to the 1919 edition, his criticism represented a response to the failures of the various Marxist currents — including both traditional social democracy and the Bolshevik alternative<sup>42</sup> — a response which, however,

<sup>42</sup> See Pross, *op. cit.*, p. 530.

transcended the limits of the discussion within the organized working-class movement in order to confront the disorder of Germany's socio-cultural situation.

The needs and desires at the bottom of the widespread turbulent opposition to industrial capitalist society were not treated adequately by the programmes of the Marxist orthodoxies. Precisely this failure of the German left allowed the political right to appropriate the general dissatisfaction that characterized German society. Of course, the right misused the issues with glaring contradictions between its ideological pronouncements, designed for mass appeal, and its actual policies, which only reinforced the modernizing tendencies. Indeed, for all its glorification of nature, the right would only construct modern highways and sophisticated war machines. Invoking autonomy and independence, it strengthened bureaucratic hierarchy and State interventionism. Finally, its paeans to the provincial virtues, aimed at the anti-urban, anti-Berlin mood, only hid a more rigorous integration of the State and local administrations into the centralized organization. The subrational mouthing of shibboleth-like community (*Gemeinschaft*) only heightened the isolation and the impotence of the individual in society. This was the fascist reality that openly contradicted the successful fascist appropriation of tradition and of broadly based dissatisfaction with the course of advanced industrial development. The cultural victory of the right was the outcome of the left's inability to speak to this malaise, except in pedantic, uncomprehending tones. In this sense, Landauer's critique of Marxism foreshadows the attempts to develop theories of fascism in the twenties and thirties by figures such as August Thalheimer, Ernst Bloch, Wilhelm Reich, and Franz Neumann, who were dissatisfied with the platitudes of the Comintern.<sup>43</sup> Landauer's insights, however, had raised similar questions two decades earlier.

Thus, *For Socialism* transcends the specific context of the turn-of-the-century milieu by anticipating the themes raised by various

<sup>43</sup> See Niels Kadritzke, *Faschismus und Krise: Zum Verhältnis von Politik und Oekonomie im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt a.M., 1976), especially pp. 17-92; Anson Rabinbach, "Ernst Bloch's *Heritage of Our Times* and Fascism," *New German Critique*, II, Spring 1977, pp. 5-21; and Reinhard Kuhn, ed., *Texte zur Faschismuskritik I: Positionen und Kontroversen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1974), pp. 8-9.

generations of Western Marxists and radical thinkers throughout the twentieth century. Landauer is the missing link between the oppositional forces of the late nineteenth century and the work of Lukacs, Korsch, and Gramsci, as well as the critical theory of Benjamin, Adorno, and Horkheimer. Despite his vague, quasi-expressionist style, it would be erroneous to relegate him to the level of a mere precursor of these later thinkers. On the contrary, a radicalism characterizes *For Socialism* that is much more profound than that of later works anxious to salvage certain aspects of Marxism, which Landauer already was prepared to reject wholly. In fact, given Lukacs' explicitly Hegelianized Marxism that leads straight into a defense of democratic centralism, or Adorno's implicit teleology with its concomitant despair, nowhere is the problem of subjectivist praxis as important as it is in Landauer's work.

Landauer anticipates critical theory while also serving as witness to the ground lost during half a century of subterranean orthodoxy within the left-wing of Western Marxism. He also proves quite relevant to the present as the last vestiges of New Left subjectivism are disappearing beneath a rising tide of scientific socialism. *For Socialism* provides a new perspective on the history of the Second International, which is all too often understood only as a prelude to Lenin. At the same time, Landauer's study raises issues which effectively question today's neo-orthodoxy at a fundamental level. While radical claims that a profound social transformation is inevitable today only can be attributed to a blind romanticism numb to a history of defeats, Landauer upholds an image of change that becomes possible only through collective action, personal participation, and a large measure of faith in the present.

## THE SEARCH FOR COMMUNITY: From Utopia to a Co-operative Society

by George Melnyk  
Black Rose Books, 1985  
*reviewed by George Woodcock*

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Authority often wins its greatest triumphs not by repression, which is obvious and can be resisted, but by the very subversion of which it accuses its enemies. For the State has sought to make itself indispensable, and has largely succeeded in this by weakening the very structure of mutual aid that naturally sustains a society. From this point of view, the welfare State, with its paraded compassion and its relentless interference with the lives of people, is even more dangerous than the openly autocratic State. By replacing voluntary co-operation with the bureaucratic management of our lives from the cradle to the grave it removes the alternative structures that sustain not merely our self-respect as human beings, but also our essential freedom. So long as the possibility of managing their own affairs and providing voluntarily for their neighbours' needs is sustained, men and women remain to that extent free. When the welfare State takes over those functions, freedom withers at the same time as initiative.

George Melnyk's *The Search for Community* is a search for a solution to this problem. For government intervenes, and the welfare State emerges, largely because the organs of mutual aid that might have been sufficient in a mediaeval city or an Alpine farming village or an African tribal community did not develop

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sufficiently rapidly to meet the needs of modern industrial and organized societies. The solution that Melnyk suggests is the modernization and the universalization of co-operation.

In a general sense, of course, the essence of libertarian arguments has lain in an insistence on the superiority of co-operation as an alternative to coercion; it was the basis of both Proudhon's mutualism and Kropotkin's mutual aid, and, moving out of theory into action, Proudhon's People's Bank, which was essentially the first co-operative financial institution and the ancestor of all credit unions and *caisses populaires*, was founded in 1848, only four years after the Rochdale co-operative, a significant historical conjunction which Melnyk does not note. Co-operation, then, lies at the basis of libertarian strategy as well as libertarian ideology, and the fact that — as *The Search for Community* demonstrates — co-operative patterns have been adapted to suit liberal-democratic and socialist societies, and have even been appropriated and perverted into State adjuncts by various communist States, does not take away from the fact that, *par excellence*, the co-operative — even if we conceive it in other terms such as *collective*, *artel*, *workers' management*, *credit union* — is by its very nature a voluntary grouping and therefore a natural unit of the libertarian society.

In *The Search for Community*, Melnyk presents the 'social co-operative' not only as a valid and voluntarist alternative to the welfare State, but also as the kind of organizational pattern that, by inducing people to work together in their mutual interests, could be effective in solving the very social problems — and notably unemployment — which even the best organized of welfare States have found themselves incapable of overcoming.

*The Search for Community* is history and polemic combined. In the first part of the book Melnyk takes us through the history of co-operation as it has been manifest in practice. He isolates four traditions — the 'Liberal Democratic,' the 'Marxist,' the 'Socialist,' and the 'Communist.' Generally speaking, he rejects the Marxist tradition, since it subordinates the necessary voluntarism of co-operation to the will of the State, though he sees Yugoslavian workers' management as a promising heresy. He notes among what he calls 'Socialist' communities a tendency for external ideological imperatives to assume predominance, as Zionism did

in the Israeli *kibbutzim* and nationalist dogma in the Tanzanian *ujamaa* villages, which were imposed by coercion when Nyerere's appeals did not result in their voluntary implementation. And he notes that 'Communist' co-operatives seem to have succeeded best when they were dominated by some over-riding belief — when they "rejected the concept of their commune as a heaven on earth, and insisted it was only a waystation to something higher"; in this area the Hutterites with their powerful if primitive religious faith and certain Catholic monastic orders offer good examples.

Indeed, in the last three categories, the only experiment that he regards as wholly successful and therefore worth emulation is the Mondragon movement in the Basque region of Spain, a network of "over 100 co-ops that employ 19,000 worker-owners and provide education, housing, social welfare, consumer goods and banking for its members." Unlike the great consumer co-operative movement in Britain, the Mondragon system is firmly based on worker co-ops oriented towards production, but it seeks to meet all the material and many of the mental needs of its members; and in fact, so far as they are concerned, it provides through voluntary agency all the social services offered by the most paternalistic welfare State.

Mondragon has developed an impressive structure that provides an integrated system. A child of a Mondragon worker can attend a daycare co-operative, then go to a co-op Basque language elementary school, graduate to a technical high school, and attend the Mondragon engineering university. While at the university he can pay his way by working part-time in the student co-op factory. He can then get a job in a co-op, live in a Mondragon housing co-op, shop in the Eroski consumer co-op, and on retirement get his pension from Lagun Aro, the social welfare co-op of Mondragon. During his tenure at Mondragon he is virtually guaranteed job security. Should his job become redundant he will be retained and assigned to another co-op. In a region where unemployment runs 15 to 20 per cent this is extremely important.

Melnyk does discuss the anarchist industrial and agricultural collectives of the civil war period in Spain, with their considerable success over a brief period of time, but since they did not survive and have no lineal successors, he is probably wise to choose as his example a system that is successfully operating today and is of

growing importance in the Basque country — a system that teaches libertarian lessons without being avowedly anarchist.

The Mondragon experiment is strongly regionally oriented, and as such it appeals especially to Melnyk, who is a Western Canadian regionalist, and who in fact considers the social co-operative as an organizational pattern peculiarly suited for his own locality, with its long history of agricultural co-operative ventures and its special problems, the most important of which, for the foreseeable future, is unemployment.

The Canadian State has obviously shown itself incapable of dealing with this problem, and at the moment, mainly because official welfarism has weakened the natural processes of mutual aid in the region, there is an insufficient voluntary system to take its place. Melnyk argues that a well co-ordinated co-operative system, aimed not merely at organizing production, consumption, housing, and credit, but also willing to take responsibility for social needs, for the unemployed and the otherwise disadvantaged, is what is needed. No libertarian could dispute such a conclusion; Melnyk's social co-operative, if it could come into being, would be as near to Kropotkin's ideal society, based on mutual aid and mutual responsibility, as one could hope to see in real life. It would be a true free society growing up in the disintegrating ruins of the nation-State.

The goal is admirable. How to achieve it remains the question, and Melnyk admits that "The task of building something that has never existed before is an awesome challenge." He finds hope in the existence today of a considerable network of co-operatives of various kinds that — if they were galvanized by a sense of pressing need — could form the basis for creating a genuine 'social co-operative' that would go beyond their present narrow functional orientations to deal with society's problems on the broadest scale. And the need, he maintains, is urgently there, in the special plight of the West, which is not likely to be solved by a State organization oriented towards furthering the interests of central Canadian industry and international corporations. But for the need and the effort to be brought together, a strong movement is clearly needed; it does not yet exist. If *The Search for Community* can begin to inspire such a movement it will be an important and immediately influential book. If it does not, it will remain an interesting utopian tract whose time may yet come.

## THE MAKING OF THE SECOND COLD WAR

by Fred Halliday  
Verso, 1985

## THE POLISH REVOLUTION: Solidarity 1980-82

by Timothy Garton Ash  
Jonathan Cape, 1985  
*reviewed by E.P. Thompson*

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If one finds oneself quarrelling with Fred Halliday's interpretations this should diminish in no way the very warm welcome which his book deserves. It provides the first convincing global map of the multiform political forces which have coalesced into the Second Cold War. However radically some parts may have to be revised, it will serve us well as the mustering grounds for our debates. All the central chapters of the book display a steady applied competence, in which the relevant evidence is addressed, and from which the reader emerges enlightened and alerted to new complexities.

This is becoming a hallmark of Halliday's work. (Another example will be found in his article "Cold War in the Caribbean" in *New Left Review*, Sept.-Oct. 1983 — an article written before the invasion of Grenada, but whose analysis prepares the reader for exactly that event.)

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Nevertheless, I do have certain objections. There appears to underlie Halliday's argument adherence to some progressivist historical model of a Marxist-modernization kind, which leads him to bi-polar categories (capitalist versus 'post-capitalist' or 'post-revolutionary' States) which foreclose some questions. One question closed off is the nature of the State itself (in particular, the militarized security State) and the contest between its organs and 'civil society,' whether capitalist or 'post.'

This bi-polar predisposition leads him to be hard-nosed in his analysis of Western militarism but more tender — indeed, sometimes apologetic — towards 'post-capitalist' insanities. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a 'response' to 'pre-empt hostile control of disputed regions.' So also was Cromwell's expedition to Ireland — an enlightened and modernizing force contesting backward and obscurantist forces in league with the Lord Protector's enemies. The trouble is that after nearly 350 years the Irish have not forgiven Cromwell, just as the Afghans will not forgive Brezhnev.

Or again: "The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978, and the punitive Chinese attack on Vietnam in February 1979" were "all consequences of the U.S. policy of using the conflicts of the Far East as a means of placing pressure upon the USSR." Turn that argument around, with Cuban advisers in Grenada or Angola giving rise to the 'consequences' of U.S. or South African invasion, and it looks like special pleading.

A further objection is that Fred Halliday is a tidy-minded man, and he imposes the tidiness of his own mind upon history. Being rational himself, he must sort the historical forces into rational components: "the Second Cold War... reflected conscious, long-term decisions taken by people in power with limited control over world events." To suppose so assists in the analysis of such forces as *are* conscious and in pursuit of rational interest. This is Halliday's hard-nosed, realistic strength.

But it is a large supposition. Why should we make it? Halliday's repeated fault is to under-estimate the irrational in history, and also — despite a good chapter on the militant Right in the U.S. — to downplay ideological forces. This is an old fault of his. His admirable book on Iran nevertheless left readers unprepared for the force of Moslem fundamentalism. In a prim bit of classification

in this book he wrestles with the problem, was World War II primarily an 'inter-imperialist' war or a 'capitalist-communist' confrontation? But those of us who endured that war supposed that it was also about the irrational, hyper-nationalist, statist forces unleashed by Nazism and Fascism. It really *was*, in the popular consciousness of millions who fought, were butchered or endured, an 'anti-fascist' war. That popular consciousness was a force that cannot now just be erased from the historical record in order to make the categories tidier. Moreover, the 'popular front' of those years which transcended 'capitalist/communist' categories has endured into today's peace movement, in which, from Norway to Greece, veterans of the anti-fascist Resistance have taken their places.

By 'irrational' I mean forces which overshoot the matrix of rational interest in which they are nurtured, which acquire, for a time, an independent momentum of their own. Nationalism may sometimes be a force of this kind, and it is a force about which Halliday is overly reticent.

I have been arguing recently that what distinguishes Cold War II from Cold War I is the obsessionally high ideological content of the present confrontation and the low content of actual interest-conflict. The measures taken by both blocs to enhance their 'security' are in fact rapidly reducing whatever margin of 'security' there was. It is, of course, always possible to identify interest-conflicts, as Halliday does, but these will often be found to rest upon prior ideological obsessions. It can equally well be argued that it is in the rational interests of very powerful and identifiable groups in both superpowers to call the Cold War Show off, and carve up the whole world into a global 'Yalta' with clearly defined sectors of influence in which each party can pursue its own interests undisturbed (except by the unfortunate natives).

What prevents this resolution is, in part, the hegemonic nationalism (disguised as the pursuit of universals) which now grips a substantial part of the population of both superpowers. In another part it is prevented by the reciprocal dynamic and dialectic of the Cold War itself. It seems to me that Halliday ducks this central analytical problem, by reducing it to the theory that both superpowers are equally to 'blame' for the Cold War (a ninepin theory which he then refutes).

If one seeks to analyze two immense military, political and ideological formations in a reciprocal relationship of mutual exacerbation one is not thereby seeking to explain everything in terms of 'symmetry' or of equal historical responsibility. One is, precisely, trying to cut free from those unhelpful (and moralistic) arguments and to identify the actual 'motor' which drives onwards the confrontation. And in this extraordinary reciprocal relationship (which has no clear historical precedent) every impulse in power or in ideology on one side calls forth some response on the other side, and confrontationists of each side are continually motoring forward their analogues on the other.

But equally, a refusal of this confrontationist logic on one side *does* call forth — however slowly, and with whatever misrecognitions — a response on the other side. It is in this area that Halliday's analysis is most sketchy and even ill-informed. Astonishingly, he makes no effort at all to digest the most awkward piece of political gristle in Europe in the past three years — Solidarnosc.

This is why Timothy Garton Ash's *The Polish Revolution* is necessary reading alongside *The Making of the Second Cold War*. Any European peace activist, any European seeking to heal the confrontation on our continent and to go 'beyond' Yalta, must attempt the difficult exercise of coming to terms with the evidence offered in both.

There have been other good books on Solidarity. I commend Ash's book because, in his final section, he reflects on the whole experience, and he asks awkward questions directly of the peace movement itself — fair questions, which we should attempt to answer.

I have not always liked the way in which Ash's questions have been posed. He prefers to publish in the *Spectator*, before an audience which gives easy applause to any critique of the 'peace movement' or the 'Left,' and he has a knowing way of throwing suspicions on our motives and of managing the evidence to suit his case.

But this book fully persuades me of the authenticity of Ash's response to the self-activity of the Polish workers. This is a warm book and the sharpness of his questions — above all, why was the

response of the Western peace movement to Solidarity and martial law so inadequate? — arises quite properly from the warmth.

I will address myself briefly to one or two questions which he puts to END (European Nuclear Disarmament) and myself. First, he reproaches END (and other peace movements) for not making more official approaches to Solidarity's leadership. Well, letters were sent and visitors went. On several occasions the suggestion was made that the END Appeal might be published in Solidarity-controlled journals, always without success, since — as Ash himself explains — Solidarity "deliberately kept the whole area of defence and foreign policy off the agenda, because it saw this as a precondition for any peaceful compromise with the communist regime."

We understood this, and it was no business of ours to push at these sensitivities. It has never been any business of END (nor, in my view, of other Western peace movements) to act as *organizers* on the other side. We simply seek out dialogue with whoever wishes to conduct this honestly and on equal terms.

Second, Ash fumbles or does not take our point about the 'Rapacki plan' — or a Rapacki perspective. From 1980 this perspective was revived in many Western peace publications. Maybe these publications never reached Poland; in any case, the response from Poland was nil.

By reviving a Rapacki perspective we meant returning to that plan in its latest form, in which there would be a nuclear-weapons-free zone embracing both Germanies, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, and also mutual phased withdrawal of conventional forces on both sides. This offered a perspective in which both demilitarization of Central Europe and greater room for Polish autonomy could come about together.

Ash suggests a quite different hypothesis: if only the West had offered some generous 'Marshall Plan'-type aid to Poland, linked in some way to political conditions, Solidarity might have survived. But the answer to that would have been *nyet*. The Warsaw bloc leaders would not have permitted Western credit to be used as a lever for political intervention in the sole interest of the West. The only thing which might have been acceptable is a



resolution (in Poland) brought by a Western *concession*, and a concession that the Warsaw Treaty would have valued. That concession could only have been at the expense of the militarization of West Germany.

Yet throughout the long months when Solidarity was above ground — and when a quite new opening appeared for the mending of all Europe — NATO drove ahead with its plans for cruise and Pershing II. That is why I still consider that President Reagan, Mrs. Thatcher, and the NATO crew were accomplices with General Jaruzelski and the WTO crew in bringing down martial law on the Polish people.

The moment for a renewed Rapacki perspective might still return. There could be circumstances in which a Soviet leadership would accept some 'Finlandization' of parts of Eastern Europe in return for a relaxation of Western military pressure, and a relief from the costs of their own military machine. Ash cannot see this because he holds tenaciously to the one-sided view that "the political problem of overcoming the division of Europe is the problem of loosening the Soviet stranglehold." But that is only half the problem. The other half is the hegemonic American military presence in Western Europe. The two strangleholds can only be loosened together.

No doubt the majority of Poles hold Ash's view. One has to say, with respect, that they may be wrong. One consequence in nations which have been deeply marked in their histories by suffering and by the frustration of their aspirations to nationhood (for example, the Irish and the Polish) is a dulling of the internationalist nerve. They tend to become self-absorbed, self-centric in their perception — perhaps in their greatest moments of national revival most of all. The Poles, in 1980-82, became so self-centredly Polish that they even alienated potential support among their neighbours. They projected the impression that for Poles *all* international questions (even thermonuclear war) were Polish-centric questions, and to be considered only in their bearing on the Polish question.

The Polish Renewal did not travel across frontiers. It is no good scolding each other, as Mr. Ash tends to scold all of us, because the situation became locked into Poland. If another opening appears we should seek to meet it — with concession and with openings in the West.

The Second Cold War can end up three ways. First, in blowing the whole place up. Second, in a further long interlude ('detente') accompanied by a global Yalta. Third, in the supersession of the Cold War itself, by the break-up of the blocs and a transcontinental flow of ideas and movements.

Fred Halliday glimpses this third possibility in his final chapter. He is right to suggest that an independent and non-aligned Western Europe would fracture the whole logic of the Great Cold War Contest, and also offer an alternative pole to the Third World. He is wrong, I think, to suppose that this new Europe would perforce become a new unified State, a third superpower (of a benign kind). If it happens, it will be much untidier than that. It is in the midst of this argument (and Solidarity's argument also) that END finds its perspectives and its reason for existence. This change will have to happen. The world cannot go on as it is. Either it will be blown up or it will have to be made over anew.

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