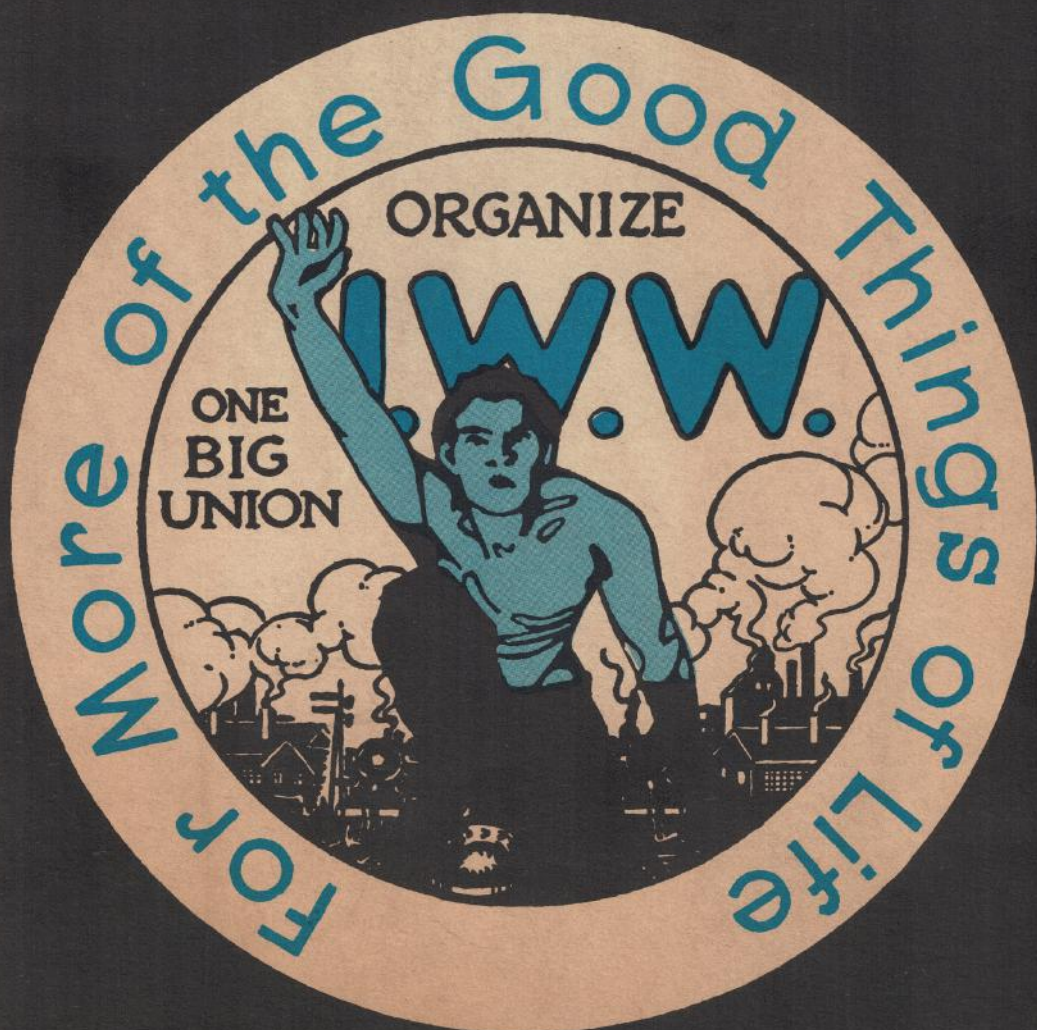


Number 1

Price: \$1.00 or 40 p.

WORKERS' OPPOSITION



Contents on back cover

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Workers' Opposition will endeavor to expound the principles of workers self-management and apply them to modern life, the problems of the worker in particular and the oppressed in general. It is our policy to encourage, stimulate, and promote all efforts in this direction.

It is our understanding that the best-organized expression of how workers' self-management of society might be accomplished is to be found in the application of the principles and tactics of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Therefore, although this magazine is not an official publication of the IWW, we, as individual members of Metal and Machinery Workers Industrial Union 440 and Furniture Workers Industrial Union 420 of the IWW, intend to further understanding of Industrial Unionism through this magazine.

The columns of the magazine are always open to discussion on relevant issues. Unsolicited manuscripts welcomed. (Typed double-spaced, with stamped self-addressed envelope if return desired.) If possible, include artwork/photos with articles. Graphics without articles are also welcomed.

Editors: Elaine Hladik
Graham Tymken





THE WINTER BLUES AGAIN

MANY HANDS



Winter Products is a mucky little factory on the Willamette River in one of Portland, Oregon's industrial areas. It enslaves around 200 male and female workers in brass plating and finishing door plates and handles. Usually two shifts operate, but during the time of the actions described here they operated a small graveyard shift as well.

I.W.W. GENERAL MEMBERSHIP BRANCHES

The Industrial Workers of the World is organized into over 30 different unions that cover all the industries. The present situation in most towns, however, calls for local organization into General Membership Branches, as there is not the numerical strength to organize on an Industrial Union basis. This "catch-all" branch is quite efficient, but the immediate necessity is to build the industrial unions. So, to that end, wherever possible, the branches tend to set up organizing committees covering those industries where there are enough branch members to wage an organizing campaign.

In Portland the General Membership Branch has for some time been involved in leafletting outside factories that were not organized, especially those where members had a lot of knowledge of specific conditions inside. Winter Products was one of the plants leafletted like this through July and August, 1972. At the end of August one of the workers in the plant called the I.W.W. office and a meeting was arranged to which about six workers from the plant talked to branch members about what could be done to better the lot of the workers by using I.W.W. organization and methods.

After this meeting a few I.W.W. members got jobs at the plant, and although the high turnover rate of the plant had already claimed half of the workers who had come to the meeting, the job was gotten underway.

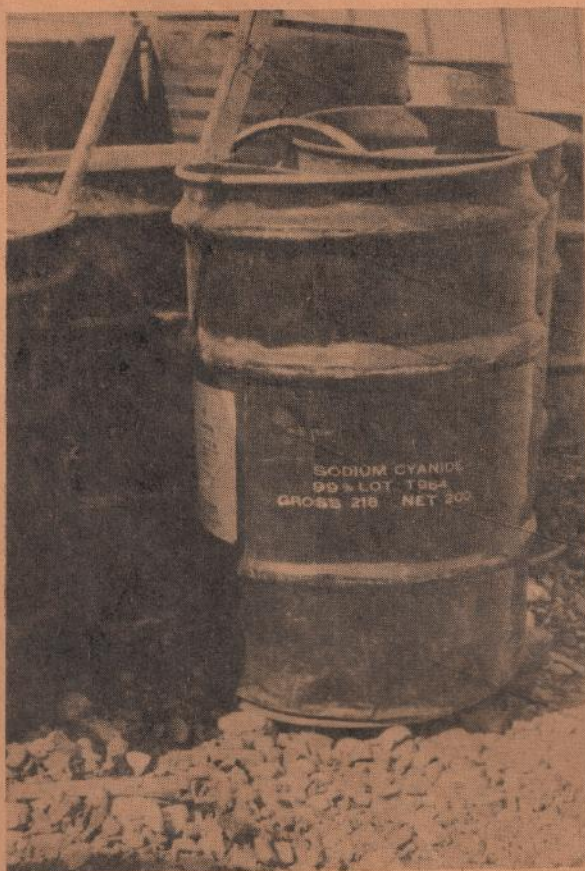
CONDITIONS EXPLAINED

At the first meeting in the branch office, the conditions the workers described were frightening in their usualness. Exposed to different hazards in different departments, they faced the casual dangers of chemical burns from both acids (including sulphuric) and alkalis (including sodium cyanide), as well as the dangers of toxic fumes, skin rashes, and excessive noise. And added to that was the equally noxious tedium. But far from being unorganized at all, the workers had foisted upon them a company union over which plant owner, Old Man Winter, has even more control than the law allows.

INTO THE PLANT

Members of Metal and Machinery Workers Industrial Union 440 (I.W.W.) got jobs in the plant throughout September and October, with seven members holding jobs there by the end of October. At what became the end of the campaign there were three members in the packing department on swing shift; one operating a plating machine on the day shift; another on swing shift; and also on swing shift one member in the honing room and another in shipping.

" . . . the casual dangers of chemical burns. . ."



Union members never pushed hard for others to get union cards as the campaign progressed, although about four did. However, especially on the swing shift, there was strong support in various departments—mostly among the men—which is where the union had most of its strength since that was where we had members working the longest. It was relatively late in the campaign when union members began working in the packing room and the campaign suffered through not recognizing this weakness and what its effect would be.

Similarly it was detrimental that only one member was organizing on the day shift and that he had not been working there long. But it was there that the first job control confrontation occurred, which will be described later. ("Man or Man-Killer")

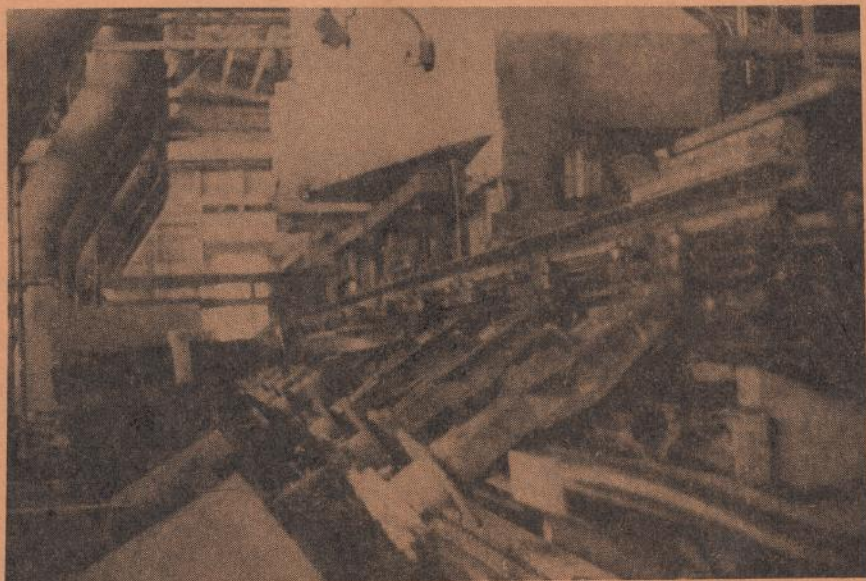
On the swing shift the idea of getting the place unionized properly had the support of all the workers in the honing and plating departments (seven workers) and of about four in the oxidizing room. The first bit of solidarity shown had been when one of the honers

had reported for work although he wasn't feeling well. The workers had a slowdown, cutting production by 60%, in order to take some of the work off his, and their own, backs. About the same time it had been informally agreed in two after work meetings to which about 15 workers had attended, that 15 instead of 10-minute coffee breaks would be a fine thing, so a couple of days later, after the word had been put around and it appeared that it would get active support, it was decided to inform the two foreman that in the future workers would be taking 15-minute breaks. So five minutes before the last coffee break of the shift the foreman were told. In oxidizing the foreman accepted it without any fluster, but the foreman covering plating and honing who was more or less in charge of the plant at night wanted to know more.

After the 15 minute breaks were over, Dale McCready, the foreman, asked for a meeting of workers representing the militants in the different departments and he was presented with a list of demands to give management. When the workers learned that there was to be a meeting of the company union the following day, they told the foreman to see that Winter was at the meeting to answer the demands. Copies of the demands were passed around the different departments for workers to make additions or alterations and everyone was urged to be at the meeting the next day to confront the bosses.

WINTER BLUES

Winter Blues was a leaflet that was passed out inside the plant from the point on. From the first issue it was open to all workers in the plant and was edited and printed by



Automatic Plating Machine. This required spending 8 hours measuring 20 lbs of handles into the drum every 3 minutes or so.

the union members working in the plant and by anyone else who came. A worker on the day shift phoned through any additional news he'd heard by midmorning each day; the leaflet was then put together and distributed at 2:30 p.m., as the day shift came off and the swing shift went on. Copies were also left in the lunchroom and were passed on to the ten or so men who worked the graveyard shift.

The first leaflet handed out simply called everyone to come to the meeting to discuss the grievances. It also noted that Winter was out of town (in Chicago buying equipment for a new plant he intended opening in the South), and that Vic Schmidt, the vice president (and his brother-in-law) would be the company's spokesman at the meeting.

A leaflet handed out the next day carried the following report of the meeting:

"So we had our meeting.

"Yesterday at 2:00, as agreed, the lunchroom was filled with people there both to talk about the 8 grievances and to vote on one item of the Company Union business. Vic Schmidt was there and after the so-called president of the Company Union had done his bit, Vic tried to explain to us that he had no authority to deal with us and after some discussion it was agreed that there would be a meeting between delegates from each department on each shift and Old Man Winter and his friends from upstairs, plus any other workers who can get there. And that gets us somewhere. Now we all need to decide in what fashion the delegates need to be elected on the shop floor, how we are to have full control over what those delegates say, and how we on the shop floor treat the report of next Monday's meeting.

"From the floor . . . It is obvious that the Company Union does not represent us. If it did, then we wouldn't be treated like shit everyday, both with regard to the conditions we work under and the way the foremen and women treat us. (And since they come from the production line you'd really think they'd know better!) So we need to have another method of representation and it was put to Vic Schmidt that we elect delegates from each department which seems to be the way we're going to get our fullest control over the agreement. Any other way would put us back to the existing Company Union agreement, a document incredibly complicated, that is, even if we could understand it, pretty securely tied up so that the Company wins every time. What we need is a contract written by us so that we can all understand it. To understand it we have to write it rather than have a mess of lawyers do it for the Company.

"Department Delegates . . . On swing shift we rapidly elected delegates when we needed them. We can now accept all these as re-called, and elect new ones if we need them. Their job will be to represent us before Old Man Winter and to do what they must to fully understand what we as individual workers need. This means that we have to do a lot of talking in each department, so that if necessary we can add a list of grievances which apply to the different departments to the list of eight which apply to the plant as a whole. So, that is up to you. It is the responsibility of all of us to talk to the worker beside us and in groups, both in breaks and after work."

In the following week and at the meeting with Winter, 14 workers were fired, effectively killing the organizing drive and ending the immediate possibility of getting the demands met. The events of the week and the proceeding days are best told by those involved, taking the material directly from the pages of "Winter Blues." Each article is identified by the number of the issue that it came from.

“SOMEONE SAYS WE CAN'T HAND OUT OUR OWN LEAFLETS!

Today we were told by those new notices that we would be fired for demanding better conditions in leaflets on company property unless, of course, we got their permission. Who are they to tell us that we can't organize ourselves? To us, that's like some slaveowner telling his slaves that there's a law against taking their chains off. Our right to hand out leaflets and talk with fellow workers comes from—and only from—the fact that we are fellow workers. It ain't something that they can take and give back to us.

But even in their own rules that new notice is a no-no. The National Labor Relations Board has told us just today that the usual interpretation of these affairs is that workers can talk and hand out union literature on designated breaks, lunch time, and before and after work. The only problem is when it interferes with people working or if it becomes a litter problem. So, we won't litter and we'll make sure we do this kind of thing during these times. If one of us gets fired for this—well, we'll just have to let them know that in either their rules or ours, *we won't let them get away with it.*” (2, 2nd November 1972)

“COMPLAINTS

Yesterday's leaflet was greeted well throughout the plant by all shifts. Of course, there are a few sceptics, but who can disagree with the 8 demands after they're thought about for a few minutes? Some of our fellow workers objected to the language used and we weren't really sure how to respond to that except that we aren't censors and we write like we talk. Also, there seemed to be some objection to calling Old Man Winter “Old Man Winter”. What can we say? Are we supposed to call him “Sir”, how about touching our foreheads when he walks by or is mentioned? Really now! In giving it more thought though, and thinking that perhaps we misunderstood the criticisms, perhaps we were being criticised for giving him too much respect. After all, we often refer to our fathers or the men we live with as our “old man”, so if that's the case, then we apologize.” (2, 2nd November 1972)

“WHO ARE WE?

Many people at Winters (including management) have been asking that question. While it has been clear that we stand for a different kind of unionism, they want a name to call us. Well, here it is, and we're proud of it. We represent Industrial Union No. 440 — the Metal and Machinery Workers of the Industrial Workers of the World. We represent a unionism that though it is not new (the I.W.W. was founded in 1905) is almost non-existent. A unionism that sees its officers not as leaders or manipulators of its members, but as followers whose only duty is to carry out the orders of the membership. We believe that everyone who *works* in this plant should be in the same *Job Branch*. That all who work in our industry should belong to the same Industrial Union and that all workers everywhere should belong to the One Big Union of the working class — the IWW. To this end we maintain absolute democracy within the union. We have low initiation and dues and we further the interests of workers against those of their bosses (which is the only reason we need a union) in any way we can.” (2, 2nd November 1972)

“MAN OR MAN-KILLER

Most of you working here have probably never heard of it. Or maybe you heard it called by some other name such as ‘Progromat’. But most everyone in the plating depart-

One of the two production lines of the "Man-Killer".



ment has had occasion to work on the Man-Killer. The Man-Killer is a plating machine that, even though it is largely automated, is a real bitch to work on. It is really designed to have two men on it since there are two lines of tanks. Yet there is always just one man on it busting ass.

In the past often the same person was kept working on the Man-Killer all day, being relieved by someone else for breaks and lunches only. At best two men might trade off. Eight hours, or even four hours in a row, on the machine is enough to wear almost anyone down. So several of the workers in the plating department got together and decided that they wanted to begin two-hour shifts on the machine, having four different people in one day work on it. Yesterday was the start. When the first man took his break the second one took over. All was going fine until the foreman came and told the first man to get back on the machine and the second to go back to another area. The two workers did this but an impromptu conference was held and the workers decided to defy the foreman and go ahead as planned. When the foreman came back the shit hit the fan and sev-

eral of the workers were warned that if such activity continued they would be fired. End of story? Not quite. This was a small setback but it illustrates well what the purpose of the foremen and women are — to dictate to us what to do since we are supposed to be so stupid that we can't arrange our time and work ourselves. Obviously, having two-hour shifts on the Man-Killer won't harm production (it might even help it). But the fact that the workers involved were able to plan out for themselves what to do to arrange our time for the good of all concerned shows that we are smart enough to work for ourselves. When we all see that we can, then we will realize that the foremen, or Mr. Winter himself are, for the most part, extra baggage blocking the way to more reasonable working arrangements. So the struggle here involves not only higher wages and better conditions, but also being able to run our own jobs like responsible human beings instead of being treated like machines."

"MEETING TODAY: 2 O'CLOCK

Today, Monday, in the lunchroom at 2 PM we are having a plant-wide meeting to discuss with W. A. Winter the demands which were presented to management last Tuesday. So we got the official, sanctified word that it's okay for *all of us* to go to today's meeting. And who spoke the Word? Vic Schmidt! Well, sure he did. So when was the last time that Schmidt or any of our other bosses allowed us to do as individuals what we wanted to do? Old Vic didn't have much of a choice with nearly a hundred of us in the lunchroom last Tuesday. Not just out of his fine heart did this happen. It happened because we showed the potential power that we do have by going to that meeting. Now that they have to listen to us, let's tell them just how we do feel and what we want. And the best way for us to do that is for every one of us to go to today's meeting.

Even though, it is essential that we have some representation just so they know we mean business we need to support each other. If you have something to say, there's no better person to say it than yourself. And you can help your fellow workers express themselves, too. But mostly we can help each other and ourselves by standing together.

OUR DEMANDS

Everyone who thinks that the points below are justified and worth talking about should come. Spokespersons or delegates from all departments have been or will be elected but everyone should attend to put democracy in action. These are the demands that have so far been formulated:

1. Fifteen-minute coffee breaks.
2. Lockers and changing space for everyone.
3. End of the ruling that women should not talk at the workbench and the option of stools to sit on for those who can use them while working.
4. Better lighting in the Packing Department.
5. Free access to all protective clothes and creams.
6. Minimum wage of \$2.50/hr. with swing differential.
7. End of compulsory overtime.
8. Safety and first-aid instruction for everyone." (4, 6 November 1972)



"WORKERS IN PLATING—DEPARTMENT FIRED!

Friday night the men in the Plating Department were told two hours before quitting time that they were to work overtime that night. Not only were they informed that they would stay until the job was done, but it might mean 3 or 4 hours. Well, what does all mean except that they think we're their slaves! We're not, but they will think so as long as all we do is talk among ourselves, bitching about it, and when quitting time comes, we stay and put up with it for another day.

Many of us aren't willing to let them decide for us. We workers know how tired we are or how much we need the overtime money. Because we know that we are human and we have the right to decide what is done with our time, we have refused to work overtime. Well, Friday one of our fellow workers was fired — fired because it was Friday night and he had already made plans to go out and have some fun. Like after working for a week, can't a human have at least that? According to the bosses, it doesn't look like it.

Thursday one of the workers on the day shift in the Plating Department was fired. Why? Disobeying orders, they said. The foreman said that he didn't relieve another fellow worker for his break. That's what he had been doing for the last three weeks, but now the foreman told him he hadn't. The foreman, although he has two dozen other people to keep an eye on and must run all over the factory, is supposed to know more than a dumb worker. And even though the worker who he relieved could tell the boss what happened and another worker could testify to the same, it was just his word against that of the foreman as far as the boss is concerned.

With a reason so obviously trumped up as the one given, questions are asked. Talking to the management has been tried and a deaf ear been turned, but the plain facts are still there. So why was he fired? It looks like anyone who stands up to say something about the conditions in this place gets cut down, but we can stop it! We just must realize that we are all dependent on each other to make our jobs better here. **An Injury to One is an Injury to All.** The fellow worker can get his job back only if we support him.

At a meeting or workers Sunday, it was decided that the rehiring of these two fellow workers be added to our demands. We have no choice but to unite solidly — for everyone to start speaking out about conditions — for everyone to try to improve their own job and make that of their fellow worker easier. The boss would like nothing better than to see us divided so we can be pushed off one by one. Let's not give him that chance!" (4, 6 November 1972)

"WE'VE BEEN HAD!

When several members of the I.W.W. decided to get jobs here at Winter and try to organize for better conditions, we didn't figure we would do it by ourselves. Sure, some of us would be more outspoken or tend to take the initiative in organizing. But we're sure not leaders. Anyone who leads can just as easily mislead. But one thing that we have found out is that everyone working here would like to see a better deal. So just in my opinion the only one who can see that happen is you. Some of us have been fired and we are now writing our opinions in this leaflet. But that's just some of us. Who are we? We're the people who work here and have had it done with this rotten place. Some of us are outside, but most of us are inside. So to all of us inside, **carry it on!**" (5, 7 November 1972)



"... and added to that was the equally noxious tedium." Racks of handles and plates waiting to be wrapped in Packing Room.

"WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR 2:00 MEETING?"

Well as you know, they fired some of us last night. They were pretty insulting about it, too. They didn't even think that you workers that are still in the factory had any right to know what was going on. Winter and his gang knew that they had to make their play fast. He knows that the conditions are so bad (would he work here?) that he must kill any voice that speaks up. So anyway we had our so-called meeting in the Personell Office. Since you were not able to be there, I'd like to tell you what happened. Winter wasn't interested in the workers' demands. He made that clear by telling us straight off that we were fired. He also called us communists which damn well isn't what I am. But everytime a worker tries to get the bosses off his back, that's what we get called. I've seen enough of what's happening in Russia to know that Russian workers and the American workers are not communists. I knew I had to write this to tell you how little they care about us and to tell you what we workers that are now on the outside are defended. We all know we were sold down the river and we are damn well tired of it — the fight has just begun!" (5, 7 November 1972)

"TO THE WORKERS ON THE INSIDE

The point is that we're fired and you're not and the battlefield is on the work shop floor, which we've lost access to. Of course we all know who the enemy is: we share in common the glamor of being at the butt of his greed. In a totally piggish attempt to keep us down there, he and his cronies fired some of us today — which simply means that it's up to you workers still on the inside to keep up the fight — with more determination than ever. You don't need to get fired to demonstrate your continued support. It's simply a question of whose side you're on. There are daily incidents intended to humiliate us so that we'll fall back in line. We've got to put it on the line — and that means standing up for yourself and your fellow workers! (5, 7 November 1972)

"WHO IS THE BIGGEST TROUBLEMAKER IN THIS PLANT?"

Many people have been fired or harrassed this week because someone thinks we're 'troublemakers'. But who is responsible for the conditions that we have been protesting? Who are the troublemakers — the people who find the conditions intolerable and must speak out or the people whose only concerns are how much profit they're making?

Isn't the chief troublemaker Winter who fires a worker for wanting only better conditions? Tuesday a worker in the Oxidizing Department was injured when a basket of parts fell on his foot. In the Honing Department oil spilled all over the floor but people had to keep on working. When women in the Wheel Room complained of electric shocks, they were told to wash their clothes with fabric softener! Much of the time we don't even have adequate heat. And how much are we paid to endure such conditions — as low as \$1.65 per hour. Sometimes we're asked to work 58 hours a week and not many of us can refuse since the wages are so low and economics force us to accept all the overtime forced on us. A 10-minute break is not long enough for workers who are on their feet the entire day — sometimes for 10 hours a day. The list of grievances could go on and on. So, who is responsible for these conditions — the biggest troublemaker of all — W. A. Winter." (6, 8 November 1972)

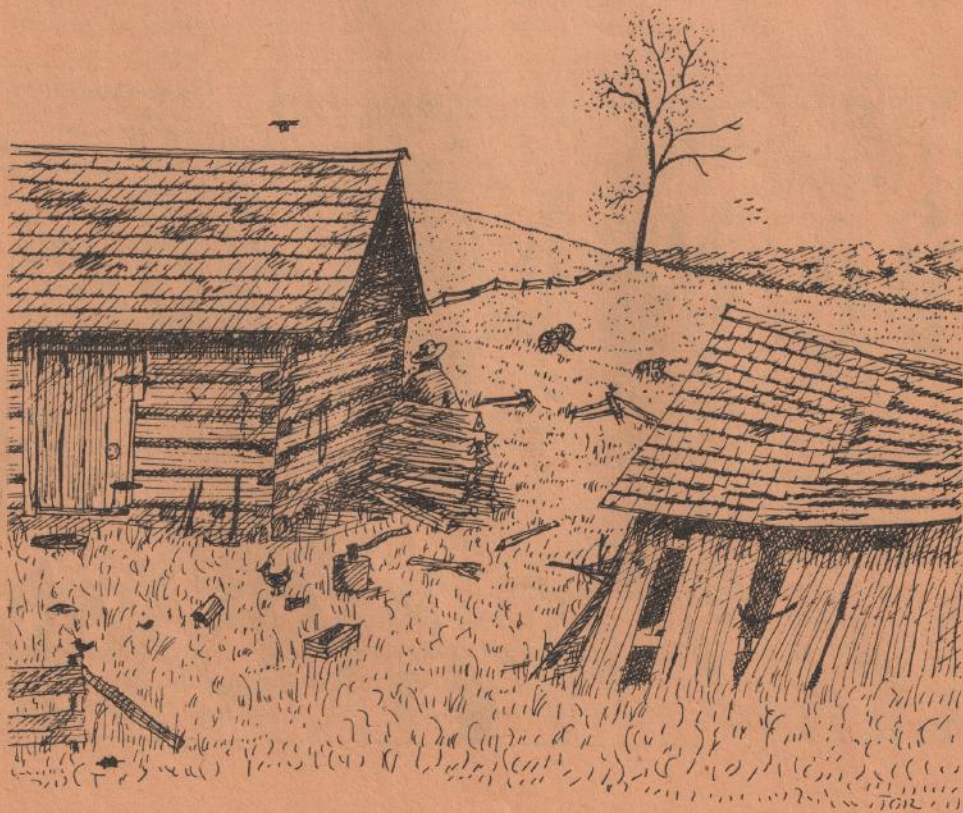
"THE SWEAT SHOP DOWN THE STREET"

There is a story going around the plant that we should accept our jobs since no one forces us to work here at Winter, there's no gun in our backs . . . Perhaps not — just a more gradual death like starvation. . . Oh, yes, we have a huge range of jobs to select from — like any of the innumerable sweat shops throughout Portland (which is the only way we managed to conquer our fear of being fired). Of course, there are other factories with equally bad conditions and the same daily dosage of humiliation. It's all the same and all workers experience that familiar feeling of self-doubt and nightly defeat. Besides, it's not merely for ourselves that we are refusing to accept these conditions, it's also for the workers who will replace us — and for our children and theirs. There is an entire class of us: people who are forced to work at jobs they hate going to and which make us feel worthless. And if we were all to refuse to work the owners would have to create a new class of workers. We are essential and they know it. What they are only beginning to realize is that we are refusing life on their terms — we will live on our own terms. We begin with a fight and we must demand that the situation be put to an end. We are no longer willing to submit so meekly." (6, 8 November 1972)



DIRIGIBLE STORY II

PATRICK MURFIN



It passed over the packed-dirt yard, between the listing little frame house and the half-burnt barn, trailing a shadow like a postage-stamp cloud skittering past on a high wind. The even, whirring sound raised the hens to a confused flutter of white wings and fox-fear screams. The dogs ran with tucked-in tails underneath the crumbling porch and howled as if they had seen death itself. My mother, who was 18 then and years away from being my mother, had just finished pumping up a kettle to heat for dishwashing and was cutting a new bar of home-made lye soap from the pan when she heard the dogs, the chickens, and my grandma Mona calling from out by the clothes line.

"Ruby, Ruby," cried Mona, "come here, child! There's something strange in the sky!"

This all happened, I should say, on the outskirts of Kirksville, Missouri, in the middle of a time called the Great Depression, when the heat and the drought of Oklahoma and Arkansas were beginning to creep north into the once-green hills of the "Show Me State". Everybody was poor then, but the Mills family was closer down to the ragged end of starvation than most. The old man — it was widely suspected by most — wouldn't work even if there was any to be done. He was dirty and seldom shaved. He wouldn't even put time into the miserable few acres they had on the edge of town. He let the house crumble, watched his land first get over-grown with weeds that choked his crops and then, when the dry spell came, did nothing to keep his topsoil from being blown into Illinois. When the barn burned almost completely, he was too drunk to get the old cow they owned out, and he never got around to pulling down the ruins and putting up a new one.

It was because the people were so poor and there seemed so little that could be done about their poverty that the United States government had sent the Navy Dirigible *Shenandoa* to cruise lazily over the bankrupt farms and worn out cities, far, far from any oceans, lakes, or seas where a Navy vessel properly belonged. In its wisdom the Department of the Navy hoped that when the people saw the giant airship, the largest in the world outside Germany, they would marvel at the power and the beauty that represented America and grow confident that a country which could produce such a marvel would pass this time of poverty as a child passes a fever in the night.

Of course my mother did not know that. She had never heard of a dirigible in her life, never knew that such things existed. Neither did my grandma Mona. They knew, of course, that men flew. When she was much younger she had seen *Wings* at the county opera house which showed moving pictures on Thursday and Friday nights then. And from time to time the mail planes running from Kansas City to St. Louis to Chicago

This is the second of two dirigible stories that Pat Murfin has written. The first appeared in the Hyde Parker, a relatively new magazine that appears to be trying to do a New Yorker on Chicago. That story saw dirigibles through the eyes of a bunch of socialites. This second story was returned by the Hyde Parker, and we're glad to print it here.

Pat Murfin, a member of Metal and Machinery Workers Industrial Union 440, is presently serving time as prisoner 9235 - 147, Box 1000. Sandstone, Minnesota 55072, for refusing to be drafted.

could be seen from the packed-dirt yard. My mother had never seen Kansas City, St. Louis, or Chicago, and when she saw the mail planes she sometimes wondered vaguely about them. When my grandma Mona called her to see the thing in the sky she did not run immediately to the door, but finished cutting the bar of soap and then picked up the piece of flour sacking that they used as a dishtowel and carefully wiped her hands.

Two nights before she had been on a date with the man who was to be my father, who was called — much to his chagrin — Maurice. He lived in Queen City, a tiny town even more squalid than Kirksville, where his father — my grandfather — had a farm and owned a small music store. My father, tall and lanky, played the clarinet and the harmonica beautifully. He had very graceful hands. He also was a sprinter, a high-hurdle runner, and a pole vaulter good enough to hold several all-Missouri records and dream about the Olympic games. In season he played center for the Queen City Owls, a semi-professional basketball team that usually played in church basements with pillars in the middle of the playing floor. When he came to court my mother he would hitch-hike there, thirty or so odd miles from Queen City. Once, on such a trip, he came across a man with a flat tire, helped the man change the tire, and rode with him to Kirksville. The man was called Pretty Boy Floyd, the outlaw, and was much-loved by the poor people of Oklahoma and Missouri.

On the night of the date, two nights before the dirigible *Shenandoa* flew over the yard, they had gone for a walk in the Kirksville City Park because neither of them had the price of a movie show. It was a beautiful night, just hot enough to make their cotton clothes cling to their bodies like second skins. They laughed some and talked in whispers about the future. My father had finished his first year at Northeastern Missouri State Teachers College at Kirksville. He was going to be a gym teacher. They laughed a little about how my mother's father, my grandfather, had told my mother he would beat her within an inch of her life if he ever caught her smoking cigarettes or going out with college boys. She was smoking a Lucky Strike at the time. They kissed, lying on the rough grass beside an oily pond. My father slipped his hand between the buttons of my mother's dress and touched her breasts. Later, as they walked toward home through the park, they heard animal noises in a clump of bushes near the walk. My grandfather Mills was there pumping himself with locomotive fury into the body of a girl my mother had gone to high school with. He heard them coming, looked up, and cursed my mother viciously.

But my mother was not thinking of this when she lay down the flour-sack dish towel and moved to the door to see what the clatter was about. She was hardly thinking at all and hadn't been since her last date with Maurice. She couldn't. She just moved through the house wordlessly, helping her mother take care of the younger children — her brother Pearl and her sisters, Mildred and Virginia. Virginia, who was three, was sitting at the kitchen table, trying to figure out something interesting to do with a three-foot stretch of bright red yarn. My mother picked up Virginia and through her across her shoulder as she went through the door. She stepped onto the porch, could see nothing, then stepped into the packed-dirt yard, holding her left hand above her eyes to scan the sky. What she saw was a great oblong shape with whirring engines that was just moving past her yard at a slow and dignified speed, trailing a postage-stamp cloud shadow on the ground below.

The *Shenandoa* was flying low and slow to impress the poor people in this hopeless pocket of Missouri. The crew members were not looking down for they knew what they would see — brown hilly earth and worn-out farms. They had been on such voyages before and would be again. Sometime later the Department of the Navy would order them stupidly out again and, in a heavy thunderstorm over Ohio, the ship would break into two and each half would come falling slowly down to earth. Miraculously, most of the crew would survive because America used helium instead of the highly-flammable hydrogen the Germans used, and there would be no fire. But with that stupid, silly crash of the *Shenandoa* would come the end of dreams of dirigible fleets. But, of course, that had not yet happened and the airship was flying over Missouri in deathlessly hot, still air.

Virginia squirmed, shifted, and began to cry on my mother's shoulder. She did not see the great shape in the sky, and she did not want to see it. My mother held Virginia a little closer and crooned into her ear, "That's all right, baby, nothin's going to hurt you, baby." In four months Virginia would come down with a fever that would not break. It would take her three days to die. And all that would be left of her then would be a single picture taken by a traveling photographer when she was two. Because Virginia would not hold still long enough for the photographer to get her picture in the packed-dirt yard, my grandma Mona had given her a baby chick to hold. Virginia had loved the chick very much and held it tightly, so tightly that when the photographer had finished taking the picture, the entrails of the chick hung out and its head loped over at a crazy angle. Virginia had squeezed it to death with love in her little hands.

The dirigible *Shenandoa* was headed straight for the center of Kirksville, Missouri. Kirksville at the time was the largest and most important town in a three-county area. It was a market town and supplied the seed and equipment demands of any farmers who could meet cash prices. The largest single industry was a shoe factory. In good times it employed over three hundred people. There were only fifty-seven working there now, though. It was an NRA shop and all of the employees were let out for 15 minutes that day to watch the *Shenandoa* pass overhead. Kirksville's main claim to fame was that the strange medical science of osteopathy was born there, mid-wifed by a crazy old doctor who had regularly robbed graves in the county cemetery for his anatomy experiments. The world's first college of osteopathy was located in Kirksville, despite the anguished cries of MD's who claimed the whole thing quakery and fraud. My mother's brother, my uncle Pearl, who for obvious reasons preferred to be called Jack, would go on to become an osteopath in Platt, South Dakota, where they did not care if he was an MD or not. The other college in town was Northeast Missouri State Teachers College. That was the college my father would quit after his third year. He was a victim of too-fast musician's hands that typed faster than anybody in school or in town, and he had a head for figures that was remarkable. He became a bank teller because of these skills and stayed on until the Second World War took him elsewhere. He never became a gyn teacher.

My father, thirty odd miles away in Queen City, never saw the *Shenandoa*, which was just visible from the town as an oblong blob on the horizon. He was busy at the time, showing a shiny new cornet to a fifteen-year old who could not possibly afford it.

Old man Mills, my grandfather, did not see the *Shenandoa*, either. He was sitting in a deserted railroad shed with two of his low-life friends, drinking moonshine whiskey he had bought with the egg money he had stolen from grandma Mona that morning. Grand-

WORKERS' CONTROL IN CHINA:

SHELBY SHAPIRO

AN OPEN-EYED VIEW *

That ping pong might have political overtones sounded absurd, that the Defender of Quemoy and Matsu would go to Peking sounded even crazier. Now Shirley Maclaine walks arm-in-arm with Madame Chou En Lai, and Disneyland sells Red Chinese flags. (What would the Founder say? I can see it now: Comrade Bambi lecturing the other comrade animals on "socialist emulation" and on the necessity of raising productivity in the "All Animal, Snow White-is-Red-Fern-Gathering Collective No. 1," so that the oppressed Third World Animals should benefit from the teachings of Chairman Mickey Mouse. Minnie goes unisex, and walks arm-in-arm with that "patriotic capitalist" Scrooge!).

China is now allowing foreign visitors to enter, and as if to make up for years of Red-Chinese-Commie-Bastard propaganda, we are being flooded ("Après mao, c'est le deluge") with a spate of articles, books and pamphlets from both the capitalist and "new left" press, ranging from sympathetic to blatantly pro-Maoist, from writers such as Joseph Alsop, John Kenneth Galbraith and Barbara Tuchman (See, for example, Tuchman's *Notes from China*; ¹ *Fortune*'s Louis Kraar's "I Have Seen China — and They Work"²). Some of this new literature is quite good; other pieces rank with the apologies and praises for Stalinist Russia written in the 30's by the willfully blind.

And so it is that we arrive at the latest offering, the Feb. 1973 issue of *Far East Reporter*, a Maoist drivel-sheet printed in New York City, which reprints Janet Goldwasser's and Stuart Dowty's (ahem!) "Chinese Factories are Exciting Places!" Their article sets

*Footnotes refer to sources, and will be found at the end of the article.

ma Mona had caught him doing it and he beat her with the back of his hand. He hit the woman hard, hit the woman who by common consent around Kirksville was considered something of a saint for her forbearance of her husband's brutality, and the gentle kindness she always showed to those who needed help. When my grandma Mona had called for my mother, her lip was swollen and split and her left eye blackened by the back of the old man's hand. In two years he would be gone, run away to some more exciting place. The last direct contact my mother would have from him would be a postcard dated December 9, 1941, mailed from Hickam Field in Hawaii, where he was a civilian laborer. The postcard told her that he had been there when the Japs bombed the field, and that he was personally going to get every one of those stinking yellow bastards before the war was over. Of course he didn't. When he died in Phoenix in 1967 only my uncle Pearl went there to make the funeral arrangements and to spit on his grave.

The dirigible *Shenandoa* was still floating over Kirksville and still looked very large from the packed-dirt yard. My mother, still holding Virginia, asked my grandma Mona, "What is it, Mama, is it all right?"

My grandma Mona, still pinning my grandfather's overalls to the clothes line, peered at the thing in the sky for a moment and then said, "Some kind of flying machine, you can see that, child. It must be all right, it has a flag on it." Then she leaned down and pulled a pair of drawers out of the bushel basket on the ground beside her.

The *Shenandoa* began a long graceful turn. She was going to circle the town two or three times to give all of the people a chance to look at her. There was great excitement and even some cheering among the workers of the shoe factory who were probably most grateful for getting an extra 15-minute break with pay. The mayor, in honor of the occasion, ordered one of the old Civil War cannons on the court house lawn fired in salute to the airship. The cannon was usually fired only on the Fourth of July, but old timers remembered a few other special occasions, like the assassination of McKinley and the Armistice, when it had roared. This time, however, the luckless courthouse caretaker had loaded both too much powder and too much wadding, and the old gun blew its breach with a terrifying roar. Almost miraculously, no one was killed. The sheriff, who actually touched it off, suffered only minor burns and lacerations, but every window on two sides of the court house was shattered, as were the plate glass windows in the newspaper office and dry goods store across the street.

The *Shenandoa* did not notice, but continued to turn lazily in the August sky. On the captain's orders crew members fired a small gun of their own in answer to the routine salute.

The distant explosion of the cannon startled Virginia into crying again. My mother patted her gently on the head and rocked her back and forth in her arms. My grandma Mona grew really excited. "They've done it! They've shot off the cannon! I guess it's real important," she said.

My mother shifted Virginia on her shoulder and said in a low, listless voice, "Nothing much ever happens in Kirksville. I guess this must be the biggest thing in years." ■

forth the results of a one-month investigation of industrial China. They totally ignore the mind control, State repression, the persecution of political and industrial dissidents, and the actual class structure existing in China. They are not alone. While Barbara Tuchman does talk about the mind control and other repressive aspects of the Maoist regime, she writes that

In a country where misery and want were the foundation of the social structure, famine was periodic, death from starvation common, disease pervasive, thievery normal, and the graft corruption taken for granted, the elimination of these conditions in Communist China is so striking that negative aspects of the new rule fade in relative importance.³

It is also a historic fact that Hitler ended unemployment and Mussolini made the trains run on time.

To Goldwasser, Dowty and Tuchman, what Raya Dunayevshaya wrote in 1967 is particularly apt:

Some self-styled revolutionaries are ready to forgive Mao every crime in the book and leave a few blank pages for those he might invent later. . . They are ignorant of fundamental class divisions within each country, China included, and illogically link those opposites, war and revolution.⁴

The purpose of the present article, however, is not to carp at the Maoists and their sympathizers, but rather to examine the available literature to see if "workers' management of the means of production" does indeed exist in China. What are the groups that control the means of production, and how are these means of production controlled? Since this is a magazine article and not a book, discussion will be limited mainly to the same areas covered by Goldwasser and Dowty — the shop floor. Covering other areas — foreign policy, foreign trade, the activities of Maoists in Hong Kong trade unions, the continued existence in China of private capitalist enterprises, party power struggles, etc. — would only support the conclusions reached about Chinese society at its economic base.

WORKERS' CONTROL VS. WORKERS' MANAGEMENT

In China, the differences between the two concepts, "workers' control" and "workers' management," become obvious. Management means *total* control — making decisions, initiating them, and enforcing them. As Maurice Brinton put it,

To manage is to initiate the decisions oneself, as a sovereign person or collectivity, in full knowledge of all the relevant facts. *To control* is to supervise, inspect or check decisions initiated by others. 'Control' implies a limitation of sovereignty or, at best, a state of duality of power, wherein some people determine the objectives while others see that the appropriate means are used to achieve them.⁵

Goldwasser and Dowty write that "... China's workers and peasants have been busily constructing a new socialist society."⁶ They define "socialism for us:

Socialism means the economy and government are run by workers in their own interest — a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' which has replaced the previous class dictatorship of the capitalists.⁷

In China — as will be shown below — reality is somewhat different. The “dictatorship of the proletariat” is actually a “dictatorship over the proletariat.” Workers do not control — they merely participate in the low-level technical and procedural aspects of production; they do not manage. Things in China are controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and not by the working class. There exists a very marginal form of “workers’ control” — but certainly no “workers’ management.” “It is important to point out that the party is the ultimate and dominant authority in Red China. The party can and does determine dominant attitudes toward authority, responsibility, and subordination in industry and business; and enterprise personnel tend to adopt the prescribed part attitudes quite quickly when there are official changes in the party’s position.”⁸ This is implied, but never stated straight out, in Goldwasser and Dowty’s article, and must be remembered if Chinese “workers’ control” is to be understood.

The now-discredited Liu Shao-chi stated that:

The system adopted in managing our enterprises is a system which combines a high degree of centralization with a high degree of democracy. All enterprises must abide by the unified leadership of the Communist Party and the state, and by *observing strict labor discipline*, ensure unity of will and action among the masses. At the same time, they should bring into full play the initiative and creativeness of the workers, develop the supervising role of the masses, and get them to take part in the management of their enterprises.⁹

Let us see how the above is translated at the factory level.

REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEES, PARTY COMMITTEES, & THE 3-IN-1 COMBO

Goldwasser and Dowty describe the mechanics of workers control in the Eastern Workers’ Paradise:

Chinese factories have two leading organs which make and administer decisions: *The Party committee is the basic decision-making body and exercises top leadership. The revolutionary committee is the top administrative body, carrying out the decisions of the Party committee.* Most factories we visited also had a workers’ representative congress, a new mass organization formed since the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰

Fortune magazine’s Louis Kraar apparently missed the Party Committee, for he writes that “Every factory and farm is nominally controlled by a ‘revolutionary committee’ of workers, party members, and Army personnel.”¹¹

Since the Party Committee makes the top decisions (the Revolutionary Committee only carrying out the Party Committee’s decisions), it is clear that the Party Committee — and thus the Party — is what runs the factories. Logically enough, only CCP members can serve on the Party Committee.¹² Goldwasser and Dowty write that “About 15 per cent of the workers and cadres in the factories we visited were members of the Chinese Communist Party.” The Party Committee is supposed to be run on “three-in-one” lines (workers, cadres, army) whenever possible.¹³

Now if we were to assume that there were no bosses in China (see the sections on cadres and the army, below), and were further to assume that at the factories the 15% figure cited above was made up solely of workers, that would mean that the Party worker minority of 15% dominated the 85% non-Party worker majority. This is statistical proof (assuming their estimate to be correct) of a dictatorship *over* the proletariat. The ruling committee – the Party committee – is made up solely of Party members. The Revolutionary committees contain *both* Party and non-Party people¹⁴ – thus the stranglehold of the CCP increased. This stranglehold will become all the more evident in the sections below dealing with the cadres, the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA), the type of decisions made by the Revolutionary committees, and the manner of "election" to the two committees.

THE CADRES

Management expert Barry Richman differentiates between factory personnel types: "Cadres are leaders, either Red or Expert, *party or managerial*; technicians are Experts and typically intellectuals; and workers are the masses."¹⁵ The term "cadre" (*ganbu*, or *ganbou*) covers a lot of territory, or, as it is said, a multitude of sins: "... it now loosely covers anyone in an administrative, professional, intellectual, or white-collar job, in short, *everyone who is not worker, peasant, or soldier*. There is a sharp distinction between lower-echelon cadres called 'staff members' and the upper-echelon 'leading cadre' who is a person in a position of authority: a minister, bureau chief, manager, director, or head of any organization. . . ."¹⁶ Goldwasser and Dowty state that a cadre is "anyone who is a leader," and that the concept combines "aspects of civil servants, political and ideological leaders, *managers and administrators*."¹⁷ And further:

"... there is a more specific definition of cadre. Cadres... are those 'administrators' assigned to factories by the State. The same is true for cadres on communes. The full-time administrators in factory 'front offices'; the 'responsible person' at a public park in Wuhan; full-time government or Chinese Communist Party leaders – all are cadres."¹⁸

Most of the cadres are members of the CCP.¹⁹ The odds are pretty high, then, that any cadres that might get onto the Revolutionary Committees will be CCP members.

Apparently these "dedicated revolutionaries" have become a slight problem:

Since factory cadres work full-time at administrative duties, there is always the danger that they lose touch with actual production, that a gap develops between the cadres and workers. Several methods have been introduced . . . to ensure that cadres do not become 'divorced from the masses.' The general rule is that cadres must regularly take part in manual labour. Within that guideline, there are any number of specific ways to schedule *lao dong* (labour) for cadres.

Goldwasser and Dowty note that in a "few exceptional places" there was a sharp division between the cadres and the workers, analogous to the division of bosses and workers in the U.S.²⁰ Special camps have been set up for the "re-education" of cadres, the

May 7th Schools, where cadres go for ideological tune-ups.²¹ Goldwasser and Dowty's definitions of cadres — once the Maoist sugar-coating is stripped away — boils down to one word: BOSSES.

THE PEOPLES LIBERATION ARMY (P.L.A.)

An oft-quoted Thought of Chairman Mao is "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." A bullet in the head effectively ends any argument; the threat of one does almost as well. The above dictum of Big Brother bares Maoist ideology to its State Capitalist core. Now, if — as Goldwasser and Dowty state — "workers and cadres run the factories"²² — what the hell are PLA representatives doing on the Revolutionary and Party Committees? These soldiers are apparently not factory workers — what are they doing in the factories? Goldwasser and Dowty state that "They play an important role in political education; one cadre (naturally! S.S.) told us, 'The People's Liberation Army is a great school of Mao Tsetung Thought, founded and led by Chairman Mao. They bring a fine tradition with them to the factory.'"²³ A fine tradition, all right — a tradition of breaking strikes with armed force! "Political education" is the key concept — "Political Power grows out of the barrel of a gun" — and the PLA is ever-ready to "educate" rebellious workers. Says Louis Kraar:

The Army's presence undoubtedly helped the learning process, too. When the Cultural Revolution got out of hand, Mao ordered the People's Liberation Army to move into every enterprise and restore order. Though inconspicuous, the military men still exercise widespread authority — at the Kwangchow machinetool plant, among other places. The "most responsible person" at the plant, (who is also its chairman,) is an Army representative whom I was never able to meet. Confronted with this apparent contradiction in the principle of management by the masses, a member of the committee blandly says: "We can learn what we don't know through practice. After the chairman came to the factory, he integrated himself with the broad masses."²⁴

Economist John Kenneth Galbraith notes that even now, after the Cultural Revolution, "In factories, universities and even the secondary schools PLA . . . representatives are still present as a stabilizing force."²⁵ As of May 1991, 22 out of 29 Chinese provinces had set up provincial Party Committees — all commanded by the PLA.²⁶

The role of the PLA — like armies everywhere — is to keep those on the bottom in line. In China the military's basic role is as a tool of class repression. When the army is helping to "lead" the factories (which are of course run by the workers and cadres!), the class-repressive nature of the PLA is obvious. And the class that is being repressed is the Chinese working class.

DECISION-MAKING IN THE FACTORIES

Looking at the available sources, it is obvious that “workers’ control” in China is strictly on a consultative and technical level. Workers may suggest new forms of doing old jobs, better allocation of resources — but *never may they run the factories on their own*. As Richman stated: “It is similar in many respects to the philosophy of ‘consultative direction,’ ‘participative management,’ ‘bottom-up management,’ or ‘grass-roots budgeting,’ under a balanced system of centralization and decentralization of authority, found in a growing number of American companies.”²⁷ And further: “It seemed clear during my visit to China that *the regime was not willing at that that time to have the workers actually play dominant roles in the management of their enterprises* . . . ”²⁸

Goldwasser and Dowty go on and on about the marvelous workers’ participation in management; but participation is still just participation — it is not a substitute for the “real thing” — collective management. They cite examples of workers’ participation — most of which concern workers’ suggestions for increasing productivity. They also cite the activities of the Workers Representative Congresses as further proof of worker control (see below),²⁹ and also that workers *discuss* wage increases.³⁰ Louis Kraar likewise talks about workers participation in increasing productivity and technical innovations. But when you read the fine print, one thing becomes clear: workers can talk, suggest and “participate” all they want (within CCP limits, of course) — but when it comes to the actual making of decisions — that is up to the Party Committees and other Party authorities. Only if a suggestion is ratified by Party superiors can it be instituted.

In the early 60’s it was “qualified managers and experts making the final decisions.”³¹ In the mid-60’s authority was switched upwards to the State planners, with the Party Committees at the factories retaining some control.³² As to the determination of wages — the results of the discussions must be approved by the Revolutionary Committees — or they are sent back for further talk.³³

If anyone thinks that this form of workers’ participation is “revolutionary,” just take a look at the March 26, 1973 issue of *Newsweek* magazine, “The Job Blahs: Who Wants to Work?” wherein various experiments on the assembly line are discussed. The Chinese system is no more revolutionary than the experiments of such prominent Reds as General Motors, Ford Motor Co., Monsanto Chemical and the Travellers Insurance Company: once again the dichotomy between “workers’ control” and “workers’ management” is emphasized.

COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

We have seen that of the two committees, the Party Committee calls the shots; that workers’ participation is limited to actually nothing more than an extended version of the Bosses’ old Suggestion Box, with about as much power as the slips dropped into the box have. That the Maoist system is a dictatorship *over* the proletariat becomes absolutely conclusive when we examine the so-called “elections” to the Party Committees and the (powerless) Revolutionary Committees. Goldwasser and Dowty write that the representatives are chosen

... on the basis of being good workers, having close relations with the masses of the workers in the factory, and being diligent in the study of Marxism-Leninism and the thought of Chairman Mao. The workers have discussions in their shop groups and make nominations. The names are then discussed by everyone, *including the Party organization* in the factory ... After the discussions representatives are chosen by an election among the masses of workers.

In Tangshan, we visited a Rolling Stock Plant which manufactures locomotives and railroad coaches. They have a slightly different method of choosing representatives which is called the 'two times up, two times down' process. First, workers in each section of the factory have discussions and put forward names of people for the revolutionary committee. The names are sent up to the leading body, which holds its own discussions and sends its opinions back down. This process takes place twice; thus the 'two ups and downs.' (In some places this is done three times.) After the final discussion, they agree on a group of people for the committee, but *no vote is taken* — it is all handled by discussion. They said it does occasionally happen that some names are put forward by the workers but not approved by the leading body. In such cases they come to agreement through further discussion. They said they judge people according to 'how they fit into the class struggle and the struggle between the two lines,' and whether they are 'continuing the revolution.' *Here the PLA members are also discussed by the workers but the PLA has the final say on who their representatives are.*³⁴

This is workers' democracy, where workers representatives have to be thoroughly indoctrinated in the ruler's ideology, and further must first be approved by others than the workers themselves?

Goldwasser and Dowty further state that members of the Party Committee are chosen in the same way,³⁵ and that "The Party committee is often chosen at a congress of all Party members in a factory, involving extensive discussions and elections."³⁶

Richman writes that

... The workers, and other personnel, supposedly elect the directors, vice directors, and group leaders (who are like front-line supervisors or floor foremen). They may play the major role in the selection of group leaders, but it is doubtful that they do so, regarding the higher-level managers. The elections, not surprisingly, are under the direct leadership of the enterprise party committee, and appropriate higher-level administrators and party committees above the enterprise also formally approve the election of directors and vice directors. I was told that such formal higher approval is almost always given.

There seemed to be a general reluctance on the part of the managers and Reds interviewed to discuss the mechanics of these elections. When I pushed for more details, some of them seemed to get embarrassed or upset. It seems that there are several after-hours meetings and screening sessions involved in coming up with a slate of managerial candidates. By the time the list of candidates is processed through the formal worker and staff representative conferences of workers and staff and party committee meetings, and then is presented to the electorate, there is typically only one candidate for each position. But, I was told, "employees can still vote 'yes' or 'no' for each candidate." What if the majority vote in a specific case is "no?" I

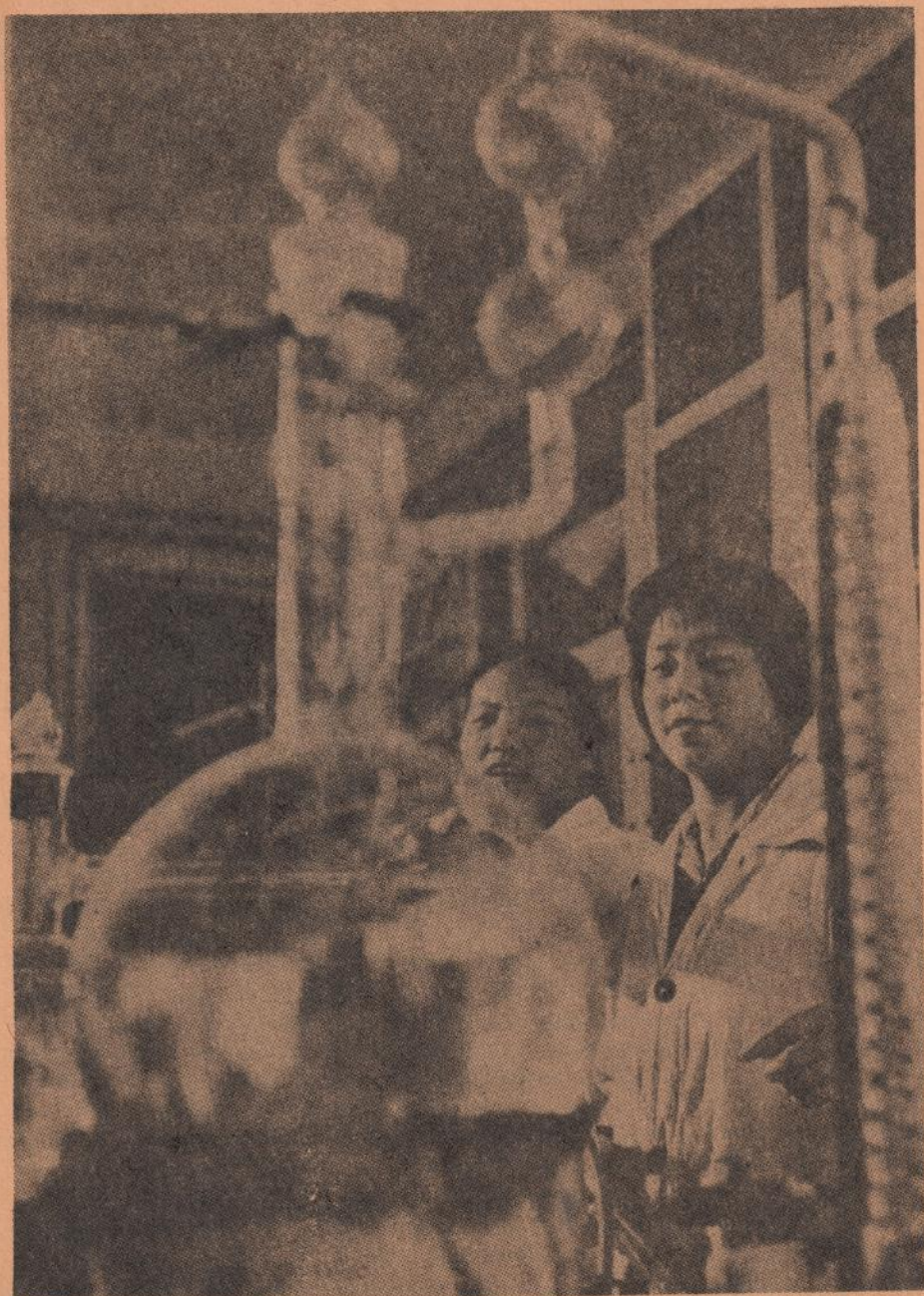


In a factory like the one Chou Chieh-hsu works in, the workers themselves meet regularly to discuss the organization of work in the plant . . .



. . . they appoint and criticize managers . . .

Reprinted from "In China, Managers Work!"; text by U.S.-China Friendship Association of the S.F. Bay Area. Published by United Front Press.



... they select their fellow workers to be trained as technicians or experts.

asked. This has never happened, I was told, and if it ever did, a new candidate would be proposed for the job, and a new election would take place. A British diplomat who had been stationed in Red China for several years told me that employees wishing to vote "no" for a candidate in an election of this type would probably have to ask for a special pencil to mark his ballot and would become very conspicuous. It was implied that all candidates at the enterprises surveyed which had elections are elected with a 99 or 100 percent majority.³⁷

And later:

At virtually all of the firms their directors and all their vice-directors — even where the enterprise had "elections" to choose their high-level managers — had to be approved by superior authorities. In a number of cases they had to be approved by higher bodies two or three levels above the enterprise, and at a few large firms final approval came from as high up as the state council. The same was true for party secretaries and vice secretaries at some of the enterprises. Their appointments had to be approved by higher party committees, and in a few cases formal approval came from as high up as the Central Party Committee in Peking.³⁸

And this is what passes for workers' control! The only "control" is by the Party bosses, who control the workers. Such a system almost guarantees that any decisions made will be — like the ones who make the decisions — approved by the Party hierarchy. And if there's any question, there is a PLA man always ready to answer. Just as the class interest of a private capitalist is to raise productivity and make increased profits, so is the interest of the Chinese State Capitalists — the CCP. Read any contemporary writings on China — increased productivity is loudly lauded as a major achievement of the Regime. And then we look at the foreign trade deals — with the fledgling fascist Marcos regime in the Philippines, with the U.S. and all of the others that the Maoists used to deride as "paper tigers" and general nogoodniks. And these elections are the basis of Chinese workers control — and our two proud Americans, Goldwasser and Dowty, see nothing wrong. If American unions ran elections in the same manner, these unions would be rightfully accused of election-fixing, pressure-tactics, and the cry would be long and loud about how such "elections" were in fact the exact negation of workers' democracy. But Goldwasser and Dowty blithely ignore all this, contentedly wallowing in the quotations of Chairman Mao. In their study of Marxism-Leninism they have conveniently overlooked the one about "the emancipation of the working class being the job of the working class itself!" Private capitalism is no worse than State capitalism — in both, workers' labor power is expropriated by the Boss Class. In both, those daring to do something about it are brutally suppressed. And in both, the apologists continue with their pantywaist explanations. Their rationalizations boil down to nothing more than "Mussolini made the trains run on time." The brutality of the regimes are ignored by concentrating on advances in health care, free housing, etc. Of course what these people forget is that if such social welfare measures were not introduced wages would necessarily have to rise in order to cover increased living expenses. A wage system is a wage system, no matter who the paymaster is; and wage slavery is wage slavery, no matter who the Master is.

Thus we have seen that the decision-making parties are firmly in the hands of the Party; the decisions must be ratified by the Party; and the members of the Party-controlled committees must be approved by the Party before being allowed to make their powerless de-

cisions. This is not workers' freedom, workers' democracy or workers' anything-else — except *workers' exploitation*.

THE WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVE CONGRESSES

Goldwasser and Dowty talk about a new organization that has sprung up since the "Cultural Revolution" — the workers' representative congresses. They cite this as another example of Chinese workers controlling their factories.³⁹ The activities of this outfit include the following:

... to organize workers' study and education, to *mobilize workers to fulfill the production plan* of the factory, to save waste materials, and to promote technical innovation and technical revolution. It is part of the tasks of the workers' representative congress to listen to the needs and demands of the workers, collect opinions and transmit them to the Party committee and revolutionary committee. They also organize sports and other recreational activities and arrange for cultural performances . . . ⁴⁰

Not all workers may belong, only "revolutionaries"⁴¹ — and we can readily guess who decides that.

The workers' representative congresses have no power at all and have nothing to do with controlling the factories — that's in the hands of the Party committee. The revolutionary Committees merely carry out Party Committee orders. Thus the workers' representative congresses are nothing more than Maoist social clubs.

WORKERS CONTROLLED—WORKERS RESPOND

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into the disgraceful history of the CCP in regimenting and dominating the Chinese working class to its own (State Capitalist) interests. I am purposely confining myself to the present (that is, post-Cultural Revolution) situation. Suffice it to say that ever since the 1949 "Liberation," the CCP has consistently fought any independent working class initiatives and movements, branding them as "economist," "syndicalist," "anarchist," "Ultra-Left," "Trotskyite" and other epithets of the Stalinist lexicon. Suffice it to say that the history of the CCP has been one of collaboration, not struggle, against capitalists, naturally at the expense of workers.⁴² Suffice it to say that, in conjunction with the Chinese State Capitalist regime (in 1956, the CCP's Congress "declared China to be 'state capitalist' . . . "⁴³), private capitalists continue to prosper, either in their old role as private capitalists or else as the managers of state firms.⁴⁴

Let us once again note the basically boss role of the cadres; that all "workers' participation" must be approved by Party personnel, who — unless it is a trivial decision — must clear it with their Party superiors; that through the Party and Revolutionary Committee method of administration, the system becomes one of class collaboration, not class struggle.

Reading Goldwasser and Dowty, Tuchman, and yea! even Joseph Alsop, it would appear that Chinese workers are behind the Maoists body and soul. In fact, the only criticisms that appear in Goldwasser and Dowty's 24 page pamphlet are that job safety is not up to snuff, and concerning the necessity for "close relations between workers and cadres."⁴⁵ If Chinese workers are so enamoured of Big Brother, then how is a letter to the editor of the American anarchist journal *The Match!* (2/73 issue) explained, wherein Ying Yi-shi of the English Section of Peking's Foreign Languages Press writes:

We have received your note in which you request some literature and materials. We will be very glad to send you what we have on the subjects you mention, though we must make clear our position on the question of "anarchy." We are against it, for the reason that now, when imperialism (headed by the USA) is going to its doom and bright socialism is winning world-wide victory, anarchy does not accord with the interests of the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, to which class struggle inevitably leads. Chairman Mao says: "... deprive the reactionaries of the right to speak ..."⁴⁶

Why is Mao so afraid to hear ideas other than his own spread? Let us give one small example. In 1957 Mao (who supported the Russians in crushing the Hungarian workers' uprising of 1956) decided that he would allow criticism of the Regime. Response was immediate. Workers and intellectuals were quick to point out that the State Capitalist nature of Mao's China, the exploitation of the Regime, and the class nature of the Chinese State.

This unasked-for eruption of opposition and censure prompted Mao and the Party to adopt immediate reprisals. A large number of outspoken intellectuals were either liquidated or sent to Sinkiang province, China's Siberia, to undergo thought-reform through hard labour and personal sufferings. From then on, any criticism of government or Party was considered high treason. At the present moment, deviations or abstinence from practising Maoist doctrines and policies constituted disloyalty to the regime and the nation.⁴⁷

This was the "Hundred Flowers Movement". The name was adopted from a Quotation of Chairman Mao that he and others have never again repeated: "Let 100 flowers bloom, let 100 schools of thought contend." And now we have a professor at Nanking University saying that "We believe in constant criticism and re-education ... Chairman Mao teaches us that if you wash your body, there is nothing wrong with washing your brains."⁴⁸

But not all are so subservient and brain-washed! During the so-called Cultural Revolution, workers did not stand still and submit to Maoist outrages:

... In the course of the Maoist terror mass opposition surfaced. Somehow the "handful" of anti-Maoists had managed to "dupe" so many that the ruling clique admitted that "perhaps we are temporarily in a minority." Even more important, the opposition had roots directly in production, in the factories and the fields. They were, in fact, the proletarian and peasant masses. They wore no red armbands, waved no books of quotations from Mao but they went out on unprecedented strikes and fought pitched battles with the Red Guard "seize control committees" that invaded their factories.⁴⁹

The continued existence of thought-control, "re-education" camps, and the presence of the PLA in factory committees is living proof that "something is rotten in the State of China," that workers are not just taking things lying down. J. Walker outlines 6 main groups of immigrants to Hong Kong, setting aside one group as

Those genuine communists who do not sympathise with the bureaucratic Maoist regime. They are usually ex-Red Guards who used to be ardent followers of Mao, Chou and other members of the Chinese establishment red capitalists, red aristocrats or red bureaucrats. They fled to Hong Kong in order to prepare themselves for a genuine socialist revolution in China because the present regime is not, in their eyes, socialist to the least extent.⁵⁰

The existence of an immigrant group large enough for definition indicates that Chinese workers are not so brain-washed as Goldwasser and Dowty would have us believe.

Chinese factories may be exciting for goggle-eyed new leftist rubber-neckers and devotees of Stakhanovism. But for those of us who believe in workers' management of the means of production, who believe that "the working class and the employing class have nothing in common," who believe that it is not an amelioration of the present system that is needed, but a new system altogether, a system of workers' freedom, in short of a new libertarian society—Chinese factories are not exciting places. They are simply Variations on a Theme by the Boss. That two supposedly intelligent workers should see in the Maoist system a panacea is surely a bad sign: it shows that they are still hung-up in the slave-ideology of elitism that began with Lenin and continued through Trotsky, Stalin and Mao. Elitism is of the very essence of capitalism, dividing into leaders and led, workers and bosses, Masters and Slaves. Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin all believed that essentially workers were too dumb and not to be trusted in running society themselves and for themselves; similarly with Mao. The elitists are afraid of the masses. As politicians, their interest is *power*—and they cannot see beyond the tips of their gun-barrels. The idea of real freedom scares them; so we are treated to maxim-ridden rationalizations for mass-murder, exploitation and oppression. It is high time to start looking at China—and everything else for that matter—with both eyes open.

FOOTNOTES

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37. Richman, op. cit., p. 255f.

38. Ibid., p. 797.
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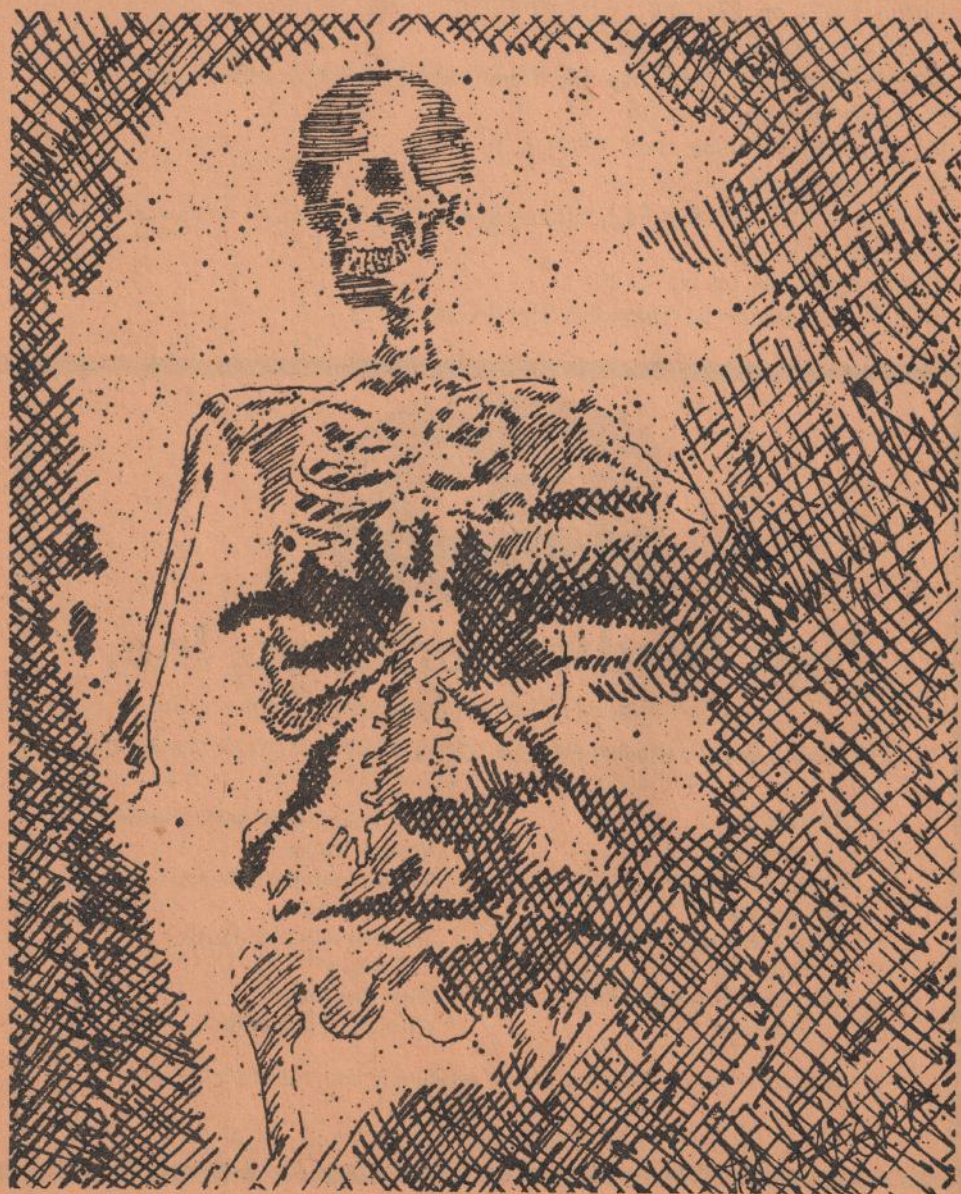
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SHOTBLASTER

JIM BURNS

He was a shotblaster in the engineering factory where I was employed for a time. A shotblaster works in a small compound which is set apart from the rest of the shop-floor. In the compound there's a metal hut with a heavy door but no windows. The shotblaster wears overalls, of course, and also a canvas hood covering his head and shoulders. A perspex sheet set in the front of the hood allows him to see what he's doing. His job is to direct a steady and powerful stream of fine shot at various metal components which are rusty or require smoothing down. You don't have to think about it for long to realize what the atmosphere in the hut is like and even after a few minutes in the compound you can feel your scalp itching and the irritation in your nose and throat. Of the three men who'd done the job before the man I knew, two had died of chest ailments and the third had retired early.

The only way in which the firm could get anyone to take the job was by offering various minor perks — efficiency bonuses and the like — and also turning a blind eye to the piecework booked in by the shotblaster. Most factories limit your earnings on piecework, with the management and union having a tacit agreement as to what the maximum should be. Skilled workers are allowed a higher figure to work to. Whatever your rate, though, if you constantly book above the agreed maximum the ratefixer will come down and re-time the job and you'll find yourself speeding up in order to maintain the wage you've become accustomed to. Within reason the shotblaster was given a certain amount of leeway. Not many people were willing to work in that hut.

I always disliked having to go near the compound early in the morning. The shotblaster would be sitting on an upturned box, coughing and spitting. He was like that every morning for five or ten minutes. I once asked him why he stuck the job and he said it was for the money. If he went back to fettling or one of the other lower-grade, semi-skilled jobs he would lose two or three pounds a week and to a man with several children it was the difference between being able to afford a night out each week or watching TV all the time. He described it as the difference between living and existing.

He wasn't an unfriendly man but working in that hut, and his tendency to cough whenever he spoke for any length of time, had made him taciturn. In the canteen quite a few people disliked sitting next to him because the grains of shot rubbed off his clothes. He hadn't time to change before he ran across the road to the canteen. If you didn't get there early you had to queue and often wasted half the lunch hour before you got your meal. The shotblaster liked to sit outside for a few minutes before going back to his hut.

I didn't think it worth ruining your health for a couple of pounds a week but he just shrugged his shoulders when I put this to him. He was unskilled, badly educated, and the firm wouldn't guarantee him another job if he asked to be taken off this one. And if he went elsewhere it could mean a drop in wages or perhaps increased travelling expenses. He wasn't getting any younger either. So, what could he do, he asked me, and then turned his head to one side and coughed into a dirty, spit-stained handkerchief. ■

**With rare exceptions one is
struck by the mediocre and
superficial character of the
ideas advanced by modern
writers on anarchism.**

ANARCHISM AND MODERN SOCIETY

SAM DOLGOFF

BOURGEOIS NEO-ANARCHISM

Meaningful discussion about the relevance of anarchist ideas to modern industrialized societies must first, for the sake of clarity, outline the difference between today's "neo-anarchism" and the classical anarchism of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta and their successors. With rare exceptions one is struck by the mediocre and superficial character of the ideas advanced by modern writers on anarchism. Instead of presenting fresh insights, there is the repetition of utopistic ideas which the anarchist movement had long since outgrown and rejected as totally irrelevant to the problems of our increasingly complex society.

Many of the ideas which the noted anarchist writer Luigi Fabbri a half century ago labelled "Bourgeois Influences in Anarchism" are again in circulation.¹ For example, there is Kingsley Widmer's article, "Anarchism Revived Right-Left and All Around." Like similar bourgeois movements in the past, Widmer correctly points out that:

*Anarchism's contemporary revival . . . mostly comes from the dissident middle-class intellectuals, students and other marginal groups who (base themselves) on individualist, utopian and other non-working class aspects of anarchism . . .*²

(All words throughout the article between parentheses and emphasized are ours.)

Like the old bourgeois anarchist, Widmer too, practically denies the link between anarchism and free socialism and chides Noam Chomsky for seeing "anarchism as purely integral to socialism."

Other typical bourgeois anarchist characteristics are:

-
1. *Influences Bourgeoises en el Anarquismo*; Solidaridad Obara, Paris 1959
 2. *The Nation*; Nov. 16, 1970

Escapism—the hope that the establishment will be gradually undermined if enough people ‘cop out’ of the system and “live like anarchists in communes . . . and other life-style institutions . . .”(Widmer)

Nechaeivism—romantic glorification of conspiracy, ruthlessness, violence in the amoral tradition of Nechayev.

Bohemianism—total irresponsibility; exclusive preoccupation with one’s picturesque “life-style”; exhibitionism; rejection of any form of organization or self-discipline.

Anti-Social Individualism—the urge to “idealize the most anti-social forms of individual rebellion.” (Fabbri)

Intolerance of oppression (writes Malatesta), *the desire to be free and to develop one one’s personality to its full limits, is not enough to make one an anarchist. That aspiration towards unlimited freedom, if not tempered by a love for mankind and by the desire that all should enjoy equal freedom, may well create rebels who . . . soon become exploiters and tyrants . . .*³

Still other neo-anarchists are obsessed with “action for the sake of action.” One of the foremost historians of Italian anarchism, Pier Carlo Masini notes that for them ‘spontaneity’ is the panacea that will automatically solve all problems. No theoretical or practical preparation is needed. In the ‘revolution’ which is ‘just around the corner’ the fundamental differences between libertarians and our mortal enemies, authoritarian groups like the ‘Marxist-Leninists’ will miraculously vanish.

Paradoxically enough (observes Masini) *the really modern anarchists are those with white hair, those who guided by the teachings of Bakunin and Malatesta, who in Italy and in Spain (as well as in Russia) had learned from bitter personal participation how serious a matter revolution can be . . .*⁴

It is not our intention to belittle the many fine things the scholars do say, nor to downgrade the magnificent struggles of our young rebels against war, racism and the false values of that vast crime ‘The Establishment’—struggles which sparked the revival of the long dormant radical movement. But they stress the negative aspects and ignore or misinterpret the constructive principles of anarchism. Bakunin and the classical anarchists always emphasized the necessity for constructive thinking and action:

*It (1848 revolutionary movement) was rich in instincts and negative theoretical ideas which gave it full justification for its fight against privilege, but it lacked completely any positive and practical ideas which would have been needed to enable it to erect a new system upon the ruins of the old bourgeois setup . . .*⁵

Lacking such solid foundations, such movements must eventually disintegrate.

3. Errico Malatesta—*Life and Ideas*; Freedom Press, London 1965, p. 24

4. quoted in letter from a friend — no date

5. *Federalism—Socialism—Anti-Theologism*

**The cardinal principles of classical anarchism (are):
economic and political decentralization of power, individual and local autonomy, self-management of industry
(‘workers’ control’) and federalism . . .**

DISTORTING ANARCHIST IDEAS

Recent works on anarchism, like George Woodcock’s *Anarchism* and the two books by Horowitz and Joll—both titled *The Anarchists*—perpetuate the myth that the anarchists are living antiques, visionaries yearning to return to an idyllic past. According to Woodcock, “. . . The historical anarchist movement that sprang from Bakunin and his followers is dead . . .” The cardinal principles of classical anarchism: economic and political decentralization of power, individual and local autonomy, self-management of industry (workers’ control) and federalism are

*obsolete forms of organization (running counter) to the world wide trend toward political and economic centralization . . . The real social revolution of the modern age has in fact been this process of centralization toward which every development of scientific and technological progress has contributed. (the trend is in the opposite direction) . . . the anarchist movement failed to present an alternative to the state or the capitalist economy . . .*⁶

It is hard to understand how scholars even slightly acquainted with the vast libertarian literature on social reconstruction could possibly come to such absurd conclusions!! A notable exception is the French sociologist-historian Daniel Guérin whose excellent little book *L’anarchisme* has just been translated into English with an introduction by Noam Chomsky (Monthly Review Press, N.Y.) Guérin concentrates on the constructive aspects of anarchism. While not without its faults (he underestimates the importance of Kropotkin’s ideas and exaggerates Stirner’s) it is still the best short introduction to the subject. Guérin effectively refutes the arguments of recent historians, particularly Jean Maitron, Woodcock and Joll, concluding that their

*. . . image of anarchism is not true. Constructive anarchism which found its most accomplished expression in the writings of Bakunin, relies on organization, on self-discipline, on integration, on a centralization which is not coercive, but federalist. It relates to large scale industry, to modern technology, to the modern proletariat, to genuine internationalism . . . In the modern world the material, intellectual and moral interests have created between all parts of a nation and even different nations, a real and solid unity, and this unity will survive all states . . .*⁷

To assess the extent to which classical anarchism is applicable to modern societies it is first necessary to summarize briefly its leading constructive tenets.

6. *Anarchism*; World Publishing, Cleveland 1962, pp. 469, 473

7. *L’anarchisme*; Gallimand, Paris 1965, pp. 180-81

COMPLEX SOCIETIES NECESSITATE ANARCHISM

It is a fallacy to assume that anarchists ignore the complexity of social life. On the contrary, the classical anarchists have always rejected the kind of 'simplicity' which camouflages regimentation in favor of the natural complexity which reflects the many faceted richness and diversity of social and individual life. The Cybernetic mathematician John B. McEwan, writing on the relevance of anarchism to cybernetics explains that:

*Libertarian socialists, (synonym for non-individualist anarchism) especially Kropotkin and Landauer, showed an early grasp of the complex structure of society as a complex network of changing relationships, involving many structures of correlated activity and mutual aid, independent of authoritarian coercion. It was against this background that they developed their theories of social organization . . .*⁸

Like his predecessors, Proudhon and Bakunin, Kropotkin elaborated the idea that the very complexity of social life demanded the decentralization and self-management of industry by the workers. From his studies of economic life in England and Scotland he concluded:

*. . . production and exchange represented an undertaking so complicated that no government (without establishing a cumbersome, inefficient bureaucratic dictatorship) would be able to organize production if the workers themselves, through their unions, did not do it in each branch of industry; for, in all production there arises daily thousands of difficulties that . . . no government can hope to foresee . . . Only the efforts of thousands of intelligences working on problems can cooperate in the development of the new social system and find solutions for the thousands of local needs . . . (emphasis ours)*⁹

Decentralization and autonomy does not mean the breakup of society into small, isolated, economically self-sufficient groups, which is neither possible nor desirable. The Spanish anarchist, Diego Abad De Santillan, Minister of the Economy in Catalonia in the early period of the Spanish Civil War, (December, 1936) reminded some of his comrades:

*. . . Once and for all we must realize that we are no longer . . . in a little utopian world . . . we cannot realize our economic revolution in a local sense; for economy on a localist basis can only cause collective privation . . . economy is today a vast organism and all isolation must prove detrimental . . . We must work with a social criterion, considering the interests of the whole country and if possible the whole world . . .*¹⁰

A balance must be achieved between the suffocating tyranny of unbridled authority and the kind of 'autonomy' that leads to petty local patriotism, separatism of little grouplets and the fragmentation of society. Libertarian organization must reflect the complexity of social relationships and promote solidarity on the widest possible scale. It can be defined

8. *Anarchy*; No. 25, March, 1963, London

9. *Revolutionary Pamphlets*; Vanguard Press, N.Y., 1927, pp. 76-77. Proudhon's position was similar, ". . . through the progress of ideas and the complexity of interests, society is forced to objure the state. . ."

10. *After the Revolution*; Greenberg Publisher, N.Y., 1937, pp. 85, 100

The increasing complexity of society is making anarchism *more and not less* relevant to modern life.

as federalism: coordination through free agreement, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. A vast coordinated network of voluntary alliances embracing the totality of social life, in which all the groups and associations reap the benefits of unity while still exercising autonomy within their own spheres and expanding the range of their freedom. Anarchist organizational principles are not separate entities. Autonomy is impossible without decentralization, and decentralization is impossible without federalism.

The increasing complexity of society is making anarchism *more and not less* relevant to modern life. It is precisely this complexity and diversity, above all their overriding concern for freedom and human values that led the anarchist thinkers to base their ideas on the principles of diffusion of power, self-management and federalism. The greatest attribute of the free society is that it is self-regulating and "bears within itself the seeds of its own regeneration." (Buber) The self-governing associations will be flexible enough to adjust their differences, correct and learn from their mistakes, experiment with new, creative forms of social living and thereby achieve genuine harmony on a higher, humanistic plane. Errors and conflicts confined to the limited jurisdiction of special purpose groups, may do limited damage. But miscalculations and criminal decisions made by the state and other autocratically centralized organizations affecting whole nations, and even the whole world, can have the most disastrous consequences.

MODERN INDUSTRY BETTER ORGANIZED ANARCHISTICALLY

Bourgeois economists, sociologists, and administrators like Peter Drucker, Gunnar Myrdal, John Kenneth Galbraith, Daniel Bell, etc. now favor a large measure of decentralization not because they have suddenly become anarchists, but primarily because technology has rendered anarchistic forms of organization "operational necessities." The bourgeois reformers have yet to learn that as long as these organizational forms are tied to the state or to capitalism, which connotes the monopoly of political economic power, decentralization and federalism will remain a fraud—a more efficient device to enlist the cooperation of the masses in their own enslavement. To illustrate wherein their ideas inadvertently demonstrate the practicality of anarchist organization and how they contradict themselves, we cite the 'free enterpriser' Drucker and the 'welfare statist' Myrdal. In the chapter titled "The Sickness of Government" Drucker writes:

... Disenchantment with government cuts across national boundaries and ideological lines ... government itself has become one of the vested interests ... the moment government undertakes anything it becomes entrenched and permanent ... the unproductive becomes built into the political process itself ... social theory to be meaningful at all, must start with the reality of pluralism of institutions, a galaxy of suns rather than one big center surrounded by moons that shine only by reflected

light . . . a society of institutional diversity and diffusion of power . . . in a pluralist society of organizations (each unit would be) limited to the specific service it renders to the members of society which it meant to perform—yet, since every institution has power in its own sphere, it would be as such, affected with the public interest . . . such a view of organizations as being autonomous and limited are necessary both both to make the organization perform and to safeguard the individual's freedom . . . (emphasis Drucker's)¹¹

After demonstrating the 'monstrosity of government, its lack of performance and its impotence' Drucker flatly contradicts himself and comes to the surprising conclusion that 'never has strong, effective government been needed more than in this dangerous world . . . never more than in this pluralist society of organizations . . .'

Myrdal convincingly demonstrates that both the Soviet and the "free world states" need decentralization for administrative efficiency in order that (political and economic life) shall not succumb to the rigidity of the central apparatus. But then he expects the paternalistic welfare state to loosen "its controls over everyday life" and gradually transfer most of its powers to "all sorts of organizations and communities controlled by the people themselves . . ." No anarchist could refute Myrdal's argument better than he does himself:

. . . to give up autocratic patterns, to give up administrative controls and . . . withdraw willingly from intervening when it is no longer necessary, are steps which do not correspond to the inner workings of a functioning bureaucracy . . .¹²

If these advocates of decentralization and autonomy were consistent, they would realize that the diffusion of power leads to anarchism.

"FORMING THE NEW SOCIETY WITHIN THE SHELL OF THE OLD"

(preamble of the I.W.W.)

The anarchists have always opposed the Jacobins, Blanquists, Bolsheviks, and other would-be dictators, who would in Proudhon's words: *. . . reconstruct society upon an imaginary plan, much like the astronomers who for respect for their calculations would make over the system of the universe . . .¹³*

The anarchist theoreticians limited themselves to suggest the utilization of all the useful organisms in the old society in order to reconstruct the new. They envisioned the gen-

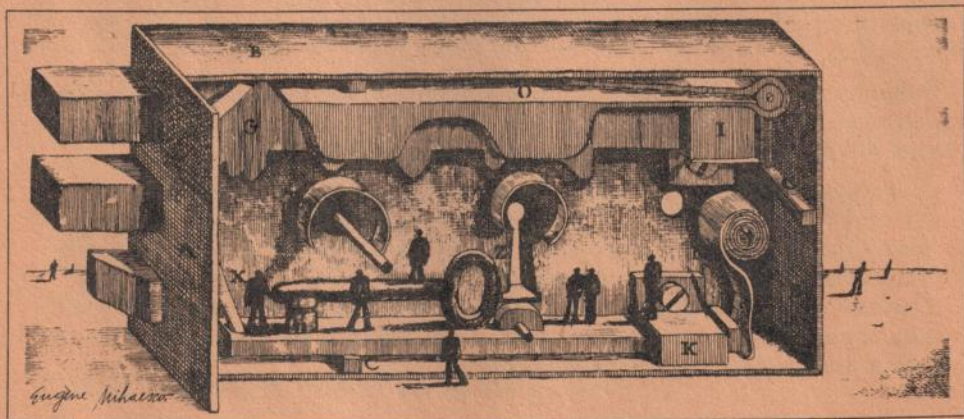
11. *The Age of Discontinuity*; Harper and Row, N.Y., 1968, pp. 212, 217, 222, 225, 226, 251-2

12. *Beyond the Welfare State*; Yale University, New Haven, 1960, pp. 102, 97, 108

13. *General Idea in the Revolution in the 19th Century*; Freedom Press, London, 1923, p. 90

eralization of practices and tendencies which are already in effect. The very fact that autonomy, decentralization and federalism are more practical alternatives to centralism and statism already presupposes that these vast organizational networks now performing the functions of society are prepared to replace the old bankrupt hyper-centralized administrations. That the "elements of the new society are already developing in the collapsing bourgeois society" (Marx) is a fundamental principle shared by all tendencies in the socialist movement. Kropotkin was very explicit on this subject:

*The anarchists . . . build their provisions of the future upon those data which are supplied by the observations of life at the present time . . .*¹⁴ *The idea of independent communes for the territorial organizations and of federations of trade unions for the organization of men in accordance with their different functions, gives a concrete conception of a society generated by a social revolution. There remained only to add these two modes of organization, a third, growing up everywhere for the satisfaction of all possible and imaginable needs . . . and all of them ready to meet new needs and adjustments . . .*¹⁵



One need not, in view of modern developments, agree with all of Kropotkin's specific suggestions to see that, in general, the concepts sketched out by him constitute a realistic basis for the reconstruction of society. Society is a vast interlocking network of cooperative labor: and all the deeply rooted institutions listed by Kropotkin, now functioning, will in some form continue to function for the simple reason that the very existence of mankind depends upon this inner cohesion. This has never been questioned by anyone. What is needed is emancipation from authoritarian institutions *over* society and authoritarianism *within* the organizations themselves: above all, they must be infused with revolutionary spirit and confidence in the creative capacities of the people. Kropotkin in working

14. *Revolutionary Pamphlets*; p. 168

15. *Ibid*; pp. 166-67

out the sociology of anarchism, has opened an avenue of fruitful research which has been largely neglected by social scientists busily engaged in mapping out new areas for state control.

The anarchist's insistence on workers' control — the idea of self-management of industry by workers' associations "in accordance with their different functions" rests on very solid foundations. This tendency traces back to Robert Owen, the first International Workingmen's Association, the Guild Socialist movement in England and the pre-World War I syndicalist movements. With the Russian Revolution, the trend towards workers' control in the form of free soviets (councils) which arose spontaneously, was finally snuffed out with the Kronstadt massacre of 1921. The same tragic fate awaited the workers' councils in the Hungarian, Polish and East German risings around 1956. Among the many other attempts that were made, there is of course, the classic example of the Spanish Revolution of 1936, with the monumental constructive achievements in the libertarian rural collectives and workers' control of urban industry. The prediction of the *News Bulletin* of the reformist 'International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations'¹⁶ (July 1964) that: "... The demand for workers' control may well become the common ground for advanced sectors in the labor movement both 'east' and 'west' ..." is now a fact.

Although the purged Bolshevik 'left oppositionist', Victor Serge, refers to the economic crisis that gripped Russia during the early years of the revolution, his remarks are in general still pertinent and incidentally illustrate Kropotkin's theme:

*... certain industries could have been revived [and] an enormous degree of recovery achieved by appealing to the initiative of groups of producers and consumers, freeing the state strangled cooperatives and inviting the various associations to take over management of different branches of economic activity I was arguing for a Communism of Associations — in contrast to Communism of the State — the total plan not dictated on high by the State, but resulting from the harmonizing by congresses and special assemblies from below ...*¹⁷

"AFTER THE REVOLUTION"

The anarchist thinkers were not so naive as to expect the installation of the perfect society composed of perfect individuals who would miraculously shed all their ingrained prejudices and old habits on the day after the revolution. They were primarily concerned with the immediate problems of social reconstruction that will have to be faced in any country — industrialized or not.

They are issues which no serious revolutionary has the right to ignore. It was for this reason that the anarchists tried to work out measures to meet the pressing problems most

16. a confederation of national unions affiliated to the International Labor Organization, a branch of the United Nations.

17. *Memoires of a Revolutionary*; Oxford University, London, 1963, pp. 147-48

likely to emerge during what Malatesta called: "... the period of reorganization and transition..."¹⁸ We summarize Malatesta's discussion of some of the more important questions:¹⁹

Crucial problems cannot be avoided by postponing them to the distant future — perhaps a century or more — when anarchism will have been fully realized and the masses will have finally become convinced and dedicated anarchist-communists. We anarchists must have our own solutions if we are not to be relegated to the role of useless and impotent grumblers, while the more realistic and unscrupulous authoritarians seize power. Anarchy or no anarchy, the people must eat and be provided with the necessities of life. The cities must be provisioned and vital services cannot be disrupted. Even if poorly served, the people in their own interests would not allow us or anyone else to disrupt these services unless and until they are reorganized in a better way; and this cannot be achieved in a day.

The urbanization of the anarchist-communist society on a large scale can only be achieved gradually as material conditions permit, and as the masses convince themselves of the benefits to be gained and as they gradually become psychologically accustomed to radical alterations in their way of life. Since free and voluntary communism (Malatesta's synonym for anarchism) cannot be imposed, Malatesta stressed the necessity for the co-existence of various economic forms, collectivist, mutualist, individualist; on the condition that there will be no exploitation of others. Malatesta was confident that the convincing example of successful liberatarian collectives will

*attract others into the orbit of the collectivity ... for my part I do not believe that there is 'one' solution to the social problem, but a thousand different and changing solutions, in the same way as social existence is different in time and space. ...*²⁰

"PURE" ANARCHISM IS A FICTION

Aside from the "individualists" (a very ambiguous term) none of the anarchist thinkers were "pure" anarchists. The typical "pure" anarchist grouping, explains George Woodcock "... is the loose and flexible affinity group," which needs no formal organization and carries on anarchist propaganda through an "invisible network of personal contacts and intellectual influences." Woodcock argues that "pure" anarchism is incompatible with mass movements like Anarcho-Syndicalism because they need

*stable organizations precisely because it moves in a world that is only partly governed by anarchist ideals. ... and make compromises with day-to-day situations ... [It] has to maintain the allegiance of masses of working men who are only remotely conscious of the final aim of anarchism.*²¹

18. Malatesta; p. 100

19. *Ibid*; See pp. 159, 36, 103

20. *Ibid*; pp. 99, 151

21. *Anarchism*; pp. 273, 274

If these statements are true, then "pure" anarchism is a pipe dream. First, because there will never be a time when everybody will be a "pure" anarchist, and humanity will forever have to make "compromises with the day-to-day situation." Second, because the intricate economic and social operations of an interdependent world cannot be carried on without these 'stable organizations.' Even if every inhabitant were a convinced anarchist, "pure" anarchism would still be impossible for technical and functional reasons alone. This is not to say that anarchism excludes affinity groups. Anarchism envisions a flexible, pluralist society where all the needs of mankind would be supplied by a infinite variety of voluntary associations. The world is honeycombed with affinity groups from chess clubs to anarchist propaganda groups. They are formed, dissolved and reconstituted according to the fluctuating whims and fancies of the individual adherents. It is precisely because they *reflect individual preferences* that such groups are the lifeblood of the free society.

But the anarchists have also insisted that since the necessities of life and vital services must be supplied without fail and cannot be left to the whims of individuals, they are *social obligations* which every able bodied individual is honor-bound to fulfill, if he expects to enjoy the benefits of collective labor. The large scale organizations, federations and confederations supplying these necessities, must therefore underpin the free society. Such stable associations, anarchistically organized, are **not a deviation**. They are the very essence of anarchism as a viable social order.

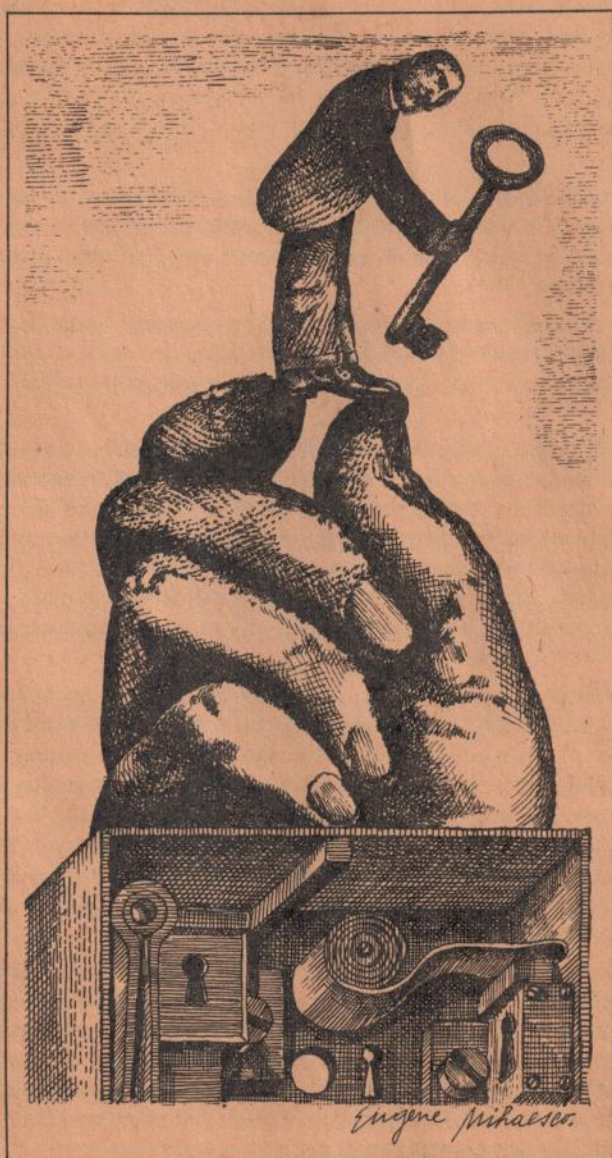
There is no "pure" anarchism. There is only the application of anarchist principles to the realities of social living. The aim of anarchism is to stimulate forces that propel society in a libertarian direction. It is only from this standpoint that the relevance of anarchism to modern life can be properly assessed.

AUTOMATION COULD EXPEDITE ANARCHISM

We consider that the constructive ideas of anarchism are rendered even more timely by the cybernetic revolution still in its early stages, and will become increasingly more relevant as this revolution unfolds. There are, even now, no insurmountable *technical-scientific barriers* to the introduction of anarchism. The greatest material drawback to the realization of the ideal (which the anarchists hold in common with all socialist tendencies: "To each according to his needs from each according to his ability,") has been the scarcity of goods and services. "... Cybernation, a system of almost unlimited productive capacity which requires progressively less human labor ... would make possible the abolition of poverty at home and abroad ..." ²² In a consumer economy where purchasing power is not tied to production, the wage system becomes obsolete and the preconditions for the realization of the socialist ideal immeasurably enhanced.

When Kropotkin in 1899 wrote his *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, to demonstrate the feasibility of decentralizing industry to achieve a greater balance between rural and urban living, his ideas were dismissed as premature. It is now no longer disputed that the

22. *Manifesto . . . Committee for the Triple Revolution*; quoted in *Liberation* magazine, N.Y., April 1964



problem of scaling down industry to manageable human proportions, rendered even more acute by the pollution threatening the very existence of life on this planet, can now be largely solved by modern technology. There is an enormous amount of literature on this topic. (Murray Bookchin has done an enormous amount of research on this subject—see his *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* Ramparts Press—1971)

One of the major obstacles to the establishment of the free society is the cumbersome all pervasive, corporate-statist apparatus manned by an entrenched bureaucratic elite class of administrators, managers and officials who at all levels exercise de facto control over the operations of society. This has up till now been regarded as an unavoidable evil, but thanks to the development of computerized technology, this byzantine apparatus can now be dismantled.

Alan Toffer (*Future Shock*, Random House, 1970, p. 141) summing up the evidence, concludes that: "Far from fastening the grip of bureaucracy on civilization more than before, *automation leads to its overthrow . . .*" (emphasis ours) Another source, quoting *Business Week*, emphasizes that:

*. . . automation not only makes economic planning necessary—it also makes it possible. The calculations required for planning on nationwide scale are complicated and difficult, but they can be performed by the new electronic computers in an amazingly short time . . .*²³

The libertarian principle of workers' control will not be invalidated by changes in the composition of the work force or in the nature of work itself. With or without automation, the economic structure of the new society must be based on self-administration by the people directly involved in economic functions. Under automation millions of highly trained technicians, engineers, scientists, educators, etc., who are already organized into local, regional, national, and international federations will freely circulate information, constantly improving both the quality and availability of goods and services and developing new products for new needs.

By closely intermeshing and greatly expanding the already existing networks of consumer cooperative associations with the producers associations at every level, the consumers will make their wants known and be supplied by the producers. The innumerable variety of supermarkets, chain stores, and service centers of every description now blanketing the country, though owned by corporations or privately, are so structured that they could easily be socialized and converted into cooperative networks. In general, the same holds true for production, exchange, and other branches of the economy. The integration of these economic organisms will undoubtedly be greatly facilitated because the same people are both producers and consumers.

The progress of the new society will depend greatly upon the extent to which its self-governing units will be able to speed up direct communication—to understand each other's problems and better coordinate activities. Thanks to modern communications technology, all the essential facilities are now available: tape libraries, "computer laundromats", closed television and telephone circuits, communication satellites and a plethora of other devices are making instant, direct communication on a world scale accessible to all. (visual and radio contact between earth and moon within seconds!) "Face to face democracy"—a cornerstone of a free society, is already foreshadowed by the increasing mobility of peoples.

There is an exaggerated fear that a minority of scientific and technical workers, in a free society, set up a dictatorship over the rest of society. They certainly do not now

23. *Robot Revolution*; Socialist Party, U.S.A., 1965, pp. 43, 44

wield the power generally attributed to them. In spite of their 'higher' status, they are no less immune to the fluctuations of the economic system than are the 'ordinary' workers. (nearly 100,000 are jobless) Like lower paid workers, they too, must on pain of dismissal obey the orders of their employers.

Tens of thousands of frustrated first-rate technical and scientific employees, not permitted to exercise their knowledge creatively find themselves trapped in monotonous, useless and anti-social tasks. And nothing is more maddening than to stand helplessly by, while ignoramuses who do not even understand the language of science, dictate the direction of research and development. Nor are these workers free to exercise these rights in Russia or anywhere else.

In addition to these general considerations, there are two other preventative checks to dictatorship of the techno-scientific elite. The first is that the wider diffusion of scientific and technical training, providing millions of new specialists, would break up any possible monopoly by a minority and eliminate the threat of dictatorship "... the number of scientists and technologists in this country has doubled in little more than ten years and now forms twenty percent of the labor force—this growth is much faster than that of the population ..." (*New York Times*, December 29, 1970)

The second check to dictatorship is not to invest specialists or any other group with political power to rule over others. While we must ceaselessly guard against the abuse of power, we must never forget that in the joint effort to build a better world, we must also learn to trust each other. If we do not, then this better world will forever remain a utopia.

THE TRUE RELEVANCE OF ANARCHISM

I have tried to show that anarchism is not a panacea that will miraculously cure all the ills of the body social, but rather, a 20th century guide to action based on a realistic conception of social reconstruction. The well-nigh inseparable material obstacles to the introduction of anarchism—scarcity of goods and services and excessive industrial-managerial centralization—have or can be removed by the cybernetic-technical revolution. Yet, the movement for emancipation is threatened by the far more formidable, political, social and brain-washing techniques of "The Establishment".

In their polemics with the Marxists, the anarchists insisted that the political state subjects the economy to its own ends. A highly sophisticated economic system, once viewed as the prerequisite for the realization of socialism, now serves to reinforce the domination of the ruling classes with the technology of physical and mental repression and the ensuing obliteration of human values. They very abundance which can liberate man from want and drudgery, now enables the state to establish what is, in effect, a nationalized poorhouse where the millions of technologically unemployed—forgotten, faceless outcasts—on public "welfare" will be given only enough to keep them quiet. They very technology that has opened new roads to freedom, has also armed states with unimaginably frightful weapons for the annihilation of humanity.

While the anarchists never underestimated the great importance of the economic factor in social change, they have nevertheless rejected fanatical economic fatalism. One of

the most cogent contributions of anarchism to social theory is the proper emphasis on how political institutions, in turn, mold economic life. Equally significant is the importance attached to the will of man, his aspirations, the moral factor, and above all, the spirit of revolt in the shaping of human history. In this area too, anarchism is particularly relevant to the renewal of society. To indicate the importance attached to this factor, we quote a passage from a letter that Bakunin wrote to his friend Elisee Reclus:

... the hour of revolution has passed, not because of the frightful disaster (the Franco-Prussian War and the slaughter of the Paris Commune, May 1871) but because, to my great despair, I have found it a fact, and I am finding it every day anew, that revolutionary hope, passion, are absolutely lacking in the masses; and when these are absent, it is vain to make desperate efforts ...

The availability of more and more consumer goods plus the sophisticated techniques of mass indoctrination has corrupted the public mind. Bourgeoisification has sapped the revolutionary vitality of the masses. It is precisely this divorce from the inspiring values of socialism, which, to a large extent, accounts for the venality and corruption in modern labor and socialist movements.

To forge a revolutionary movement, which, inspired by anarchist ideas, would be capable of reversing this reactionary trend, is a task of staggering proportions. But therein lies the true relevance of anarchism.



HUSKINGS

PERVICACIA*

This here heading could indicate that this here writing was going to pull the shucks off some corn. It'll be corny, all right. Howsomever, before we get all grim and uptight an go to digging after things like a ghou! in a graveyard, let's just lean back, take a what-the-hell attitude, sort of turn the thing up and see what runs out. You still with me?

This is going to be the production of a grasshopper mind, saying whatever comes to mind as it comes to mind, if I can keep it on my mind that long. Whenever it reaches about the length to fill about so much space, we'll knock it off — not necessarily in the middle of a sentence, however. When it takes a hop from one thing to another, the editor is welcome to sub-head if he sees fit; that is his privilege. In fact, editors have a lot of rights and privileges over submitted material, including the right to pass it on to the sweeper! Selah!

I claim to be the guy who coined the phrase, "Life is an eternal struggle between principle and policy." Hurts m' feelin's, but 'tain't included in the Book of Great Quotations. But to get on with the husking:

The union called the Industrial Workers of the World embodies what you could call my true belief. So we'll say it

that way: The IWW embodies my true belief. And that's enough to set principle and policy to tearing at one another. It seems to me that a mystique has been built around the IWW that tends to exalt it to a point that puts it out of reach. I suspect that many a worker has taken a look and then decided to worship from afar. Ow-w-w! That was a sharp pain hit my conscience right then!

There is no moral fault to be found with the sentiment that built, and still builds, the mystique. If ever the path to true nobility was pointed out to the working class, the IWW Preamble was the finger. Yet, so long as the capitalism which the IWW is pledged to replace does continue to exist, the respect, the admiration, the esteem, the high regard have got to be bolstered with physical support. Sentiment is not the weapon that will overthrow the capitalist, even though his paid brain-warppers whip it up among us dupes in copious quantities, but always with a plan for action attached, have you noticed? Sentiment backed with action, not just sentiment. Remember that.

Are you still there? Well, we've come full circle, right back to principle and policy. Now, in principle, we call for production for the use of all people instead of for profit for the few, right? So, if you adhered to principle, like full steam

*willfully obstinate

"Pervicacia" is the pen-name of Gilbert Mers who has been a member of Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union 510, since 1947.

ahead and damn the torpedoes, you'd begin in the morning — or right now — to do your manly or womanly share, taking that which has been produced and distributing it for use, right up to the limit of your strength and endurance. The sad reality is that such a course would certainly get you incarcerated — could get you assassinated.

Now, if 15 or 20 million people were to join you in that effort tomorrow morning. . . . But we don't have that many believers yet. So, as a matter of policy, it might seem better to stay free and alive and keep talking to whomever will listen about a better deal.

The foregoing was a bit on the extreme side. Getting to the more mundane or ordinary or whatever you call it: The average guy or gal grows to be about a certain size and generally encounters a set of circumstances which combine to make him or her desirous of finding a job. Again, through a set of circumstances, a job is found. The average youngster hasn't spent any prodigious effort studying the class struggle; he'll get him a job, look forward to pay day, and take it from there. The exceptional youngster who has studied the class struggle knows that to influence the working class he has to be of it. So, either way, the newly-employed worker accepts the prevailing conditions of the job he hires on. He may not accept them for long; he may quit before noon. Some have been known to take a close look and walk away without having even touched the working gear. This last could hardly be called employment, and it could be added that workers of this persuasion are hardly germane to the issue at hand.

The average guy stays on the job. If it's unionized, after a period of time he'll be offered union membership. It may be a union shop, where he either takes mem-

bership in the union holding the labor contract or faces discharge. Chances are it'll be the usual business union, committed against the class struggle rather than to it. Does principle dictate walking away from the place, or does policy advise staying and working to instill a class viewpoint among his fellow workers? It could be one of those unions that declares IWW membership to be de facto dual unionism and grounds for expulsion. Does principle say to wave the red card in their faces and shout, "Screw you!", or does policy say stick around and play it low key and convert some of these fellows?

In related situations many Wobs have done yeoman service for the trade unions while pushing the One Big Union idea. Wobblies support any workers' struggle and have generally been the most effective help any union has had in a strike situation. The same goes for the daily struggle on the job, the betterment of working conditions. It cuts two ways. It most likely strengthens the trade union, an outfit opposed to IWW principle. At the same time, the IWW member's ability and honesty have evoked respect for his principles from his fellow workers.

So how far do you go with principle and where do you begin to react to policy? I can't answer. I am of the belief that it is a mistake to lead or push a person farther than he or she is morally conditioned to go. "From each according to this ability," I suppose.

Are you still there? You didn't get disgusted and hop off? Nor dizzy and fall off? Well, we're full circle another time yet. Whether we went around twice in the same old rut or whether we cut a Figure-8, I can't tell; but we're right back to the original premise:

Truly, life is an eternal struggle between principle and policy. ■

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