

# FRAGMENTS

*a memoir*

by

Sam Dolgoff

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*To all fighters for freedom: past, present and future.*



## OTHER WORKS BY SAM DOLGOFF

### Books:

#### *Bakunin on Anarchy*

Alfred A. Knopf, 1972

English edition: George Allen and Unwin, London, 1973

Second enlarged edition: Black Rose Books, Montreal,  
Canada, 1980

Spanish translation: Tusquets Editor, Barcelona, three  
printings, 1977

Italian translation: Antistato, Milan, two editions, 1976  
and 1984

#### *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers Self-management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-1939*

Free Life Editions, Inc., New York and Black Rose Books,  
Montreal, 1974

Second edition: Black Rose Books, 1983

#### *The Cuban Revolution: A Critical Perspective*

Black Rose Books, Quebec, 1976

Spanish translation: Campo Abierto, Madrid, 1978

Swedish translation: Federativs, Stockholm, 1980

German translation: Libertad Verlag, Berlin, 1983

### Pamphlets:

*Ethics and American Unionism*, Libertarian League, New York,  
1958

*The Labor Party Illusion*, Libertarian League, New York, 1961

*The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society*, Soil of Liberty,  
Minneapolis, Minn., first printing August 1977, second  
printing September 1979

*The American Labor Movement: A New Beginning*, Resurgencé,  
Champaign, Ill., 1980

*A Critique of Marxism*, Soil of Liberty, Minneapolis, Minn.,  
1983

*Third World Nationalism and the State*, Anarchist Communist  
Federation of North America (dissolved, but available  
from Resurgence)



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# PREFACE

I have written these memoirs at the suggestion of our friend and comrade Paul Avrich, in the hope that my recollections will constitute at least a modest contribution to the history of the American anarchist movement. This is not a systematic work. I have recalled my experiences and impressions as they occurred to me but I do hope the reader will make allowances for minor errors, which are to be expected when one is nearly eighty-three years old and the “remembrance of things past” is not always unflinching correct. It was suggested that I write these memoirs in detail. But age, impaired memory, lack of documentation and the expense would make so vast a project unadvisable—practically impossible. I have therefore confined myself to recollecting—outlining, so to speak—the most important events.

I deeply appreciate the help and encouragement of my “compañera” of over half a century, Esther, and friends who shared their recollections; Robert Calese and Irving Sterling for files of anarchist papers; Bessie Mahler, Valerio Isca and Franz Fleigler who provided invaluable data; my old friends, Dick Ellington for his excellent typesetting and layout, Robert Palmer who volunteered to compile the index, and last but by no means least, Stuart Christie and the comrades of Refract Press for their invaluable efforts and encouragement.

—Sam Dolgoff  
1986

## *A note to the reader:*

Please bear in mind that from 1932 to 1972 (when my *Bakunin on Anarchy* was published) I wrote and addressed public meetings under the pseudonym Sam Weiner.







## EARLY LIFE

My parents (original name Dolgopolski) came from small towns near the city of Vitebsk (White Russia) where I was born on 10 October 1902.

My father, by no means a revolutionist, was nevertheless a nonconformist in his own way. Thus, upon marrying my mother he refused to accept a dowry and further scandalized the orthodox Jewish community by announcing that he violated the holy sabbath by smoking cigarettes and not attending synagogue services. The community was particularly incensed because my father had an excellent Hebrew-religious education. But despite his nonconformity, his subconscious loyalty to his orthodox training crept out when he recited long prayers in Hebrew during his sleep.

In Russia my father was a timekeeper on a railroad under construction and ran a commissary for the workers. He was discharged from his job when he sided with the workers during a strike and urged the contractor to recall the strikebreaking soldiers when all the workers wanted was another piece of bread and decent working conditions.

To escape compulsory service in the Russian army before the Russo-Japanese War (1905) my father emigrated to the United States, leaving my mother, my sister and myself in Russia to join him a year or two later when he planned to send for us if he could save enough money for transportation. In New York, his countrymen from the same vicinity in Russia taught him the housepainting trade. Later when other friends or

relatives came to New York, my father in turn taught them his trade.

The family revolutionist was my father's brother Tsudik. Through the many years spanning the 1905 Russian Revolution to my father's death in 1945, we had no news about what happened to Tsudik, and doubted strongly that he was still living. But while purchasing the centennial edition of *The Minutes of the International Workers Association*, published in Russia in English translation, I was given a copy of the Russian Communist Jewish periodical *Soviet Homeland* (number 4, 1964) in which to our great surprise, a photo and obituary article about my uncle read in part:

Tsudik Dolgopolski was born in the village of Haradok, not far from Vitebsk. At 13 years of age he began work in a brush factory. In 1909 after many difficulties he became an elementary school teacher. In 1926, his novel *Open Doors* was published in which the great events of the October Revolution were graphically described. In 1928 his book *On Soviet Land* was published. Later, two volumes of memoirs, *Beginnings* and *This Was Long Ago*, appeared. Dolgopolski's writing graphically described the awakening of Jewish life thanks to the achievements of the October Revolution.

This sketch omits the fact that he was sent to Siberia for fomenting strikes and demonstrations against the Czar, that extracts from his *Sketches of Village Life* were printed in the New York *Jewish Daily Forward* and that my uncle declined the *Forward's* invitation to come to New York as a staff writer. More importantly, a full report from a reliable source revealed that my uncle, condemned to hard labor in Stalin's concentration camps where he died, was later "rehabilitated" by Khrushchev.

Upon our arrival in New York we lived in a typical lower east side slum on Rutgers Slip, a block or two from the East River docks, in overcrowded quarters. The two lavatories for the six tenants on each floor were located in the common hallway. There was no bathroom. A large washtub in the kitchen also served as a bathtub. When another immigrant in need of shelter came, a metal cover over the washtub also served as a bed. There was no central heating, no hot water and no elec-

tricity. Gas for illumination and for hot water in summer was supplied only by depositing a quarter in the meter. Neither the electric trolley nor the auto were in general use and both commercial and passenger traffic was horse drawn.

Despite the horrible economic conditions, there was, at least in our neighborhood, far less crime than now. We could walk the streets at all hours of the night unmolested, sleep outdoors on hot summer nights and even leave our quarters unlocked and feel perfectly safe. To a great extent this can be accounted for by the character of the immigrants. The new immigrants, fortunately, had not yet become fully integrated into the American "melting pot." The very local neighborhood communities which enabled the immigrants to survive under the oppressive conditions in their native homes sustained them in the deplorable new environment.

The new arrivals lived in the same neighborhoods as did their friends and countrymen, shared their cramped lodgings and meager food supplies, found employment for them where they learned a new trade and helped in every possible way at great sacrifice, the new arrivals to adjust to the unfamiliar conditions in their new homes. Thus, upon arrival, as already noted, my father was taught the painting trade by his fellow countrymen, lodged and sustained till he could establish himself.

My father became a member of the Vitebsker Benevolent Society, which provided sickness and death benefits, small loans and other essential services at cost. Fraternal and other local associations actually constituted a vast integrated family. Neighbors in need received the widest possible assistance and solidarity and encouragement, and the associations promoted the fullest educational and cultural development.

Social scientists, state "welfarists" and state socialists, busily engaged in mapping out newer and greater areas for state control, should take note of the fact that long before social security, unemployment insurance and other social service laws were enacted by the state, the immigrants helped each other by helping themselves. They created a vast network of cooperative fraternities and associations of all kinds to meet expanding needs—summer camps for children and adults, educational projects, cultural and health centers, care of the aged,

etc. I am in this still impressed by the anarchist Peter Kropotkin's insistence on the practical importance of mutual aid and voluntary organization as the precondition for the free society; by the insight of the great anarchist thinker Proudhon who in the following words outlined a cardinal principle of anarchism:

Through the complexity of interests and the progress of ideas, society is forced to abjure the state . . . beneath the apparatus of government, under the shadow of political institutions, society was closely producing its organization, making for itself a new order which expressed its vitality and autonomy. . . . [*General Idea of the Revolution of the Nineteenth Century*, Freedom Press, London, 1923, p. 80]

Some time later the family moved to the then less crowded "wilds of the Bronx." Work was hard to find and my father found it increasingly difficult to support the family which now numbered five children. To help supplement the family income, I found part-time work delivering breakfast rolls and milk. I was eleven or twelve and attending elementary school. In those days the milk and rolls were placed in a dumbwaiter in the basement and hoisted up to an opening installed in the kitchen of each apartment. I worked from about six to eight in the morning and from four to six in the afternoon, six days a week, for the princely sum of \$4.50. Under such circumstances I was not really a conscientious student. My classmates would taunt me by repeating that they "would have to burn the school down to get me out of there." Aside from a few months' night high school, this ended my formal education.

After graduating elementary school I worked full time in different factories as an unskilled laborer. My father then made up his mind to teach me his trade of house painter. But he couldn't make headway. I was very obstreperous and would not listen to his instructions. So he induced a friend of his, a very good housepainter and decorator, a Swiss, to take me on: "He won't listen to me, so I am giving him to you. Make a painter out of him. If he gives you any trouble, kick him in the ass." My teacher believed that compliments, however well merited, would spoil me, make me "swell headed." The best compliment he would grudgingly concede was that "Your work, lately, is

not as bad as it usually is." But he would heatedly defend me if anyone found the least fault with my work, as this reflected on his ability as a teacher. I completed my training while working for various employers and several years later for a small painting contractor in Chicago in whose home I was a boarder.

## I JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

I was, by reason of harsh economic conditions, my bitter life as a low-paid, exploited wage slave, and above all by my rebellious temperament, most receptive to the socialist message. I regularly attended—better said “haunted”—the Socialist Party and its youth branch, the Young People’s Socialist League (YPSL, the “Yipsels”). I was inspired by soapbox orators who in simple, eloquent language voiced my idealistic aspirations and encouraged me to rebel against capitalism. I helped out by carrying the speaker’s platform, distributing leaflets and making announcements, circulating a cigar box to take up the collection, bringing the speaker water or other refreshments to lubricate his tonsils and occasionally even acting as chairman of the meeting—an experience that later helped me become a fairly good street corner propagandist (“rabble rouser”) after I left the socialist YPSL.

In this connection I recall an amusing incident. The candidate of the Socialist Labor Party for the state assembly and his brother, the rival candidate of the Socialist Party, insulted each other while addressing bystanders on opposite sides of the same corner. The SLP speaker sarcastically introduced himself by announcing that “I have the very dubious honor of being the brother of the Socialist Party candidate, a coincidence that I deeply deplore.” To our surprise the brothers, after hurling epithets at each other, departed arm in arm in search of refreshments after the meeting. The anti-World War I declaration of the Socialist Party in 1917 aroused hundreds of thousands of citizens to elect socialists to the New York State Assembly, New York City aldermen, the socialist Jacob Panken to the Municipal Court, and Meyer London to the House of Representatives. I still remember when the newly elected assemblymen chartered

a special railway coach to Albany, the state capital. The coach was flamboyantly decorated with red flags and banners, while a brass band blared out the proletarian hymns "The International" and "The Marsellaise." Jacob Panken and other dignitaries hailed this event as the beginning of the long-awaited Social Revolution.

I did not at the time grasp the significance of the fact that duly elected socialists were expelled and not allowed to take their seats on a legal pretext a few months later. In the general euphoria of the hollow socialist victory, I joined the YPSL in 1919.

## I LEAVE THE SOCIALIST PARTY

When the internal war between the right- and left-wing factions of the Socialist Party began, I was a young, unsophisticated neophyte, barely seventeen years old, who had just joined the YPSL. The hair-splitting quarrels between "right and left" about how the pronunciamientos of the high priests of the socialist church should be interpreted and the lust for power between sectarian political connivers repelled me. Thousands of sincere, intelligent militants, shocked by their scandalous, unethical conduct, left the movement altogether.

My growing estrangement from the Socialist Party came not from contact with the leftist factions but from my disappointing experiences and observations. I had joined the YPSL because I believed that it fought for the overthrow of capitalism and the revolutionary transformation of society. But this was not the case.

A few months after its St. Louis anti-war declaration, members of the party were beginning to shy away from the anti-war position; Jewish socialistic unions like the powerful United Hebrew Trades supported the pro-war policies of the government and insisted that the St. Louis anti-war stand must be reversed and repudiated. Meyer London, twice elected to the House of Representatives, who from the beginning reluctantly accepted his party's anti-war position, now urged the party to support the war efforts of the government. He refused to intro-

duce a bill for the repeal of conscription into the armed forces law, arguing that since the country was at war it needed a strong army. London even sent a telegram to the president of the Russian Menshevik Provisional Government urging it to reaffirm its pledge not to conclude a separate peace with Germany and continue to prosecute the war.

The *Jewish Daily Forward* which had continued its anti-war propaganda until the United States entered the war served notice that: "now that war has been declared, opposition to the war must be given up and we, loyal citizens, must faithfully carry out all decisions of our government." The Jewish socialistic labor unions—the garment and allied workers, shoe, bakery and furniture trades, some building trades, the great national fraternal association Workmen's Circle and the *Jewish Daily Forward*, the largest Jewish paper in the world, constituted the backbone of the Socialist Party and the party naturally endorsed the pro-war policy.

The idea that these organizations were part of the world socialist movement, which would eventually abolish capitalism and usher in the new socialist society, which was reflected in the preamble and constitution of unions like the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and repeated even more emphatically at its Boston convention in 1920, was altogether eliminated four years later in 1924, indicating for me the degeneration of both the Socialist Party and what amounted to its "labor front."

The bitter feud between the moderates seeking to achieve their goals by gradual reforms within the parliamentary system and the impatient revolutionary socialists who fought for the Social Revolution practically wrecked the party. I gradually realized that the Socialist Party's belief that its goals will be achieved by gradual reforms legally enacted by elected socialist legislators in the federal, state, municipal and county governments, far from undermining the capitalist system, actually reinforced capitalism by siphoning off discontent into harmless channels. Reforms like lower cost of milk for babies, the five-cent fare in public transportation, improved social services, etc. were also part of the election programs of the bourgeois political parties. The Socialist Party too was actually a pillar of

capitalist democracy which must be exposed as a camouflaged dictatorship. Necessary immediate demands leading to the overthrow of capitalism can be achieved only in refusing to obey the law and in undermining respect for the law.

I frankly discussed my changed attitude and told the socialists that their movement lacked even a vestige of revolutionary spirit. I maintained that neither I nor anyone else should ever again participate in the electoral swindle which only reinforced capitalism. Naturally, the YPSL branch expelled me for insubordination and violation of Socialist Party principles. I was about to leave the YPSL anyhow. But I welcomed the trial because it gave me the opportunity to expound my views. After the trial, one of the judges came up to me and said, "You know, you are not too bad. In fact you put up a pretty good defense, as far as things go, although your case is hopeless. I am going to give you a tip. You are not a socialist. You are an anarchist." So I asked him, "What is their address?"

## THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

When I, and a number of other restless youngsters searching for a coherent revolutionary orientation, visited the hall belonging to the anarchist periodical *Road to Freedom*—a dingy little loft on lower Broadway near Union Square—we were heartily welcomed and without membership qualifications invited to attend group meetings and to participate in all activities.

I was overwhelmed to learn that there existed a different, anti-statist international anarchist movement diametrically opposed to authoritarian Marxism. Nor had I ever heard of anarchists like Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Reclus, Guillaume, Malatesta and so many revolutionary activists who formulated the principles of anarchism. I was already receptive to anarchism. The extent to which my vague ideas were already becoming clearer, owing to my association with the comrades of the *Road to Freedom*, can best be illustrated by these extracts from two of my amateurish articles in that paper:

Today we are in a position to see clearly what occurs when a "radical" movement based on authority and relying on government to attain its ends comes to. It loses its identity and becomes a mere name without real significance. . . . In Russia we see the Revolution betrayed, bureaucracy in the saddle and every vestige of freedom obliterated by the communist dictatorship. . . . The anarchist contention that *NO* changes in the *FORM* of the state can change its inherent defects has been fully sustained. ["A Vindication," November 1930]

Another article, "At the Crossroads" (April 1932), reads in part:

Anarchism looks forward to a condition in which all the activities of society will be conducted by voluntary groups, associations, and federations—instituting mutual agreement in place of coercion as the guiding principle of human society. . . . The development of the individual and of society can be attained only on the belief that freedom is indispensable to the development of a better society. . . . We are opposed to all forms of exploitation of man by man. . . . We therefore believe in the abolition of the wage system. . . . Society must be conducted on the basis of "From Each According to His Ability and To Each According to His Needs." . . . A free man in a free society. . . .

The actual editor of the *Road to Freedom* was Walter Starrett Van Valkenburgh. We called him Van. The co-editor Hippolyte Havel rarely participated. Van came to New York City from Schenectady, New York. As far as I have been able to ascertain he lost one of his legs in a railway accident. He was a close friend of Emma Goldman and arranged her lectures in Schenectady. The editorial policy of the *Road to Freedom* was one of the fullest expression of all shades of anarchist opinion. Van published controversial articles, sometimes adding an editorial note. I will always gratefully remember that it was Van who encouraged us youngsters to write in the *Road to Freedom*. When my first article appeared, Van asked, "How does it feel to see your name in print the first time?" Van and his comrade-wife, Sadie Ludlow, were clerical workers, working on the paper evenings and weekends.

The *Road to Freedom* was launched in 1924—and Van remained with the paper until it ceased publication in 1932. He died of a heart condition six years later on 22 October 1938. Our magazine *Vanguard* in an obituary article noted:

Our comrade Walter Starrett Van Valkenburgh for the past thirty years devoted his life to the cause of human freedom. He was untiring on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti and in the last years gave unselfishly of his strength to aid the heroic fight of the Spanish workers. We extend our condolences to his comrade-wife. We, who are so few, can ill afford his absence in our ranks. . . .

From participation in group affairs I learned that certain internal obstacles to the progress of the *Road to Freedom* existed, not only in the group, but in the movement as a whole. In the *Road to Freedom* group as well as in many anarchist and other groups, sectarianism and petty personal quarrels broke up the groups, making any concerted action impossible. There were no qualifications for membership. People whom we did not know, anyone who happened to be passing through, participated in group affairs. A nut who came in from Canada addressed everyone, except himself, as an "unfinished organism." He proclaimed at the top of his voice that Emma Goldman was militant only during her menstrual period. A fanatical vegetarian left in a huff when we refused to proclaim that anyone who is not a vegetarian cannot possibly be an anarchist. Another eccentric warned that children conceived at night in darkness were born weak and died young while those conceived in broad daylight under sunny skies remained strong, healthy and long-lived.

There was practically no coordination. The extreme "individualists" who, in the pungent phrase of Luigi Fabbri, "idealized the most anti-social forms of individual rebellion" were against everything. Even a temporary committee of two or three comrades was denounced as a "bureaucracy." A proposed committee of relations to coordinate common aims was denounced as a "conspiracy." Others insisted that an anarchist should never be interested in labor movements because the struggle for better conditions was a reformist capitulation to capitalism. Some were religious Tolstoyan pacifists. Others advocated assassination of rulers, expropriations, etc., in the terrorist tradition of Ravachol, Emil Henry and others. And so it went.

## THE VANGUARD GROUP

Obviously a periodical consisting primarily of contradictory articles reflecting the divergent views of different individuals comprising the group, where "one page laughed at the other page," was bound to confuse and alienate the potential members we so desperately needed. An anarchist paper should, of course, be open to various viewpoints. But we youngsters, new members of the *Road to Freedom* group, felt that the paper, or failing that a new periodical, must work out and present consistent, constructive ideas designed to impress the new people we are trying to reach. We got together to discuss the specific nature of these ideas and how to apply them.

But we ourselves did not have the necessary knowledge or experience to accomplish so difficult a task. Fortunately we were able to do this with the guidance of Mark Schmidt, a Russian comrade with wide knowledge of anarchism enriched by direct participation in the Russian Revolution and fluent in English. We were favorably receptive to his ideas not because he urged us to accept them on faith, but because we ourselves had reached similar conclusions from our experience in the *Road to Freedom*.

We felt that the terms "pure anarchist" and "anarchism without adjectives" were not specific enough and did not adequately define our orientation. In accordance with the teachings of the classical anarchists Bakunin and Kropotkin we identified ourselves as "communist anarchists" or "anarcho-syndicalists." An anarchist society would be based on federations and confederations of free communes in which production would be conducted by free, self-managed labor associations (syndicates) as formulated in the Declaration of Principles of the International Workers' Association, founded in 1864 and revived in 1922. We were, above all, resolved to apply these principles to the actual, concrete situation of the intellectual and manual workers, the youth, the unemployed—in short, the underprivileged—with a view toward building an effective grass-roots American anarchist movement.

*Vanguard* was the outgrowth of our Friends of Freedom group which shortly dwindled and collapsed because it lacked

proper organization, opening itself to every Tom, Dick and Harry whose search for amusing curiosities impelled them to join, thereby introducing the very handicaps we were trying to avoid. With the demise of the Friends of Freedom group, we gradually attracted a solid core of militant youngsters, activists determined to put anarchism "on the map." These young militants organized themselves into the Vanguard Group and launched its monthly organ *Vanguard: An Anarchist Communist Journal*.

In open forums, outdoor meetings, and debates (I took part in quite a few) we forcefully expounded our anarchist-communist/anarchist-syndicalist position. Every issue of *Vanguard* included reports and analysis of important current events. We featured news and evaluations of developments in the American labor movement in special articles, among them: "Anarchists in the CIO"; "Open Letter to the Anarchists"; "Who Are the Progressives in the CIO?" Many of these articles were written by myself in addition to my regular feature "On the Class War Front." Our younger comrade, Roman Weinrebe (who passed away in the flower of his youth some years later), was a most talented and competent writer. In such writings we tried to dispel the pro-CIO-AFL, pro-President Roosevelt euphoria affecting even anarchist circles.

Both the CIO and the AFL are . . . intimately connected with the Roosevelt administration and helping the government to regiment the labor movement into the pattern of emerging state capitalism. . . . The attitude of many anarchists toward the IWW must be changed. The IWW represents most closely in America the type of revolutionary unionism we are talking about. [3 February 1935]

*Vanguard* published the most authentic, fullest news and comments on the Spanish Revolution, international reports and special articles by the most informed militants as well as perceptive articles analyzing problems from an anarchist-communist/anarchist-syndicalist viewpoint. Contributors included Rudolf Rocker, Armando Borghi, Alexander Shapiro, Gregory Maximoff, Christian Cornellison, Augustin Souchy, Pierre Besnard and Emma Goldman (with whom we were in fairly regular correspondence). *Vanguard* was highly regarded as one of the very

best English language publications in the world. This letter from Emma Goldman speaks for itself:

I was delighted to receive the April-May 1936 issue of *Vanguard*. I have been wondering what happened to it. I was afraid you might have to give it up. That would be a great pity. First, because the magazine contains splendid material and secondly because we are so poor in English propaganda. I can imagine the struggle you are having. I know from experience what it means to get out a magazine without any income from advertisements. My yearly income from tours enabled us to keep *Mother Earth* going for twelve years. I wish I could be with you to help through lectures to maintain *Vanguard*. I like the current issue of *Vanguard* better than the former. It is alive and deals ably with some of the pressing issues. You will see by my last statement about my final lectures in England just what has been achieved—not much to boast about yet to warrant my return. It will now depend on the condition of comrade Berkman whether I can go away. Just now our comrade is still in the hospital and his recovery is very slow. But we must hope for the best. I am sorry you have difficulty raising the money for the cost of my pamphlet *Two Communisms* . . . but I suppose most of our comrades are poor. . . .

In a speaking tour to promote *Vanguard* (spring 1935) I spoke at Wellsley College and East Boston, Massachusetts. The tour was arranged by Aldino Felicani, a friend of Carlo Tresca. Felicani organized the original Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee. He was for many years a close friend of both Sacco and Vanzetti and his papers constitute an invaluable primary source for the history of the case. Felicani, a professional printer with his own shop in Milk Street, Boston, edited and published, at his own expense, the outstanding Italian anarchist periodical *Contro-Corrente* (Against the Current) as well as many books, pamphlets and leaflets in Italian and sometimes English. He offered to print *Vanguard* at cost or if necessary, free of charge. But it was not practical to make the frequent trips to Boston required to prepare, edit and transact other matters connected with circulation and mailing.

Wellesley was then a very exclusive college attended by young ladies belonging to wealthy, prominent aristocratic families. The college combined an academic curriculum with a luxurious “finishing school” to prepare young ladies about to

be introduced to "society," a prelude to advantageous marriage to the "right" (socially acceptable) suitors.

Unfortunately, we arrived at the wrong time when the students were getting ready to attend a gala ball and reception to be held that very evening. The few who did attend showed little interest. After a few polite remarks they left and the meeting was adjourned.

My East Boston talk was delivered at the East Boston Italian group's Casa del Popolo (House of the People). The Casa del Popolo consisted of a kitchen, dining room and a medium-sized theater. The theater was also used for dances, socials and other occasions.

The comrades were most hospitable and contributed generously for expenses. They listened to me without interruption (there was no chairman). But they objected very strongly during the discussion period to my brand of anarchism. Irrespective of whether they correctly interpreted the ideas of their sage, Luigi Galleani, they were "against organization," "against syndicalism," against large-scale industry, never clearly defining what they meant by these terms. Their simplistic conceptions envisioned a return to the relatively primitive social life of a bygone age, to what has been aptly called "ox cart anarchism."

My discourse received the same reception at the Needham, Massachusetts Italian anarchist Casa del Popolo. But the Needham comrades, to counteract the reactionary education of the church and the state public schools, were determined to provide a libertarian education for their children. They asked me to recommend a capable teacher, whom they were willing to pay generously for his services. I recommended a well-qualified teacher, Ed Stattman, a Chicago Wobbly. He and his wife, Lilly, moved to Needham where they remained for about a year. When Stattman notified the Needham comrades that he had to resign for personal reasons, he was asked to recommend a replacement. The new teacher was Carl Keller, ex-editor of the IWW organ *Industrial Worker*. My esteem for the good comrades I met on my tour will always remain.

From time to time through the years I addressed meetings arranged by our close friend Joseph Meltzer in The Chelsea (Massachusetts) Jewish Workmen's Circle Center. While Massa-

chusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Vermont were dotted with Italian anarchist centers there was not even one Jewish anarchist group in the New England area. It was Meltzer, in close cooperation with the Italian comrades, who gallantly kept what little was left of the anarchist movement alive. A feeling of sadness still envelops me when I recall the Italian anarchist movement which, like the Jewish, is now extinct, with all the once flourishing centers now abandoned. Only a few old timers remain. To our sorrow Meltzer and his wife died within a few months of each other.

At a symposium in the Chelsea Workmen's Circle Center I "represented"—so to speak—the anarchist tendency. In the course of our remarks I drifted into an informal debate with the prominent Trotskyite Max Schachtman. Schachtman attacked the anarchists. His lie that Nestor Makhno was an anti-semite, together with his allusions to the character and sexual life of Emma Goldman and his labeling of the gallant Spanish anarchists as "counter-revolutionists" because they refused to follow the example of his heroes Lenin and Trotsky to "seize power" etc., made my blood boil. I told him without mincing words that it ill behooved him to extol the crimes of the grave-diggers of the Russian Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky, whose hands dripped with the blood shed by the Kronstadt sailors, the rebellious workers and peasants who fought to emancipate Russia from their totalitarian dictatorship. I challenged him to produce even an iota of evidence to back up his false charge that Makhno was an anti-semite. "Only a scandal monger like you would dare to defame the character of Emma Goldman whose shoes you are not fit to shine."

Ironically enough, the sterling revolutionary Schachtman became a conservative-minded patriot who actually praised the Vietnam war policies of both the democrat president Johnson and the republican president Nixon. Schachtman died some years ago.

In early spring 1937, at the request of the Toronto, Canada, anarchist group that the *Vanguard* send a speaker to debate a communist splinter group, the Revolutionary Workers League, I went to Toronto. I do not remember the name of the subject, but it involved the contrast between anarchism and Marxism.

I expected only a handful of people, but to my gratification my presentation and refutation of my opponent's arguments were roundly applauded by an audience of several hundred people who packed the hall—a response which was of course, enthusiastically hailed by the anarchists.

Among the active members of the anarchist group I met in Toronto was Ahrne Thorne who edited the Jewish anarchist monthly *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (Free Voice of Labor) until it was forced to suspend publication after eighty years of continuous appearance. I also met Arturo Bertollotti, an Italian anarchist who was saved from deportation by the vigorous campaign of the anarchists and civil libertarians, among them Emma Goldman and Dorothy Rogers.

Dorothy Rogers (married name, Giesecke) became an anarchist, close friend, secretary and confidant of Emma Goldman after attending Emma's lectures in Toronto. Dorothy's conservative husband did his utmost to dissuade her: "You have bees in your bonnet and must be treated by a psychiatrist." Failing this, he made life with him impossible, forcing her to live alone on a meager income. Emma Goldman's remarks in reply to a letter she received from Dorothy indicates her unhappiness: "You do not annoy me with telling me about your personal life, personal struggles, tragedies. You need never hesitate to tell me all you feel and need." (David Porter, *Soul on Fire*, p. 311) Dorothy Rogers acted as Emma's secretary, nursed her in her last illness and accompanied her remains for burial in Waldheim Cemetery, next to the monument of the Chicago Haymarket anarchist martyrs.

Dorothy did not return to Canada, but lived alone in a dingy flat in a New York lower east side slum. True to her principles, she became an active member of the Resistance Group (about which more below). After World War II she fell on an icy street and fractured her hip. She partially recovered after major surgery. Dispirited and in despair, she returned to Toronto and lived in the home of her old friend Bertollotti where she passed away, an anonymous heroine who gave her all for the emancipation of humanity.

## THE UNITED LIBERTARIAN ORGANIZATIONS (ULO)

The *Vanguard* had, even before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution (19 July 1936), allotted the fullest coverage to the events in Spain and the role of the anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labor (CNT) and Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI). Our group played a major part in organizing the United Libertarian Organizations (ULO). The ULO was organized to offset the vicious Communist Party propaganda and widespread general false reports about the events in Spain spread by the American press and by Marxist parties like the Trotskyites, the socialists and others. The ULO tried to bring the attention of the public to the decisive role of the CNT-FAI not only in repulsing the Franco-fascist hordes but initiating the libertarian reorganization of society.

The ULO was a coalition of groups publishing *Cultura Proletaria* (Spanish), *Il Martello* (Italian), *Delo Truda* (Russian anarchist), *Il Proletario* (Italian IWW), and *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (Jewish Anarchist Federation); also the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union and General Recruiting Union of the IWW, the Spanish Labor Press Bureau (administered by the CNT-FAI representative in the United States and Canada, the Chicago anarchist Maximilian Olay), and of course, the *Vanguard*. In addition, scattered anarchist groups around the country and unions like the Progressive Mine Workers of America local in Gillespie, Illinois, also adhered to the ULO. The Progressive Mine Workers local, although not directly affiliated to the ULO, through the efforts of its secretary John Batuello contributed substantial sums to the ULO. I first met John and his brother Domenick and other militants when I spoke in their district to expose and combat the Communist Party-dominated National Miners' Union. I knew that my efforts did make an impression when the Communist Party national daily called me "a paid agent of Hearst."

The official organ of the ULO, *Spanish Revolution*, was a four-page monthly featuring the libertarian reconstruction of society by the CNT-FAI. The articles were unsigned because *Spanish Revolution* was edited by a collective editorial board (I was one of them). According to the US State Department

# SPAIN

SUPPORT THE WORKERS & PEASANTS...  
IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM.  
AGAINST ROOSEVELT'S EMBARGO ON  
ARMS FOR THE SPANISH WORKERS & PEASANTS  
FOR WORKING-CLASS UNITY &  
WORKERS DEMOCRACY IN SPAIN  
PROTEST FASCIST INTERVENTION

SPEAKERS

ANITA BRENNER  
LUDWIG LORE  
CARLO TRESKA  
SAM WEINER

CHAIRMAN  
VANGUARD GROUP

**IRVING PLAZA**  
15th STREET & IRVING PLACE

AUSPICES OF  
EAST SIDE UNITED FRONT COMMITTEE FOR SPAIN

AMICUS MOST  
SOCIALIST PARTY  
GEORGE CLARKE  
YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIALIST LEAGUE

ABE BLUESTEIN  
FREEDOM AND LIBERTARIAN CLUB  
LEIBEL  
LEFT POLITICAL UNION

S. GELB  
POALE Zion  
JOSEPH ZACK  
ONE BIG UNION

Thurs  
MAR.  
**18<sup>th</sup>**  
**8 PM**



Revolución 35 C. 1975

which ruled that all organizations collecting funds for anti-fascist Spain must report how much was actually sent to Spain and how much was retained for expenses, the Communist Party-dominated Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy transmitted only *ten cents* of every dollar collected to Spain and *ninety cents* of every dollar went for "expenses." The ULO, on the contrary, sent every cent collected to Spain with no deductions for expenses.

*Spanish Revolution* (first issue 19 August 1936) soon reached a circulation of seven thousand. In addition to collecting funds, the ULO published a number of pamphlets and other literature pertaining to the history of the Spanish revolutionary movement; arranged mass meetings, symposiums, entertainments, etc. in the New York area; and, if requested, sent speakers to other areas. In the New York area alone during the spring and summer of 1937 I spoke in at least seven indoor and outdoor meetings with speakers like Van Valkenburgh (ex-editor of the *Road to Freedom*), Carlo Tresca, Pio Monaldi of the IWW, speakers from Cultura Proletaria, the journalist Liston M. Oak—just returned from Spain—and others whose names I don't remember. I do remember my old friend Harry Myers, of whom more shortly.

When we tried to conduct street meetings telling the truth about Spain and exposing the traitorous conduct of the communists the place was usurped by the communists who would not let us speak. Van Valkenburgh, Sammy Weinstein, a lightweight boxer who swore that he always defeated his opponent when he wore black tights emblazoned with IWW in red, and others, organized a strong-arm squad and, mounting the platform themselves, exposed the communists. Van Valkenburgh would attach his wooden leg and assail the communists with his crutches.

One of the speakers, Douglas Clark, just returned from fighting with the anarchist "Battalion of Death," recounted his dramatic adventures in Spain also at meetings in the Stelton Modern School Colony, Boston, Philadelphia and New Bedford, Massachusetts, where I also spoke. Douglas was a very unhappy frustrated young man. His mother was an alcoholic and he was beset by other anxieties. We were shocked when informed that he had committed suicide by jumping off the ship where he was employed as an able-bodied seaman.

A number of IWW members and anarchists who joined the communist-infiltrated Lincoln Brigades to fight in Spain were either murdered or imprisoned, framed on false charges, if they refused to submit to party discipline. There was the case of Harry Owens, a seaman member of the IWW, whom the communists deliberately placed in an exposed position on the front line, knowing full well that he would be killed. Another friend of mine, also an IWW seaman, who fought in the same brigade with Owens and also protested the Communist Party dictatorship of the brigade, was jailed on the false charge that he was a fascist spy and finally released months later owing to the pressure of the CNT.

I recall a most disappointing incident. A young anti-fascist announced that he was about to leave to fight in Spain shortly. In the meantime he was wined, dined and given free lodgings and money for expenses. But when he was supposed to leave for Spain, he suddenly disappeared and has not been seen or heard from since. We learned from comrades who knew him in Spain that a "volunteer" from New England who professed to be an anarchist was actually a spy planted by the communists to gather information about anti-communist revolutionists.

*Spanish Revolution* ceased publication on 1 May 1938, less than two years after appearance of its first issue. The fact is that expressions of moral support were not accompanied by enough financial contributions to sustain our periodical. Substantial contributions by the Gillespie, Illinois, local of the Progressive Mine Workers and the Jewish Anarchist Federation had been drastically reduced or ceased altogether. The financial report from May 1937 to October 1937 amounted to only \$60.35. This unfortunate situation must of course be attributed to the growing conviction that the CNT-FAI had suffered great setbacks and the war against Franco-fascism was irretrievably lost.

Anyone interested in the constructive economic and social achievements of the CNT-FAI in revolutionary Spain should consult the pages of *Spanish Revolution* (now available in facsimile from Greenwood Publishing Corporation). Examples of articles are: Rural Collectives in Graus and Imposta; Peasants Build a New Economy; Statistics on Industrial Socialization in Catalonia; Organizing the Textile Industry; Industrial

Democracy; Running a Department Store; Telephone System Run by Workers; Peasant Communes in Aragon; etc.

In intimate interviews with delegates from Spain (1938) Serafin Aliaga of the Libertarian Youth, Juan López, National Committee of the CNT and before then, Avelino Gonzales Mallada, former mayor of Gijon, killed in an auto accident while touring the midwestern states, we became better informed about the deteriorating situation in Spain and the position and problems of the CNT-FAI. The comrade-delegates were far too optimistic about receiving the support of the AFL and CIO for the embattled people of Spain—certainly not for the “subversive anarchist unions.” Although we hated to discourage them, we were morally obligated to reveal the bitter truth.

## THE DEMISE OF VANGUARD

The demise of *Vanguard* (last issue February 1939) was due to a number of interconnected reasons. Even the meager financial contributions which sometimes made its regular appearance uncertain practically ceased with the catastrophic collapse of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution. The fascist victory disastrously undermined not only the morale of the readers but the morale of the members of the Vanguard Group itself. The hope that *Vanguard* would spearhead the establishment of a virile American anarchist movement which buoyed the little circle of dedicated comrades of our group collapsed. The Vanguard Group simply disintegrated.

## MARK SCHMIDT

I feel it necessary to make some remarks about Mark Schmidt because his name is inseparably connected with the history of *Vanguard*. I first met Mark Schmidt at a *Road to Freedom* meeting in the early 1930s. He came to the United States from Russia years before the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and returned on the same ship with Leon Trotsky. I do not know if he was an anarchist before the

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February, 1939

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# VANGUARD

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Revolution. But his experience in Russia and contact with Russian anarchists in Russia led him to reject Marxism. He left Russia a convinced anarchist and after returning to the United States became a member of the Russian anarchist group in New York.

As already noted, his erudition, his knowledge of anarchist ideas and history, his revolutionary experience, all helped to clarify and work out the orientation of *Vanguard* and his articles, though pompous and involved, nevertheless enhanced the quality of our publication.

Unfortunately, the years revealed that our "idol" had "feet of clay." In private discussions he praised the counter-revolutionist Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* as a work of genius. When in 1935 the Communist International abandoned its anti-Socialist Party "social fascist" policy and proclaimed the "anti-Fascist United Front" slogan, Schmidt enthusiastically urged the Vanguard Group to officially join the "United Front" and participate in its demonstrations, which we categorically refused to do.

A few weeks after *Vanguard* ceased publication, Schmidt lauded dictator Stalin's "economic achievements," "planned economy" and industrialization of Russia. The infamous Stalin-Hitler pact was justified because it gave Russia the much needed time to prepare for the inevitable war.

Schmidt vehemently castigated his former anarchist comrades who refused to suspend hostilities to the Russian totalitarian regime and cooperate wholeheartedly with the communists in this emergency. He called us "counter-revolutionists and renegades." I called him a hypocrite who did not join the Communist Party where he belonged, brazenly insisting that he was still an anarchist.

As I write these lines I recall that Schmidt was gradually drifting toward becoming, in all but name, a full-fledged Communist Party Russian patriot. The most he would grudgingly concede was that the Communist Party was actually a revolutionary organization which had inadvertently adopted a number of mistaken policies. I felt that he was to a considerable extent motivated by his latent Russian nationalism which he inseparably identified with the Communist Party.

In his personal relations affecting other comrades Schmidt ruthlessly pursued his own interests regardless of even the most elementary ethical considerations. He deliberately schemed to cultivate a close friendship with one of our best comrades, only to induce his girl friend to leave her comrade and live with him. As far as I and the comrades were concerned, she had every right to live with whomever she pleased without interference. But Schmidt had no right whatever to try to drive this sincere comrade out of our movement by labeling him a scab without the slightest evidence to support his false charges. When Schmidt first met our comrade's girl friend he called her a simple-minded ignoramus and advised him to drop her. But as soon as she began to live with Schmidt, he suddenly discovered her profound knowledge of Marxism, anarchism, radical ideas and history.

## THE JEWISH ANARCHISTS

Joseph Cohen was for years editor of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. Upon reading his authoritative *History of Jewish Anarchism in America*, I was shocked to learn that the FAS, highly esteemed for its dedication to anarchist principles, was:

strongly imbued with the Socialist Party spirit. . . . As soon as America entered World War One the FAS lined up with the President and endorsed without reservation his pro-war sentiments [and] forgot all about the FAS articles against Kropotkin's pro-war position. . . . But Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman remained true to our principles.

Saul Yanofsky, the prominent Jewish anarchist editor of the FAS, a determined opponent of the Socialist Party who denounced its support of the US entry into World War I, its policies in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and other unions controlled by the Socialist Party, reversed himself and became a contributor to the right-wing socialist newspaper, the *Jewish Daily Forward*, which he had once ceaselessly denounced in the columns of the FAS. He even became editor of the official Jewish organ of the ILGWU,



Joseph Cohen

*Gerechtkite* (Justice). Yanofsky's capitulation was later followed by that of another anarchist, Simon Farber, also an editor of *Gerechtkite*. There were many more defectors.

In the struggle which took place in the 1920s between the entrenched "right wing" bureaucracy dominating the needle trade unions and the "left wing" Communist Party dictators bent on capturing the unions, the FAS anarchists with little or no reservations swung their considerable influence to the "right wing" machine and became, in time, fully integrated into the class collaborationist "right wing" apparatus. Like Yanofsky and Farber, they too became privileged officials in the unions.

The defectors did not deliberately abandon their principles. Unable to formulate an independent, consistent anarchist policy alternative to both "right" and "left" factions and bewildered by the complexity of the situation, they became enmeshed in union factional politics. They forgot that harmony between means and ends is the guiding principle of anarchism.

For example, Rose Pesotta, a dedicated anarchist whom I first met in *Road to Freedom* gatherings, became a vice-president of the ILGWU. Although she later resigned and went back to work in the shop, she nevertheless remained, in effect, a "New Deal" Democrat; championed the alleged pro-labor regulation of the government and enthusiastically proclaimed her adherence to the pro-"New Deal" class collaboration policies of the "progressive" unions. Shortly before World War II, when Armando Borghi, the revolutionary Italian anti-fascist refugee and former secretary of the Italian anarcho-syndicalist union federation, heard Rose Pesotta's declaration, he exclaimed: "If I would have expressed such views, I would not now be a refugee. I would have been appointed a minister in Mussolini's government."

Prominent union bureaucrats addressed the annual banquets to raise money for the FAS. They extolled the FAS for helping their unions and pledged their continuing support. A special Labor Day issue of the FAS was filled with listings of contributions and greetings of national and local unions pledged to sustain the FAS. When, several years before the FAS ceased publication, I pointed out the glaring contrast between elemen-

tary anarchist principles and the non-anarchist labor policy of the FAS, the manager, Isidore Wisotsky, readily admitted that this was indeed the case. But since the readers would withhold financial and moral support, the non-, even anti-anarchist policy was justified.

For example, my refutation of the factual errors in an article dealing with the relations between Marx and Bakunin in the First International over a century ago was readily published without alterations. But another article warning that the continuing cooperation of labor unions with the state in exchange for pro-labor laws (later nullified by other vicious anti-labor legislation) promotes the increasing regimentation of the labor movement was rejected.

That the editor of the FAS, Mark Mratchny (Clevansky), a Russian anarchi-syndicalist deported from Russia for fighting against the state, should reject my article because it clashed with the anti-anarchist labor position of the FAS which he inconsistently endorsed without reservation, was to say the very least most disappointing. I contrasted Mratchny's attitude with that of Maximoff, who together with Mratchny was also exiled from his native Russia. Maximoff, upon arriving in Chicago, became the editor of the Russian organ of the IWW, *Golos Truzhenika* (The Laborer's Voice). He fearlessly exposed the sickening duplicity and opportunism of the pro-capitalist collaborationist unions and their dictatorial conduct.

This was also the attitude of the Italian IWW periodical *Il Proletario*, voiced by the IWW militant Joseph Mangano in a letter reprinted in *Vanguard*:

Luigi Antonini, the secretary-treasurer of Italian local #89 ILGWU, was the dictator of the local for twenty years. He APPOINTED all the officials of the local forcing them to sign a blank resignation in advance, so he could be fired immediately if he did not obey Antonini's orders. When I exposed the true situation in *Il Proletario* I was persecuted by Antonini and his henchmen.

I was expelled from the union, but given the right to work in the same shop only because the scandal would be too great. This issue is greater than my humble person. It involves thousands and thousands of workers who through fear of losing their jobs cannot publicize these scandalous conditions. . . . Regardless of consequences to myself, this dictatorship must be ended.

I castigated some of the anarchist turncoats who became union officials. I showed them this letter and demanded at least an explanation for their reprehensible conduct. I was disdainfully ignored.

This said, I must in all fairness balance my criticism with due credit for the praiseworthy efforts of the Jewish comrades to promote our ideas. Although the scattered groups affiliated to the Jewish Anarchist Federation strongly disagreed with our criticisms of their anti-anarchist labor policy, I recall with pleasure their generous financial assistance to our organ, *Vanguard*, the use of their facilities and their New York City center for debates, meetings, forums and entertainments; and their wholehearted cooperation in joint undertakings. Through the Alexander Berkman Aid Fund and other agencies, as well as direct contacts (Cuban anarchists and political prisoners persecuted by the Castro dictatorship, etc.), the Jewish Anarchist Federation donated over a hundred thousand dollars for food and clothing packages and cash to political prisoners all over the world. Nor should the publication in Jewish translation and in English of anarchist classics, pamphlets, books and cultural works be ignored. The Jewish anarchist movement, before its demise, left behind a record of achievements which constitutes an important chapter in the history of American anarchism.

### CARLO TRESCA

Carlo Tresca was born 9 March 1879 in Sulmona, Italy. The son of a wealthy landowner, he nevertheless when very young became a militant in the Italian socialist labor movement. From 1890 to 1902 he was the secretary of the Italian Federation of Railway Workers. He edited the socialist paper *Il Germe* (The Seed). To avoid a sentence of eighteen months in jail for his radical activities, Tresca found refuge in Switzerland where he met another exile, Benito Mussolini. Tresca recalls that Mussolini boasted that "he was a very radical man and an extreme socialist, while I, Tresca, was not radical enough. Can you imagine? I am an anarchist now. And what is Mussolini? A traitor, of course."

Tresca emigrated to the United States in 1904. An early member of the IWW, Tresca participated in steel and coal miners' strikes in the Pittsburgh area; the miners' strike in Westmoreland, Pennsylvania, in 1908; the Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike of 1912; the Patterson, New Jersey, silk mill strike of 1912-13; the Minnesota Mesaba Range iron ore strike in 1916; and many other no less militant class struggles.

Tresca was jailed thirty-three times during the Patterson strike, placed under thirty thousand dollar bail, tried three times and found not guilty. During this strike he was charged with offenses ranging from disturbing the peace, disorders, and assaults to high treason. During his lifetime, Tresca was bombed, kidnapped, had his throat cut and was shot at four times. In 1917 his paper *L'Avvenire* (The Future) was barred from the mails because of opposition to US entry into World War I.

I know full well that Tresca, like the rest of us, made many mistakes. But I bear in mind the old saying, "He who never made a mistake never made anything and this is the greatest mistake of all." Carlo was a born rebel.

What was mistakenly called "Tresca's movement" was neither a party nor a movement guided by a written constitution, rules and regulations, but rather, an informal association of comrades communicating with each other through personal contacts, gatherings and informal exchange of views. Decisions were arrived at by consensus. Thus, for example, the campaign which drove the fascists from the streets of New York by assaulting their speakers and breaking up their meetings was informally launched and organized by Tresca and his comrades.

I first met Tresca in 1933 when a united front defense committee was organized to defend the militant anti-fascist, Athos Terzani, whom I met in the *Road to Freedom* group. Terzani was falsely charged with having shot and killed his young anarchist comrade Anthony Fierro during a free-for-all battle at a meeting of the fascist Silver Shirts of America in Astoria, Queens, New York City.

Without in the least downgrading the valiant efforts of other members of the defense committee, I know from my own participation that the decisive part played by Herbert Mahler, secretary of the New York General Defense Committee of the



Carlo Tresca

IWW, in achieving Terzani's freedom has been grossly understated or ignored.

When E. J. Philips, a disillusioned ex-Silver Shirt fascist wrote a letter from Philadelphia stating that he had evidence that Terzani was innocent of the killing, neither Norman Thomas nor Tresca thought it merited serious consideration. But Mahler thought otherwise and went to Philadelphia to interview Philips. It was this evidence, plus months of research, which at last legally established Terzani's innocence. The fact that Fierro's father was an active member of the Terzani Defense Committee and that he was a close friend of his son made a deep impression.

To celebrate Terzani's acquittal and publicize the demand for punishment of the real killers, the Silver Shirt leader, Art Smith, and one of his lieutenants, Frank Moffett, Terzani and his fiancé accepted Mahler's suggestion that they be married on the stage of Irving Plaza Hall. They were married by Municipal Court Judge Dorothy Kenyon (an event widely reported in the press and radio). Smith was sentenced to from three to eight years in prison and Moffett to from five to ten years.

While Tresca faithfully abided by necessary temporary united front agreements for specified purposes with different groupings, he remained true to his anarchist convictions. His paper *Il Martello* (The Hammer) ceaselessly proclaimed and interpreted events from an anarchist viewpoint.

Carlo would debate even personal friends who were political opponents at "the drop of a hat." I remember his debate with the then Trotskyite communist, Max Schachtman, before a huge audience in Irving Plaza Hall, the subject "Anarchism Versus Bolshevism." Schachtman, a skilled debater, eloquently argued his case in fluent English. But Tresca, in spite of his halting English, in the overwhelming opinion of the audience convincingly presented the anarchist position and devastatingly refuted Schachtman's arguments.

When *Il Martello*, the Vanguard Group, and the IWW occupied different floors in the same building (94 Fifth Avenue), we met often with Tresca and in frequent discussions found that our views coincided. We gladly accepted Tresca's offer to provide a supplementary page in English in *Il*

*Martello*, uncensored and with full expression of our ideas.

I spoke on the same platform with Tresca on many occasions. During the Spanish Civil War and Revolution, Tresca, in a big limousine driven by one of his comrades, picked me up at the Stelton, New Jersey, Modern School Colony where I lived and drove to Philadelphia for an anti-fascist rally arranged by the Italian group, where I was to be the only speaker in English. When I told Tresca what I intended to say, he replied that I was far too conscientious:

Make it short and don't be so elaborate. I know these Italians. They won't listen to you anyhow. But they will applaud me, no matter what I say. They like my full beard, my wide black hat and black ribbon tie and my stately appearance and my fluent colloquial Italian. I am their image of what a "professorio" should be.

I recall an incident when Carlo addressed the Vanguard forum. Due to bad weather, only five or six people attended. When one of us suggested that we adjourn to a neighborhood cafe for refreshments, Carlo insisted on delivering his speech in full, introducing his remarks by dramatically recalling an incident. He had been invited to address a meeting to organize miners in a small town somewhere in Illinois, and the committee had rented a big hall capable of holding several hundred. Unfortunately a blizzard made roads impassable and the few people who did come were seated in the front row. Tresca talked until all but one left. The one fellow remained alert, listened a full hour. Tresca, exhausted, practically begged him to leave so the meeting could be adjourned. The lone listener refused, but finally told Tresca that he was satisfied. Well, Tresca learned a few weeks later that this lone holdout organized several hundred miners. "I learned my lesson," admonished Tresca, "which I pass on to you. Do not be discouraged. The success of a meeting depends not upon the size of the audience, but upon the few that are impressed by your message."

Since united front arrangements between anarchist and non-anarchist groups were successfully concluded, there was all the more reason to expect much closer cooperation between the Italian *L'Adunata* and *Il Martello* anarchist groups. From my own observation it was the antagonistic attitude of the

*L'Adunata* group and their willingness to engage in sectarian attacks against *Il Martello* and Tresca which made any kind of cooperation impossible. I must agree with Emma Goldman that she has "no patience with comrades who set themselves up as censors of their comrades. . . . The methods of *L'Adunata* are nothing new in anarchist ranks. Instead of fighting the common enemy, each one is at the other fellow's throat."

In this connection, I recall an occasion when Esther and I and several members of the *L'Adunata* group were returning from a meeting in their Cook Street Center on the subway. They manifested their disapproval of the veteran anarchist militant Armando Borghi's private life by moving in a body to another car, leaving us alone with Borghi. Borghi exclaimed: "By what right do they set themselves up as a censor for my private life?"

Emma Goldman severely condemned Marcus Graham, editor of the anarchist paper *MAN!*, for writing an article full of lies and misrepresentations, even insinuating that she justified the Bolshevik crushing of the Kronstadt rebellion (1921) and Alexander Berkman attacked him for his jesuitry and vindictiveness (see David Porter, *Vision on Fire*, p. 317 and letter of Berkman to anarchist English paper *Freedom*).

The "pure" anarchists condemned Tresca for his friendly relations with influential, liberal-minded politicians and citizens. But his critics ignored the fact that he used these connections to help people in need of protection who could not cope with the byzantine governmental bureaucracy. There was no other practical alternative. Emma Goldman, for example, understood this, and availed herself of this opportunity. In a letter to philosopher John Dewey, Emma referred to

our mutual friend Carlo Tresca who himself offered to help with a campaign for a strong committee of outstanding men and women who might have a bearing on the decision [of government officials] in favor of a visa to visit the United States. [Drinnon, *Nowhere at Home*, p. 270]

Emma was finally granted permission for a three-month stay.

When in the 1930s Sallitto and Ferrero, members of the San Francisco *L'Adunata* group, were about to be deported for

subversive anarchist activities, *L'Adunata* launched a campaign to induce political parties, influential individuals and groups to exert maximum pressure to cancel the deportation which in no way differed from the methods adopted by Tresca.

Tresca was—so to speak—a one-man social agency. People in need of assistance with all kinds of problems (immigration, evictions, permits, legal advice, petty offenses, discrimination, non-payment of rent or wages due, etc.) depended on Tresca to exert influence in their behalf. They were never refused. Members of *L'Adunata*, too, were never refused. His assistance made life a little more bearable *now* for hundreds of desperate, troubled people at the bottom of the social pyramid. In the words of Patrick Henry, I defy Tresca's detractors: "If this be treason, make the most of it!"

For persons needing money, lodging, clothing or help for a worthy cause, Tresca was a "soft touch." He just could not turn anyone down. I recall Tresca's advice to a young anti-fascist bent on volunteering to fight in Spain. Tresca tried to dissuade him, pointing out that there were more than enough men, but by far not enough arms and ammunition: "You will do more for the cause right here rallying support for Spain." Seeing that his appeal made no impression, Tresca, to expedite his departure for Spain, gave him some money and a revolver. "I don't agree with you but I do respect your idealism. Good luck, anyhow."

Over forty years ago I proudly took my place among Carlo's comrades and strewed flowers on the spot where he fell, murdered by assassins' bullets, paid tribute to his gallant achievements for the emancipation of the oppressed. Since then, only a few of us remain. The rest of our dear comrades have passed away. I write these lines in the fervent hope that the torch Carlo Tresca carried aloft will continue to light the way in these dark days.

## APRIL FARM

Around 1926, a young idealist, Charles Garland, inherited one million dollars which he decided to donate to promote Marxist, syndicalist, anarchist and other radical ideas. A repre-

sentative committee of the various radical tendencies established the Garland Fund to finance publication of the fundamental writings of the various tendencies. As a principled anti-capitalist, Garland donated the money on the sole condition that it was not to be invested to draw interest, but that the principal be spent in its entirety as designated by the administrators of the Garland Fund.

Garland also purchased (if I am not mistaken) a two-hundred-acre tract of land in Cooperstown, Pennsylvania, near Allentown and Quakertown and not too far from Philadelphia, to establish a communitarian colony named April Farm. Everyone was to live happily like one big family, donating their labor without wages or payment, simply sharing the food, clothing, play areas, housing and other facilities that the colony was able to provide. It was hoped that growing its food in the communal gardens, and the sale of apples and peaches from the colony's orchards, in addition to its poultry farm, would render the colony self-supporting. To purchase products and services not provided by the colony each member received \$10 per month.

The colonists ate in the communal dining room and meals were prepared by colonists working in rotation. With rare exceptions the colonists slept in the communal dormitory; those that did not accepted quarters provided for them by the colony or built their own. Children did not live with their natural parents. They ate, slept and played in the communal nursery and were taught in the communal classroom. Not the natural parents, but the community were their *de facto* parents.

Practicing "free love," the community recognized neither legal marriage nor legal obligation of unmarried couples or children born out of wedlock. Unfortunately, a few scheming women shrewdly took advantage of this situation. They managed to have sexual relations with Garland and he eventually became the father of four or five children by different mothers. By threatening to expose his infidelities and instituting legal proceedings these women extorted lifetime support and thousands of dollars for themselves and their children. The news spread and a growing number of women competed to bestow their favors in return for such substantial rewards.

Like other colonies, April Farm also had its share of

eccentrics: nudists, food faddists, self-anointed clerics personally acquainted with God, etc. One of them loaded a sackful of food and retired to a deserted hut a few miles away to "commune with God." After devouring the food, he returned for a refill. These eccentrics were among a growing number of "colony hoboes," freeloaders perpetually wandering from one colony to another.

The operations of April Farm were administered by the manager, a husky Englishman appointed by Garland because he was considered an agricultural expert who also shared Garland's communitarian ideas. The manager and his assistants, which included two women, Doris and Ursula, whose children were fathered by Garland, constituted a tight little clique. They were the actual rulers of April Farm.

The manager mapped out the work schedule and assigned each colonist to his or her work. But the labor turnover was so great that production goals were seldom attained. Many would-be colonists would eat, sleep, relax and enjoy the fresh country air for a week or two and abruptly leave, to be followed by new freeloaders, bent on enjoying a free vacation. I considered such conduct unethical, and conscientiously fulfilled my obligation to do my share of the work. A young man from Philadelphia, whom I got to know pretty well, confided that he was advised by his doctor to spend time in the country: "I am here because I can't afford a sanatorium. Why work? Nobody else gives a damn. Why should you?"

Part of the explanation for this situation lies in the fact that April Farm was not really a community. A true community, in the opinion of the renowned agronomist René Dumont, should stimulate the creativity of the individual and encourage him/her to take the initiative in the self-management of a cooperative society. Each one must feel that he/she personally participates in the management of the enterprise and the nature and quality of the work.

April Farm, on the contrary, resembled a philanthropic institute, where the colonists for their sleeping quarters and meals would work as little as possible, or not at all, certain that the expenses and the deficits would be paid by their benefactor, the

philanthropist Garland. There was no incentive to act otherwise.

Where neighboring farmers were making money, April Farm, with the very latest expensive equipment and more help ran up monumental annual deficits of fifty to over one hundred thousand dollars! For Garland, this was the last straw. He donated April Farm and all the equipment to the manager and Doris, the mother of one of his children. Doris was now living with the manager as his wife. This happened after I left April Farm. According to people in close touch, whose veracity I do not doubt, the manager and Doris inflated the amount of the deficit and siphoned off huge sums which they pocketed. They eventually sold April Farm for a handsome profit. After an unsuccessful attempt to establish an April Farm-type community in the Soviet Union, Garland dropped out of sight. According to reports which I could not verify, Garland returned to his loyal wife and their five or six children, living very well indeed on the seven or eight million dollar inheritance which he did not reveal.

## ON THE ROAD

To get to know the workers and explore the vast expanse of "my America," I became a migratory worker—a working "hobo" on the railroads and waterfronts, in lumber camps, canneries, steel mills, factories, farms, construction camps, hospitals, hotels, etc.

There is a world of difference between a *working* hobo as a migratory worker and a derelict, a hobo as a non-working vagrant, an aimless wanderer sleeping in box cars, abandoned shacks near railroad freight yards, a panhandler, subsisting on handouts begged from passing people, leftovers scrounged from restaurants and markets. Many hobos are "mission stiff" subsisting on meals and lodging provided by religious missions (Salvation Army, Catholic and Protestant "houses of hospitality," etc.). The hobo's vision of the "good life" does not go much beyond the next meal and the next "flop" (sleeping place) but the *working* migratory hobo is a rebellious cuss.

The lumberjacks, the "harvest stiff" (seasonal fruit and

vegetable pickers, workers in the wheat and grain belt, etc.), the "gandy dancers" (railroad track maintenance workers), the itinerant laborers and so many other migratory workers who fought for "a place in the sun" have surely earned a heroic place in the history of the American labor movement.

I left New York, making my way by "stealing" rides on railway box cars, "shipping out" as a gandy dancer on the railroad which provided free transportation to the job site, sleeping quarters, dining facilities, meals and bedding. Tobacco, soap, toothpaste, gloves and other incidentals available in the commissary were paid for by deduction from wages. I remember shipping out from New York City to Hornell, New York, near Buffalo, on the Erie Railroad. When we arrived we were given a "nose bag" (lunch to be eaten on the job). But instead of going to work practically all us would-be employees, ignoring the pleas of the foreman to return, took our nose bags and simply disappeared.

I recall an amusing incident. While strolling through the streets of Kansas City, Missouri, I came across a fellow addressing a crowd from the tailboard of a big hearse mounted on a Ford chassis flamboyantly marked "JUSTICE IS DEAD IN CALIFORNIA! FREE TOM MOONEY!"

After the meeting I introduced myself and said, "This hearse is a damn good idea." The speaker, Harry Myers, asked: "Are you footloose? I am sick and tired of driving this hearse and selling literature all by myself. I need help. How about you coming with me? I am heading for Chicago; another fellow with a wooden leg, Kelso, is driving east of Chicago doing the same thing. We will find a place to sleep. But if worst comes to worst, we can always sleep in the hearse with a pillow or two. I will get up and "spout off" and you will be my chairman and peddle the literature."

I asked him how he was going to get along selling this stuff and "spouting off" in the reactionary small towns. Myers assured me that there would be no trouble: the Irish cops wouldn't arrest anyone trying to free another Irishman, Mooney.

When we got to Chicago the Mooney Defense Committee, controlled by the communists, demanded that Myers surrender the hearse, the literature and everything else to the Chicago

communists. Myers and Kelso were fired. Myers defiantly refused. The hearse was placed in the custody of the IWW Secretary-Treasurer, Herbert Mahler, and parked in a garage across the street from IWW headquarters, 555 ("three nickels") West Lake Street. Harry Myers married the niece of the radical sociologist Thorstein Veblen. He was killed in an auto accident in Oakland, California.

## CHICAGO

Probably the most active anarchist propaganda group in the country was the handful of comrades belonging to the Free Society group of Chicago. The history of the group is inseparably linked with its principal founder, the Russian Jewish anarchist, Boris Yelensky (he died in 1978 or 1979). After settling in Chicago where he became a paperhanger, he returned to Russia in July 1917 to participate in the Russian Revolution, as graphically recounted in his book *In the Social Storm*, a truly revealing primary source as yet unpublished. Yelensky returned to Chicago in 1923 and in that year played a big part in organizing the Free Society group.

In 1926, 1930, and 1932 the Free Society group organized three very successful lectures by Rudolf Rocker; conducted well-attended weekly open forum meetings; and raised substantial sums to sustain the American anarchist periodicals *Vanguard*, *Road to Freedom*, *New Trends*, *Resistance*, *MAN!* and the London *Freedom*.

In 1934 when Emma Goldman was allowed a four-month visit to the United States, a mass rally in the Chicago Loop attracted 1000 persons, another rally on the campus of the University of Chicago drew 800 listeners. A lecture in Yiddish was attended by about 700 people. Emma, elated by the response to her talks, exclaimed: "I was in error about our groups, never realizing the creative capacity they possessed."

During the Spanish Revolution the group raised a lot of money for the Spanish anarchists. The committee rented a downtown Chicago theater for an entire week to show an anti-Franco documentary film. In spite of the vindictive opposition



November 11, 1937: Sam Dolgoff speaking at Waldheim Cemetery in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the execution of the Hay-market anarchists.

of the Catholic Church, nearly \$9000 was collected (interview with Yelensky).

The Free Society group established the Alexander Berkman Aid Fund for arrested and exiled anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists in Russia and political prisoners in other countries; campaigned to stop the deportation of Sallitto and Ferrero; and to free Mooney and Billings; and helped the Harlan County, Kentucky, Miners' Defense Committee.

In this connection, it must be emphasized that the Free Society group deeply appreciated the unstinted cooperation of the IWW. The IWW allowed the group to designate the IWW headquarters as the mailing address for group publications and literature. Members of the IWW Carl Keller (ex-editor of its official organ, the *Industrial Worker*), and Ralph Chaplin, the wobbly poet, rendered invaluable assistance in publishing Gregory Maximoff's smashing indictment of the Bolshevik counter-revolutionary dictatorship in Russia, *The Guillotine at Work*, also Maximoff's *The Political Philosophy of Michael Bakunin*, *Constructive Anarchism* and *Bolshevism: Promises and Realities*.

As a member of the Pioneer Aid and Support Association, organized to maintain the Haymarket Martyrs' monument in Waldheim cemetery, the Free Society group was instrumental in arranging the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the Haymarket executions at a huge mass meeting in Chicago and at the monument itself in the spring of 1937.

I was invited to address the meeting and the association paid my expenses from the Stelton, New Jersey, Modern School Colony where Esther and our two children lived. I do not, after so many years, remember the names of the other speakers, but I can still see Lucy Parsons, the widow of our fallen comrade, Albert Parsons, grown old and bent, almost blind, step out upon the stage; still unshaken, still defiant, still repeating her devastating indictment of "the establishment."

I first met Lucy in the 1920s when I was delivering a talk titled "Is Anarchism Possible?" "Yes indeed," she said, "your talk does touch on this point. But it is not enough. Although I am not a Communist Party member, I do work with them because they are more practical. They are *doing things*." According to Carolyn Ashbaugh's biography of Lucy Parsons, she

became an outspoken member of the Communist Party, but I never took her conversion seriously. In discussion with comrades who condemned her as a turncoat, I explained that she was very naive. She was not able to grasp the distinction between anarchism and bolshevism or other ideologies. For her, anyone against capitalism was ipso facto a revolutionist and she saw no reason why all of them should not bury the hatchet and get together. Besides, she was most susceptible to flattery, which the communists applied in huge doses.

I was enthralled by the reminiscences of the veteran anarchist Theodore Appel whom I met at the memorial meeting. Appel was a close friend of Johann Most and of the Haymarket martyrs with whom he actively worked in the anarchist and eight-hour-day movements. Appel presided at the tenth anniversary commemoration of the Haymarket tragedy, on 11 November 1897, which was addressed by Lucy Parsons and Emma Goldman, among other speakers. Appel also edited the German language anarchist paper *Alarm*, suppressed by the government in 1916. He lived modestly from income derived from the sale of certain medicines which he manufactured and sold to pharmacies.

In the Free Society group I came to know Irving Abrams, the dedicated comrade who handled the legal affairs of the Pioneer Aid and Support Association and of comrades in need of his services; and Annie Livshis who nursed Voltarine de Cleyre in her last illness and arranged her burial in Waldheim cemetery, near the monument of the Haymarket anarchists whose martyrdom shaped the course of her life. I also met comrade Weinberg, whose son, under the pen name Arthur Hopkins, wrote *Attorney for the Damned*, a biography of George Vanderveer, the defense attorney for the IWW militants in the Everett and Centralia, Washington, and Chicago class-war prisoners trials; a biography of Clarence Darrow, defense attorney in the Haywood, Moyer, Pettibone trial for the murder of the ex-Governor of Idaho, Frank Steunenberg; and other works. As a graduate journalist he accepted my suggestion that he begin his writing career by contributing articles to the IWW organ, *Industrial Worker*.

## MAXIMILIANO OLAY

Maximiliano Olay and his comrade-wife Anna were very active members of the Free Society group. Olay was born in a small town near Oviedo, Spain, in 1893, in a family of poor peasants. At the age of 15 he went to Cuba to live with his uncle, a wealthy conservative landowner. Unable to get along with his uncle because of his rebellious temperament, Olay moved to Tampa, Florida, where he became a cigar maker. Through his contact with Spanish immigrants and literature he became a convinced anarchist, writing for a number of anarchist periodicals in Spain and the United States.

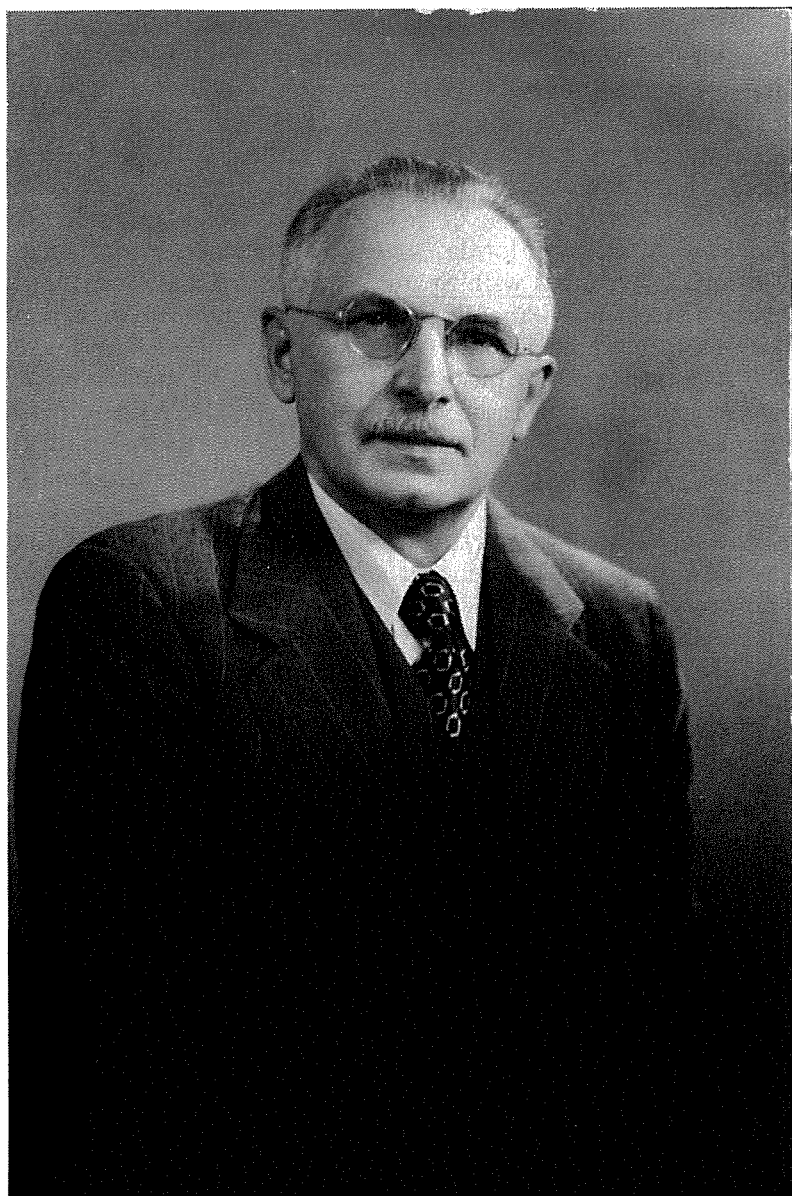
Olay settled in Chicago in 1919 where he made a meager living from a little translation bureau he established. During the Spanish Revolution and Civil War, Olay wrote reports about the situation under the pen name "Onofre Dallas" for our *Vanguard* and other publications.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War, Olay became the official representative of the CNT and moved to New York where he established a publicity and information service, returning to Chicago after the crushing of the anti-fascist forces. He died of acute stomach ulceration, leaving behind his widow, Anna, and his young son Lionel. I learned later that his widow committed suicide and Lionel, an active member of the Los Angeles "hippie" community, also passed away. Truly a deep tragedy.

## GREGORY PETROVICH MAXIMOFF

Gregory Petrovich Maximoff was born 10 November 1893 in the village of Mitushenko, Smolensk province. His parents sent him to Vladimir Theological Seminary to study for the priesthood, but a year before he was to be ordained Maximoff renounced religion in favor of science and enrolled in the St. Petersburg Agricultural Academy, graduating in 1915 as a qualified agronomist.

In his restless search for a coherent revolutionary orientation, Maximoff studied the literature of the various radical



G. P. Maximoff

groupings. But it was the ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin that shaped his revolutionary career. Maximoff's ideology—a synthesis of communism and syndicalism—is based upon the writings of Bakunin and Kropotkin. Maximoff defined this relationship:

I am a communist [because I believe in] the organization of communal production on the basis of "from each according to his ability" and of communal consumption on the basis of "to each according to his needs" . . . the state would be replaced by a CONFEDERATION OF COMMUNES. . . . I am a syndicalist because I believe that the means by which capitalism can be overthrown and communism installed is the seizure of production by the producers' labor unions . . . SYNDICALIST PRODUCTION BUILT AROUND COMMUNIST RELATIONS BETWEEN PRODUCERS . . . [*Constructive Anarchism*, pp. 24, 31]

The Russian anarcho-syndicalists did not intend to become a little sect of impotent grumblers. They endeavored to adjust theory to the practical needs of the industrial workers and the peasants. Maximoff played a key part in formulating workable, constructive, libertarian alternatives to Bolshevism: free soviets, grass roots housing and neighborhood committees, rank-and-file factory committees for workers' self-management of industry, industrial unions, agricultural collectives and communes, networks of voluntary associations embracing the myriad operations of society.

In the spring of 1919 Maximoff went to Kharkov to work in the Northern Bureau of the All-Russian Union of Metal Workers in the statistics department. When the Bolsheiks mobilized trade union officials for voluntary propaganda work in the Red Army Maximoff refused because he would be forced to spread Bolshevik propaganda. He agreed to fight in front-line combat against the counterrevolutionary white guards, only if he would not be obliged to break workers' and peasants' strikes, demonstrations and destruction of civil rights. For this and other "subversive" activities he was saved from execution only by the threat of a general strike by the Kharkov Steel Workers' Union.

## OLGA FREYDLIN MAXIMOFF

No account of Maximoff's life would be adequate without recording the important part played by his comrade-wife Olga Freydlin. Olga was still a young girl when she became an anarchist. In 1909 she was sentenced to eight years' hard labor for smuggling subversive literature. But because of her youth she was condemned to banishment to Yenesink Province, Siberia.

With the release of political prisoners by the February 1917 Revolution she participated actively in the revolutionary movement in Kharkov and other Ukrainian areas, particularly the syndicalist and cooperative movements. Later Olga was active in the Ural Anarchist Federation. When she returned to Moscow she was very active in the Golos Truda anarchist group where she met Maximoff.

With the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt and the widespread workers' strikes and peasant rebellions in 1921, the Bolsheviks unleashed a ruthless campaign to wipe out all opposition. The anarchist Makhno peasant guerilla movement in the Ukraine was shattered and the backbone of the rest of the growing anarchist movement in Russia was broken. In July 1921 thirteen anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist prisoners in the notorious Cheka Taganka prison in Moscow, among them Maximoff, Yarchuk, Mratchny and Voline, declared a hunger strike. Through the intervention of the syndicalist delegates to the Bolshevik-organized and controlled International Red Trade Unions (Profintern), Lenin and Trotsky finally agreed to release the anarchists if they gave up their hunger strike and accepted exile from Russia, never to return. Maximoff and the others were deported in January 1922. After surmounting terrible difficulties deliberately planted by the Russian Cheka, they finally reached Berlin on 7 February 1922, to be welcomed and cared for by the German anarchists.

The exiles left Russia more determined than ever to continue the struggle for the liberation of the Russian people from the new dictatorship. The Maximoffs left Berlin in 1924. After a few months in Paris they arrived in the United States, smuggled across the US border from Canada. They settled in Chicago under the name Urkevitch. Under the guidance of his comrade,

Boris Yelensky, Maximoff became a paperhanger. His wife Olga found employment in a downtown Chicago department store.

Although the American administration of the IWW was not affiliated to the anarcho-syndicalist international, IWA (the Chilean administration was), Maximoff regarded the IWW as part of the IWA. Shortly after settling in Chicago, Maximoff therefore became a member of the IWW and until its suspension in 1927, edited its Russian organ *Golos Truzhenika* (The Laborer's Voice). The Russian anarcho-syndicalist *Delo Truda* (Labor's Cause) was transferred from Paris to Chicago. Maximoff remained its editor until his death in 1950. When *Delos Truda* merged with the Detroit anarchist paper its name became *Delo Truda-Probuzhdenie*.

I first met Maximoff in 1926. When I congratulated him on having learned so quickly enough English to converse, he replied that he was perfecting his English the better to participate in the building of an effective American anarchist movement. In discussing the basis for such a movement, Maximoff helped clarify my ideas and encouraged me to deepen my study of the works of Bakunin and Kropotkin and thus achieve a fuller orientation.

Maximoff rejected the romantic glorification of conspiracy and violence in the amoral tradition of Nechaev: total irresponsibility, excessive preoccupation with one's "unique lifestyle," rejection of any form of organization or self discipline and the idealization of the most anti-social forms of individual rebellion.

For Maximoff, anarchism was not only a standard of personal conduct (he always stressed its importance). Anarchism is a social movement—a movement of the people. Like Bakunin, Kropotkin and the classical anarchists, Maximoff defined anarchism as the truest expression of socialism. He insisted that we must work out a constructive, realistic approach to the problems of the Social Revolution and relate anarchism to the socioeconomic problems of our complex society.

We were responsive to Maximoff's ideas not because we accepted them on faith, but because they related to our way of thinking and to our own experience. Maximoff's frequent articles enhanced the quality and value of our *Vanguard*.

In addition to his profuse writings, Maximoff strove to

preserve the continuity of the Russian anarchist movement in America, periodically addressing groups in New York, Akron and Youngstown, Ohio, Gary, Indiana, New Haven and Waterbury, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Boston and other centers, besides conducting a voluminous correspondence. The magnitude of Maximoff's efforts is all the more impressive when we consider that he found time to do all these things after working hours or on weekends.

We saw Maximoff shortly before he returned to Chicago. He was pale and wan, obviously a very sick man. He suffered a massive heart attack and died suddenly on 10 March 1950 on returning from his day's work. When we visited Olga Maximoff a few years before her death, she told us that she fell and broke her foot two or three years before. Incompetent medical treatment made necessary a shortening of her foot. This, with increasing deafness, forced her to quit her job in the department store. She passed away on 7 May 1973. Olga left instructions not to conduct a funeral and donated her body for medical research. Maximoff's body was cremated and the ashes interred in Waldheim cemetery near the tomb of the Chicago Haymarket martyrs.

Irving S. Abrams—deceased—an intimate friend and comrade who had known the Maximoffs when they first came to Chicago, informed me that Olga gave all she had to the Alexander Berkman Fund for the Relief of Political Prisoners in Russia and other countries which she and Maximoff helped organize. Maximoff was a prolific writer. Besides editing *Delo Trude-Probuzhdenie* and voluminous writing awaiting translation, there were published in English translation his lengthy classic *The Guillotine at Work: Twenty Years of Terror in Russia*; a series of pamphlets, among them *Bolshevism: Promises and Realities*; *The World Scene from the Libertarian Point of View*, a collection of writing by anarchists from different countries; *Bulgaria: A New Spain*, a record of the persecution of anarchists and other dissidents.

*The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism*, a compilation of Bakunin's constructive ideas, and *Constructive Anarchism*, an outline of Maximoff's practical ideas, were published after his death by the Maximoff Publication Society, organized by the secretary Irving S. Abrams, Maximoff's wife

Olga and other comrades to honor Maximoff's memory by publishing his works in English translation.

As I write these lines, thirty-five years after Maximoff's untimely death, I still feel keenly the loss of the dear friend, the valiant comrade who inspired me, and so many others, to explore new roads to freedom.

## MIDWEST CONFERENCE

The Midwest Anarchist Conference was called primarily on the initiative of the Vanguard group. We felt that such a gathering could further the development of an identifiable American anarchist movement based on the adoption of an acceptable theoretical and realistic program. With this in mind, we submitted, several months before the opening of the conference in 1927 or 1928, a tentative agenda and outline of our proposals, urging the delegates to come to the conference prepared to present, discuss and if necessary modify their views.

Shortly after the Midwest Anarchist Conference convened in the quarters of the Free Society group in Chicago, a comrade from Cleveland, Rose Krutchkoff, happened to be passing through. We asked her to report the situation of the movement in Cleveland: "The Italians don't believe in conventions and the two Jews are not on speaking terms."

Under such circumstances a conference of delegates representing formally organized groups was out of the question. Nevertheless, a conference of informed individuals discussing definite ideas to promote the growth and the influence of our movement would surely be a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, the delegates were not prepared to discuss anything seriously. In the midst of the general confusion and uproar that greeted our proposals, the assemblage could not even consider conflicting views or even attempt to outline ideas of their own. The conference did not adjourn. It just collapsed as if it had never taken place at all. We were deeply disappointed. But once again we learned that people who cannot agree should be free to create their own form of organization—or none at all—thereby eliminating a source of constant friction, cooperating only for mutually agreed, specific purposes.

## WITH THE COAL MINERS

The militant rank-and-file miners have always fought for the control of their union against the dictatorship of their corrupt leaders. Unlike the anarchists in the needle trades who helped the union bureaucracy to stay in power by joining them in their campaign to stop the no-less-dominating communist leaders from taking their place, the IWW, anarchist and other rank-and-file groupings, particularly in the Beneld, Wilsonville, Collinsville and Gillespie coal mining area in southern Illinois, near St. Louis, Missouri, fought for the miners' control of their union against both the entrenched leadership of the United Mine Workers and the Communist Party's National Miners' Union (NMU) bent on capturing the union.

Our comrades did not have sufficient resources to combat the NMU, backed as it was by the well-organized, powerful, ruthless Communist Party organization supplied with almost unlimited funds. In 1929 our comrades requested that a speaker be sent to assist them in their struggle by exposing the true nature of the Russian Bolshevik dictatorship and its agents in the United States and in the NMU. Since I was "foot loose" and had already delivered talks at forums and street meetings I was urged to make the trip.

Upon arrival, I was assured that the rank-and-file defense committee was well able to insure order at meetings, silence hecklers, repulse attempts to throw me off the platform and protect me against threatened physical assaults. In this, the comrades were entirely successful. On balance, my talks made a good impression. Many miners became far more receptive to our message, especially when I identified, by name, a number of specially trained communist "borers from within" whom I knew in New York. The surest indication of my effectiveness was a libelous article in the Communist Party's official mouthpiece, the *Daily Worker*, charging that I was a paid agent of the mine owners and the corrupt union leaders sent to defame, slander and destroy the NMU and the Communist Party.

The brazen offensive of the communists to infiltrate and capture their organization was repulsed by the miners. Our comrades spurred the spontaneous revolt of their fellow workers

against the immensely powerful, deeply entrenched United Mine Workers dictatorship headed by John L. Lewis, and succeeded in establishing the independent Progressive Mine Workers Union in their area. The confidence of the miners in the integrity of our militant comrades, their fellow workers, remained unshaken. The valiant struggles for economic and social freedom of largely anonymous comrades like John and Domenick Batuello merit our deepest respect.

### BEN L. REITMAN

Ben Reitman, known for his tempestuous love affair with Emma Goldman, occasionally came to the Free Society group forums. One day he was accompanied by a young woman whom he introduced: "I want the group to meet my new wife. This is the latest edition." We were invited to the wedding party at his place in the Bohemian, near north side section of Chicago. Prohibition was still in force. But Reitman, as a physician, procured all the alcoholic drinks he wanted simply by writing out a prescription.

Emma Goldman bitterly resented Alexander Berkman's and other anarchists' antagonistic attitude toward Reitman: that he did not belong in the movement, that he exploited her, that he was vulgar, etc. Emma was all too well aware of his faults: "his bombast, his braggadocio, his promiscuity, which lacked the least sense of selection." But she indignantly refuted the charge that Reitman exploited her. No one better summed up my attitude better than Emma herself:

During ten years Ben dedicated himself to me, my work, as no other man ever had, making it possible for me to do the best and most extensive work I had done up to my meeting him . . . it was Ben's help which kept *Mother Earth* alive . . . helped me raise thousands of dollars . . . enabled me as well as yourself to do what we have done between 1908 and 1917. [Letter to Alexander Berkman, 14 May 1929; *Nowhere at Home*, Richard and Marie Drinnon, pp. 148-9]

In conversation with friends, Reitman complained that Emma's comrades were partly responsible for the reason he "did

not belong to the movement." Instead of encouraging him, "They snubbed me, treated me like an errand boy . . . urged Emma to get rid of me." Reitman bitterly resented the insult that he was an imposter, not really a doctor. He never forgave Berkman for writing to the university enquiring if he was in fact medically qualified.

But Reitman's reputation should not, in my opinion, rest on his love affair with Emma Goldman or his personal idiosyncracies. Reitman was in his own way a dedicated humanitarian. He never forgot his early years when he came to know the drunkards, pimps, whores and crooks of the Chicago underworld tenderloin where he was brought up. He was deeply concerned with the plight of the "misfits," the prostitutes, the homeless, the hobos, the tramps, the derelicts, the "dregs of society," who, when I knew him, crowded the flop houses and dingy saloons of the skidrow on West Madison Street.

Reitman should be credited with impressive achievements. Contrary to the slanderous insinuations of some anarchists, Berkman included, Reitman was a distinguished physician, specializing in venereal and allied diseases. He taught pathology and bacteriology, public health and hygiene in reputable Chicago medical schools and nurses' schools. He was one of the pioneers in the movement for the prevention and treatment of venereal infections. He was employed by the city of Chicago to direct the first venereal disease clinic in Chicago's Cook County Jail. In Chicago he was jailed for supplying information on birth control. Jailed for the same charge in Cleveland, Reitman was released in the daytime to work for the Health Department laboratory and returned to jail at night. He won the respect of the Chicago labor and radical movements for leading a giant unemployed march and demonstration for which he was arrested and jailed.

In our discussion about anarchism, Reitman professed little or no attachment to ideologies. He summed up his credo: "I want to rid the world of poverty and disease." I often met Reitman when attending the "hobo college" forums in Chicago's skidrow district on West Madison Street. Reitman never turned down anyone seeking a handout or other help. It was even rumored that he left \$1500 in his will to the bums on West

Madison Street to drink to his memory and anyone caught weeping in his beer would not get any more drinks. I record good qualities, not to idealize Reitman or to gloss over his many shortcomings, but in simple justice.

## THE IWW IN CHICAGO

When I was in Chicago the IWW was severely crippled by the disastrous 1924 split from which it never fully recovered. Eight years later, in 1932, the organization had only \$29, not nearly enough to pay even the meager wage of the fulltime secretary or the editor of the official paper, *Industrial Worker*. Fortunately a year later the operating fund reached \$1000, hardly enough to meet expenses but at least a more hopeful improvement. The survival of the IWW is to a very great extent due to dedicated members like W. H. Westman, his wife, Alice, Charles Velsek (all deceased) and the veteran wobbly Fred Thompson, an authority on the history of the IWW and the labor movement in general, still active in promoting the IWW. They and a few other fellow workers "held the fort" and sustained the IWW in its darkest days.

In Chicago, during the depression, the IWW Unemployed Union at 2005 West Harrison Street collected food from markets to sustain unemployed members. The procedure was simple. An unemployed worker joining the Unemployed Union was welcomed to free lodging and food, no questions asked. After two or three days he was given an empty sack after breakfast and told that he would get no more help if he did not collect food before supper.

The Unemployed Union distributed thousands of the very popular leaflet, *Bread Lines or Picket Lines*, urging the employed workers not to work overtime, not to scab, and to join their unemployed fellow workers in demanding more cash allotments and unemployed benefits.

To make more jobs available to the unemployed, the employed workers were urged not to work overtime, to strike for shorter hours, stage demonstrations outside of plants and join picket lines to publicize their demands. The Unemployed Union

also offered to help any unemployed worker evicted for non-payment of rent, to put back his belongings and reoccupy the place from which he had been evicted.

I took part in some of these activities and often spoke at outdoor meetings in selected Chicago neighborhoods. In this connection, I remember an amusing incident. On the pretext that we were blocking traffic and illegally soliciting funds, the chairman, the speaker and the fellow workers making the collection were arrested and crowded into a police van to be taken to precinct headquarters and charged with violating the law. As I had already spoken before the police arrived, I was not arrested. As the van was about to leave a middle-aged man demanded that, in solidarity with those arrested, he should also join them. The police refused, telling him that he was not charged. But the determined would-be "martyr" insisted until the police, lacking patience, also hauled him off.

The "martyr" immediately demanded, as soon as he was allowed to use the phone, that the IWW General Defense Committee provide bail, engage expert legal talent to free him. He was told that offenders charged with a minor offense would at most be detained only for a few days. The General Defense Committee, already desperately in need of funds, must do its utmost to secure the release of fellow workers facing years of imprisonment. When the would-be martyr, together with the others, was released, as expected, in a few days, he proclaimed to all and sundry that he was a "class-war prisoner" entitled to the esteem and material aid freely given to "martyrs" in the struggle for the emancipation of the workers.

## DETROIT

In 1931 or 1932 I left Chicago for a propaganda expedition via Detroit and Cleveland to New York on behalf of both the anarchists and the IWW, who usually attended meetings sponsored by either grouping. Foreign language groups, Italians and Spanish, with a sprinkling of Russian, and Jewish groups made up the little Detroit anarchist community—such as it was. The Italian and Spanish comrades, each in separate quarters,

did cooperate in joint affairs and to some extent with the native American IWW members. The Jewish anarchists, in the main, restricted their activities to supporting their organ, the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* and Jewish cultural activities.

It was in Detroit where I first met Mark Mratchny. We spent an afternoon in stimulating conversation from which I learned a great deal about the problems and role of the anarchists in the Russian Revolution.

Mratchny deplored the romantic compulsion of all too many Russian anarchists to commit acts of terrorism, attentats, banditry, arson, etc. "Such tactics," declared Mratchny, "foster an altogether false interpretation of what anarchism really is . . . to a great extent it accounted for the weakness of our movement in Russia. You, American anarchists, should profit by this lesson . . . If you want to become a real effective force you must disassociate yourselves absolutely from such elements." Mratchny was a teacher in the Jewish secular-cultural "Sholom Aleichem" school in Detroit. (Sholom Aleichem was an internationally acclaimed humorist-writer, often called "the Jewish Mark Twain.") He later became editor of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. He eventually retired from the movement and became a consulting psychoanalyst. He passed away a few years ago.

Detroit was famed as a city in which civil rights were respected. Unrestricted freedom of speech within designated public areas encouraged the mayor, Frank Murphy, a civil libertarian, to designate Grand Circus Park in the heart of downtown Detroit where all groups would enjoy equal access to the facilities provided. But the communists placed their own speakers in every slot allotted to other speakers. They would not allow anyone to talk and their strong-arm squad threw anyone else off the speakers' platform, particularly anti-Bolsheviks, wobblies and anarchists. The anarchists and the IWW decided to fight the communists and stop them from monopolizing the space allotted to other groups. An IWW member describes how this was successfully done:

We knew the commie ringleaders and had them spotted. We were going to teach them a lesson they would not soon forget. Our speaker got up and said: "There is one thing I don't like, and that is a cowardly rat. You haven't even got the guts to admit that you are

communists. How many of you are communists? If you have the guts raise your hands." The minute they raised their hands we conked them with sticks wrapped in the *Daily Worker*. They howled "Bums! Gangsters! Paid agents of the capitalists!" We warned them: "This is only the beginning. If you want to grow old keep away, otherwise you are going to die young!" No trouble after that.

Murphy, the mayor, said, "How the hell are you radicals going to make a new society when you don't even arrange things so that each of you get a fair share of the time? From now on there won't be any beatings. I am going to allot the time and I will have the cops there to see to it that you step down after a half hour to let the next group have their chance. If not, off you go."

The mayor brought order out of chaos. Not exactly a compliment to us. We were not responsible for the disorder. It was the communists. We were willing to share and share alike, but they wouldn't have it.

## CLEVELAND

I first met my comrade-wife Esther on the steps of the Cleveland public library after I got off the freight train I hopped in Detroit. In these deep depression days a speaker made his way as best he could because the meager contributions of the comrades were not enough to pay transportation costs. Esther was on the committee to arrange speakers for the Cleveland Open Forum. In addition to the forum I was also scheduled to debate Glazer, a communist lawyer, on the subject "Is Russia Heading Toward Communism?"

To trap my opponent, I resorted to an old debater's trick. I memorized a carefully selected, damaging quotation from Trotsky which I emphasized as my own argument. When Glazer eloquently refuted me, I told him that he was barking up the wrong tree. "Argue with Trotsky, he wrote it." "You are a liar. Trotsky wrote no such thing. Show me the book!" stormed Glazer. I had the book and the passage marked. This was the end of the debate.

I emerged victorious. The audience agreed that I had decisively demolished Glazer's arguments and convincingly pre-

sented my own case. But a few Italian comrades were not at all convinced. "Wait till Marcus Graham, a *real* anarchist, gets here; then you will know the difference." Since no one knew when or even if Graham was coming, I could not wait for the arrival of the "true prophet" of anarchism. I am neither more nor less conceited than ordinary people. But I just could not accept this reaction from our own, otherwise worthy comrades. I was entitled to an explanation. "You say that I am not a real anarchist. By what right do you assume the exclusive right to pronounce judgment on who is or is not an anarchist?" After half a century I am still awaiting a reasonable explanation—if there *is* an explanation. I was told that when Marcus Graham preceded or followed me on his tour he cautioned his listeners to bear in mind that I was not really a bona fide anarchist.

Luba and Morris Fagin were dedicated members of the Cleveland group. Luba's sister, Fanya Baron, who returned to Russia during the Revolution, was foully murdered by Lenin's secret police, the Cheka. Her husband, Aaron Baron, the uncompromising militant anarchist in the Nestor Makhno Ukrainian peasant guerrilla movement, after years of persecution and imprisonment disappeared without a trace. Both Luba and Morris were among the finest comrades it was my good fortune to know.

I still remember with gratitude how the Cleveland comrades, in the midst of the Depression, scraped enough money out of their meager resources to pay my bus fare to New York. But I could not, in good conscience, spend the money for my own comfort, while my impoverished comrades did not know where their next meal was coming from. The least I could do to alleviate the situation was to divert the bus fare to more pressing needs. I did not want the comrades to know that their contribution was misappropriated. So a Cleveland fellow worker, Jack Woods, and I left the next morning, hoboing to New York on a Nickel Plate freight train. Woods and a few other wobblies were later arrested for counterfeiting subway tokens. Risking arrest for a slug worth *five cents* was not seriously regarded as criminal even by the authorities.

## THE MODERN SCHOOL: STELTON

When we first came to Stelton in early spring 1933 to visit comrades, Esther was in an advanced stage of pregnancy and not feeling well. A Stelton comrade, Dora Keyser, suggested that we not return home but remain in Stelton and arrange for Esther to give birth to our first son, Abraham, at the maternity ward of Middlesex General Hospital in nearby New Brunswick. We found excellent accommodations with the Shubs, elderly Russian comrades who treated Esther as their own daughter and looked forward to the birth of our child as they would their own grandchild.

Because of my mother's illness we left Stelton for New York shortly after the birth of our first son. We lived in Stelton from 1933 to 1937 when our second son was born in New York. In 1938 we returned to Stelton and remained until 1941 or 1942. The Modern School was already a mere shadow of its former self. The Living House for children whose parents did not live in Stelton was sold to a private individual. Enrollment had practically ceased and only a handful of children remained. The rest had long since left to go to other schools.

The Modern School was by no means all it was cracked up to be. The school was directed by Alexis Ferm, "Uncle," and his wife Elizabeth Ferm, "Auntie." Auntie Ferm, though no longer a member of the Catholic church, subconsciously remained a devout Catholic (she had been brought up in a convent). Auntie sided with the Catholic church against the anti-fascists in the Spanish Civil War and Revolution (1936-39). She was furious because she believed that we recent settlers provoked a number of young Steltonites to condemn the church for supporting the Spanish fascists. She scolded Esther: "Why did you come to Stelton and cause so much trouble? Your kind of people desecrated churches and killed nuns and priests." She was unbearably stubborn and intolerant, demanding her own way in all things. Former pupils interviewed by Paul Avrich recalled that:

Auntie was strong-willed, cranky . . . sexually very prudish with deeply ingrained prejudices . . . she once washed a boy's mouth with soap for using foul language. . . . she hit another boy for peeping in

at the girls' outhouse toilet . . . named premarital sex as an unhealthy indulgence and condemned masturbation as self-abuse. Hugo Gellert who conducted the art class, a great admirer of the Ferns, recalled that Auntie had a dictatorial streak. [*The Modern School Movement*, pp. 270-1]

"Auntie" was clearly unfit to teach children in the Modern or any other school. I still cannot understand why people with even a modicum of judgment, much less "enlightened progressives," could appoint this reactionary to teach children in the Modern School. Although "Uncle" Fern was more congenial, he voiced no objection to "Auntie's" high-handed conduct. Nor can I understand how Jim and Nellie Dick, who still admired the educational endeavors introduced under the totalitarian dictatorship of Stalin in the Soviet Union, were appointed to head the Modern School.



Photo of myself, Esther (holding our son) and neighbors  
Stelton Modern School, New Jersey

Esther's sister, herself an experienced public school teacher who studied the Stelton Modern School while visiting us, declared that the school was by no means as progressive as its champions assumed. Educational methods in progressive public schools were more advanced, because the Modern School did not adequately prepare the pupils for high school or to meet the problems they were bound to encounter, not in the hothouse, unreal atmosphere of the school, but in real life.

Even anarchists and "graduates" of the Modern School voiced much the same sentiments. Most of the parents, although they did value the full freedom of their children to themselves develop their natural aptitudes unhampered by formal schooling, nevertheless strongly disapproved of "Auntie's" and "Uncle's" ill-concealed contempt for academic learning in the liberal disciplines because it amounted, in effect, to rejection of the achievements of civilization itself. The Ferns did not even consider reading and writing of prime importance. In desperation, some parents themselves discreetly taught their children after school to read and write and more sent their children to other schools.

## DORA KEYSER

We felt very much at home in Stelton since we had already met many of the Stelton comrades at gatherings in New York. Dora lived with her militant companion, Lovya, an electrician who died a few years later, and her sister's daughters whose parents were killed by the Bolsheviks in Russia, where they had gone to participate in the Revolution. In the Modern School Dora taught each child on his or her little plot of ground how to cultivate the ground allotted to them. She also performed other tasks necessary to the maintenance of the Living House, the workshops and other facilities. With the decline of the Modern School, Dora and other members of the community settled in the Los Angeles area where they organized an anarchist group, actively raising funds for political prisoners, sustaining the anarchist press, assisting hard-pressed workers on strike for better wages and conditions, etc. Dora devoted most

of her life, time and effort, and slender means to promote workers' organizations and improved social services. When she passed away at the age of eighty-five she was universally mourned by the many organizations and individuals whose cause she served so nobly. The delegate representing the United Farm Workers, overcome with emotion, wept openly at her funeral.

### LILLY SARNOFF

Lilly Sarnoff was one of the young anarchists who carried on an extensive correspondence with anti-World War I, IWW and anarchist "subversives" jailed during the notorious anti-red campaigns. Her extensive correspondence with the Mexican anarchist revolutionist, Enrique Flores Magón, who was imprisoned in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary, where he died in 1922, has lately been published in English and translated into Spanish. Lilly also corresponded with Manuel Rey (pseudonym, Louis Raymond), a Spanish member of the IWW imprisoned in Leavenworth. Upon his release, Raymond and Lilly met, fell in love and began their long life together in Stelton Colony. Raymond worked as a house painter in nearby New Brunswick and at odd jobs in the Stelton area. At times I used to help him and we got along very well indeed, except for his home-made beer; I could hardly swallow his awful tasting concoction. I was tempted to complain but refrained because I did not want to mar our harmonious relationship. Lilly died a few years ago. Raymond still survives at the ripe old age of ninety.

### HIPPOLYTE HAVEL

I did not know Havel at the height of his career as a militant anarchist writer, editor, and well-known member of the Greenwich Village Bohemian community. In 1924, he lived in a room adjoining the Stelton Colony Kropotkin Library near the School House. All his expenses, the room, food, clothing,

drinks, etc. were paid by the contribution of the Jewish Anarchist Federation, the Italian, Russian, Spanish and other groups.

When I got to know him in Stelton, Havel was an ill-tempered, abusive alcoholic, a paranoiac who regarded even the slightest difference of opinion as a personal affront. Nor could he carry on a discussion on any subject for more than a few minutes without constant interruptions, abruptly launching into a tirade on totally unrelated matters. It was most painful to witness the deterioration of a once vibrant personality. Havel became insane and died in a New Jersey psychiatric hospital.

### ABE WINOKOUR AND ANNA SOSNOFSKY

While the activities of the Modern School were slowly approaching a halt, the growing and successful activities of the Stelton anarchist Kropotkin Group was primarily due to the efforts of its most dedicated members, Anna Sosnofsky and Abe Winokour. Anna was a well-known rank-and-file militant in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and Abe was a paperhanger.

The group operated in the Kropotkin Library and organized the anarchist summer school. The curriculum included: History of the American Labor Movement; The International Anarchist Movement; Principles and Practical Application of Anarchism; Critique of Marxism and Bolshevism; Current Events and Problems; etc. Among the speakers at the summer school and at the forum were Harry Kelley, Joseph Cohen, Liston M. Oak, Rudolf Rocker and myself. The secretaries of the Kropotkin Group, Anna Sosnofsky and Abe Winokour, invited speakers, arranged accommodations, introduced the speakers, etc. They also arranged details pertaining to the summer school and the periodic anarchist conferences. For all these initiatives and endless projects they were called "King and Queen."

With the final collapse of the Stelton Colony, Abe and Anna moved to Los Angeles, California. Anna, after prolonged suffering, died of cancer and Abe died a few years later. When the definitive history of the Modern School colony will finally

be written, it is hoped that their valiant efforts, now almost forgotten, will be accorded their rightful place.

The disintegration of the colony was to no small extent also due to the changing composition of the population. All the children of the original libertarian founders of the Modern School were now in their teens or twenties, and the Modern School could not possibly provide for their needs and their parents left the colony. They sold their homes for as much as they could get to strangers who were totally indifferent or even hostile to the "reds" and the "free lovers." On July Fourth and other patriotic holidays American flags were provocatively flaunted on their front lawns. The new owners made common cause with their conservative neighbors in the Fellowship Farm across the road from what remained of the Colony.

Those who hoped that the example set by the Modern School and colony would enlighten and make important sectors of the surrounding community receptive to their message were sorely disappointed. It was, on the contrary, the nefarious influence of the very non-radical agglomeration that to a great extent penetrated and undermined the colony. Not a few Stelton Colony youngsters legally married bourgeois youngsters from New Brunswick and surrounding areas. I know of no case in which this process was reversed.

While the unhampered freedom of individuals to live as they see fit as long as they do not infringe on the equal rights of others to do likewise is a cardinal principle of anarchism, the antics of food faddists, "back to nature" faddists, nudists, etc. do foster a distorted conception of anarchism. Quite a few colonists became disciples of a certain Dr. Stretch, a chiropractor and physical therapist, who insisted that the use of starch in the diet was the root cause of all physical and even mental ills.

A woman, alarmed at the physical condition of her grandchild, took the infant to a physician for examination. The physician saw that the child was slowly starving for lack of starch in the diet. To alert the grandmother that she must act immediately, he at once mixed flour and water which he fed to the child. Other colonists became "mono-dietists," eating only potatoes one week, carrots the next, spinach the week after, and

so forth. Another food faddist, a strict vegetarian obsessed with the miraculous food value of soy beans, had his disciples. He established a "nature living" soybean colony in Africa where he died. A fanatical nudist, bent on exposing her body to maximum sunshine, walked stark naked all day long around her circular roof top. Her wrinkled, leathery body took on the color and texture of an animated mummy.

I was concerned not so much with the actual or imagined benefits of these fads as with the fact that they were adopted without the slightest knowledge of chemistry or physiology, so indispensable to judging the effects of their diet on their health. A case in point: a faddist boasted to my comrade-wife that her diet was based on a thorough study of an authoritative book on the subject. A little later, Esther, on a visit to her home, saw the dilapidated volume sticking out of a pile of discarded papers, unopened and the pages uncut.

When we came to Stelton in the midst of the great economic crisis—the Depression—and the Spanish Civil War and Revolution, a number of young anarchists (Sasha Zagar and his sister Olga, Albert Weiss, Claire Gallikow, Harmony and her sister Germaine, Jeffrey Bannister, among others) determined to counteract communist propaganda and expose the counter-revolutionary nature of the growing Communist Party influence in the colony and conduct propaganda in surrounding areas; they organized the Stelton Anarchist Youth Group and published their bulletin, *Looking Forward*.

The Communist Party commissar in Stelton, Ossip Kenner, was employed by the Soviet Trading Corporation, AMTORG. His home, called "The Kremlin," was the party headquarters. To discredit or disrupt our meetings the communists resorted to interruptions, false accusations and other usual tactics. I recall an incident when "commissar" Kenner grossly insulted our speaker, Rudolf Rocker, insinuating that he and all the other anarchists, by virtue of the fact that they were "fanatical enemies of the great Soviet Union," were unintentionally helping the Nazis. Rocker severely reprimanded Kenner for his insinuations and for interrupting his remarks, telling him that "I have been jailed more times for the cause of freedom than you have hairs on your foolish head."

The Anarchist Youth Group also conducted open forums in Stelton addressed by anarchist, IWW and other speakers, among them Douglas Clark, a volunteer in the "Battalion of Death" fighting in Spain; Frank Branch (Arrigoni), an eyewitness participant, just returned from Spain; "Covami" (pen name of Covington Hall), an IWW writer and organizer of strikes in the deep south, where the IWW pioneered the integration and unity of black and white workers against their employers; and myself. Through the cooperation of Anna Sosnofsky and Abe Winokour the Youth Group obtained the Workmen's Circle Hall in New Brunswick for a mass meeting to rally support for the struggle in Spain, the United Libertarian Organizations and their organ *Spanish Revolution*. We planned to expose the despicable counter-revolutionary role of the Communist Party in Spain and in the United States. Despite weeks of intense publicity the only people attending the meeting were Anna Sosnofsky, Abe Winokour and a few other comrades.

This fiasco, plus the growing opposition of some anarchists who resented criticism of "Uncle" and "Auntie" Ferm's educational theories, and the Youth Group's open anti-communist propaganda, which was upsetting the tacit understanding between communists and anarchists not to allow their differences to interfere with the conduct of the Modern School, undermined the group's morale and led to its disintegration.

And now, a few critical remarks about the educational philosophy of the Modern School. There is no foundation whatever for the fallacious belief that propaganda and indoctrination are incompatible with freedom, i.e., that the "free" child must not be influenced. Such contentions were decisively refuted as far back as a century ago by Bakunin:

In human society every living being lives only by the supreme principle of the most positive intervention in the life of other other human being . . . the wish to escape this influence, to forego the exercise of this freedom in the name of an absolute, self-sufficient freedom is a wild absurdity. . . . [see my *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 257]

Kropotkin's *Appeal to the Young* also urges the youth to propagandize to make the social revolution.

To renounce the class struggle with the words "The savior

of the world will not be the class struggle, but the creative artist" (Auntie Ferm), to dismiss the age-old movements of oppressed peoples against exploitation, their heroic struggles which are so decisive a part of human history, as mere "isms" ("education is not anarchism, socialism, or any other ism"—Uncle Ferm), as indoctrination and propaganda, is a flagrant violation of the fundamental humanistic essence of anarchism and true socialism. Ironically, the Ferm's doctrine of freedom in education is in itself a form of indoctrination.

Numerous attempts conclusively demonstrate that the Stelton Modern School Colony and all other colonies are essentially self-isolationist forms of escapism. I came to realize more and more that freedom will be attained not in isolation, but only in association with the rest of humanity.

## SUNRISE COLONY

The uncontrollable urges of both Harry Kelley and Joseph J. Cohen to establish utopian colonies are aptly noted by historian Paul Avrich:

In spite of all the setbacks Kelley's passion for starting colonies never abated [and Cohen, like Kelley] . . . could not shed his dream of a true libertarian community . . . [*The Modern School Movement*, pp. 345, 347]

The very title, *In Quest of Heaven*, of Cohen's remarkable, gripping account of the tragic collapse of the Sunrise Cooperative Farm Community in Michigan which he founded in 1933, and chapter headings like "The Dream" and "The Ending of the Dream" indicate that his obsession was noble, but unrealizable. The enduring value of *In Quest of Heaven* is Cohen's unflinching self-criticism and his analysis of the mistakes which led to the total failure of the experiment. His conclusions, whether he knew it or not, point to the incurable, built-in defects, not peculiar to Sunrise but shared by all attempts to establish little "heavens on earth" in the midst of universal corruption, exploitation, chaos and violence. A few relevant remarks:

A natural community in which the individual is born,

reared and lives out his or her life is one in which, in Cohen's words: ". . . the individual takes his place in the infinity of circles that make up that vast tapestry which we call society . . ." But a "homogenous" community is not a true natural community. It is really an anti-social, artificially predetermined uniform life-pattern.

As in so many other failed colonies, the new settlers could not shake off their old habits and deeply ingrained ways of life. The social chains that bound them unfortunately proved too strong to break. They could not miraculously adopt a totally new idealized lifestyle that clashed so radically with their in-born subconscious loyalties. Cohen emphasizes that the "homogenous" way of life leads to:

. . . fragmentation . . . to the isolation to which our life on Sunrise tended to lead us. We gradually lost all interest in what was going on in the world outside . . . Unintentionally we were cutting ourselves off from the rest of the world and narrowing our own high dikes . . . isolation contributed a great deal to the impoverishment of our lives and the drying up of the springs of interest which are important to every human being. [p. 198]

There is an unmistakably Jesuitical tendency to regimentation and disrespect for individual rights (among other violations) in the breaking-up of families that is characteristic of far too many colonies. For example, in Sunrise parents were "persuaded" not to rear their own children by the de facto decree of their unqualified leaders who left the "job" to equally unqualified colonists to give children arbitrarily separated from their parents what Cohen considered ". . . a better chance to grow up as decent human beings and good collectivists . . ."

The Sunrise experiment naturally sparked much discussion in our circles. I was on good terms with a number of comrades who joined the colony. Almost all of them confirmed Cohen's self-critical conclusions. Surprisingly, their faith in such experiments remained unshaken. But several of the comrades who took the trouble to look into the history of colonies concluded that the Sunrise experiment once again repeated the incurable defects afflicting all colonies, past and present. Cohen, of course, insisted that if this, that or the other mistake was

corrected anarchist colonies would light the way to freedom.

Despite differing views about the value of colonies to demonstrate the virtues of anarchism, I valued Cohen's sound judgment and consistency in other matters. What I still do not understand is why Cohen, bent on demonstrating that *stateless* colonies are a practical alternative to the state could at the time reverse himself and maintain that:

Our armchair attitude toward the state ought to be revised because there are certain forms of state management and regulation absolutely necessary and beneficial in present day society which will undoubtedly remain. [Quoted by Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*, p. 348]

## MOHEGAN COLONY

The Mohegan Modern School Association was organized in the spring of 1923 by Harry Kelley, Morris Jagendorf and others. The principals, Jim and Nellie Dick, conducted the school in accordance with the educational theories and methods practiced by "Uncle" and "Auntie" Ferm in the Stelton Modern School Colony. In the 1930s, the non-anarchist residents, who outnumbered the anarchists, turned the Modern School into a replica of the conventional "progressive" school with government support.

In addition to organizing the Modern School the anarchists also organized an Institute for the Study of Social, Economic and Political Problems; conducted regular Friday night forums addressed by such speakers as Norman Thomas, Roger Baldwin, Arturo Giovannetti, Angelica Balabanoff and others. I was called to Mohegan to counteract the propaganda of the communists out to control the school and colony. On weekends I addressed the open forum, picnics, socials and informal meetings with individuals.

It was there I got to know the Mohegan comrades better. A number of Russian anarchists who once belonged to the now defunct thirty-thousand-member Union of Russian Workers of the United States and Canada lived in Mohegan: Samusin, a mechanical dentist; Dodokin, a self-employed electrical contractor; Sasha Gromm, a self-employed textile printer; Sanjour, an

anarcho-syndicalist member of the IWW and self-employed construction worker; the Murashkos, Tolstoyan anarchists; and a few others. Most of them worked in New York, but owned a home and a small plot of ground in Mohegan which they lovingly cultivated in their spare time, planning to settle there when they retired. The few Russian comrades still carried on considerable activities, maintaining what little was left of the once flourishing Russian movement: their monthly organ, *Delo Truda*, promoting the annual tour of its editor, Gregory Maximoff, contributing to the Alexander Berkman Aid Fund for Political Prisoners in Russia and elsewhere, the Sacco-Vanzetti defense, the anarchist press, *Spanish Revolution*, *Vanguard*, etc., and publication of anarchist literature.

Among the most steadfast comrades were the Monts. Mont, a carpenter, was a veteran anarchist from England. He was deeply disappointed when his own son became, of all things, a fanatical Trotskyite with whom he continually quarrelled. Pointing to Kropotkin's daughter who called herself "The Princess Alexandra Kropotkin," Paul Boattini, son of a Detroit anarchist (he was an ultra anti-organization individualist anarchist when I knew him in Chicago), who became a fanatical communist, and so many others, I tried, to little avail, to convince Mont that he was not to blame. He agreed. But he just could not control his emotional reaction.

Lydia Gordon was an altogether extraordinary personality. Over half a century ago she was already fearlessly promoting the struggle for women's equality, civil rights and sexual freedom. Lydia's husband, George, now an aged man in poor health, helped dig the tunnel through which Alexander Berkman planned to escape from the penitentiary where he was confined for almost sixteen years for his attempt to kill Frick, the manager of the Homestead Works of the Carnegie Steel Corporation, in solidarity with the striking workers. The failure of this valiant attempt to free him is movingly related in Berkman's classic, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*.

Lydia and her husband owned a small house and piece of ground where they operated a gasoline station. They lived on the premises. Lydia added to the income by selling her home-baked bread to customers and neighbors. We will always be

grateful for Lydia's generous invitation to Esther, our son Abraham and myself to stay with her all summer. On one of the weekend trips we stayed in Lydia's place. When we were about to return to the city, Lydia asked: "Why must Esther and the baby suffer in the heat of the city? Stay with us and Sam can come out on weekends."

The infiltration by non-anarchists who wanted to abandon the Modern School in favor of state-subsidized schools, the disruption by the communists in their attempt to seize control of the school and the colony, and the conservative and less-than-conservative outsiders who bought land and built houses in Mohegan Colony, turned the colony into a haven for prosperous middle-class commuters. There was little resistance because many of the original colonists passed away. Surviving colonists were for a variety of reasons forced to leave Mohegan. Certainly the few comrades who did remain could not stem the gradual degeneration and disintegration of the Mohegan Colony in the late 1950s.

### ***WHY? AND RESISTANCE***

After our Vanguard group collapsed and its organ *Vanguard* ceased publication in 1939, Esther, Franz Fleigler (an IWW seaman), and Audrey Goodfriend, whose father was a very active militant in the Jewish Anarchist Federation, and I launched the anarchist periodical *WHY?* in 1943. Audrey Goodfriend capably administered all affairs connected with the production of *WHY?*: correspondence, mailing subscriptions, finances and the innumerable absolutely necessary details pertaining to the regular appearance of the paper. When Audrey moved to the San Francisco Bay area, she was one of the founders of the very successful Walden School for children in Berkeley. She is now retired, but is still avidly interested in the progress of the school. She proudly escorted us on a little tour when we were in the Bay Area a few years ago.

We were joined a little later by five or six young anarchists who formed the *WHY?* group. Dorothy Rogers (already referred to); Diva Agostinelli, whom I first met while delivering a talk

at Temple University, Philadelphia (her father was a dedicated anarchist whom I had previously met in their Brooklyn, New York City, center); Audrey's younger sister, a bohemian habitué of Greenwich Village; another bohemian anarchist, a journalism student who wrote under the pen name Michael Grieg (he dropped out of the movement, and now lives in San Francisco where, I am told, he works for the Hearst newspaper syndicate); and David Thoreau Wieck (his mother greatly admired Thoreau), a dedicated young anarchist who was jailed when he courageously opposed America's entry into World War II. There were others whose names I do not recall. Soon the name *WHY?* was more aptly changed to *Resistance* and Wieck later became the sole editor.

As we came to know each other better, we found that we disagreed sharply on a number of fundamental points. Together with Rudolf Rocker, Gregory Maximoff, and by far the bulk of the anarchist movement who had resolutely opposed World War I, we now felt that the very existence of what was left of civilization depended on the decisive military defeat of the fascist barbarian hordes. We had to fight fascism on the condition that nobody profited by the war, that social justice must simultaneously accompany the defeat of fascism, that the allied governments should not be permitted to conclude peace with new fascist or semi-fascist regimes set up after the victory, that civil liberties and the right to strike should not be curtailed during hostilities.

In an article written eighteen years after its disappearance (*Anarchy*, London, No. 8, 1972), Wieck proudly conferred upon *Resistance* the dubious honor of anticipating the misconceptions of anarchism which afflicted the new left "neo-anarchists." An article in the August 1953 issue of *Resistance* shows that Wieck was right: "The new left also rejected what we in *Resistance* called Marxist and syndicalist ideas of the working class as a revolutionary force. . . ." In this article Wieck severely condemned the anarcho-syndicalist Maximoff because in Wieck's opinion, anarcho-syndicalist forms of organization are not compatible with freedom. To charge that: "networks of voluntary producers' organizations grouped in general confederations of labor . . . communal organizations federated

regionally, nationally and internationally are actually a shadow government" is to repudiate the very essence of anarchism as a viable form of organization in a modern interdependent world.

As far as *Resistance* was concerned, anarchism was not even regarded as a social movement with a mass base but as a sort of semi-religious formula for personal salvation defined by Wieck as a "general orientation of an individual's life rather than a set ideology." Wieck's attitude illustrates a chronic affliction which plagues anarchism: regression to antique forms of social organization; an infantile rejection of any form of organization much above the level of neighborhood groups and an intimate circle of friends, now called "affinity groups."

In general, *Resistance* reflected the ideas of Paul Goodman, expressed in the many articles, poems and reviews he wrote for *Resistance* and in his close personal relations with group members.

Our differences on these and other matters made it impossible for us to get along. I am not here arguing who was right or wrong. We were incompatible. Not a single *Resistance* member showed the least inclination to consider, much less support our position. There were only three or four of us. They did all the work. It was *their* group, and as far as they were concerned we were intruders. *We* left the group.

After the disintegration of the group and the disappearance of its organ, *Resistance*, in 1954, Wieck retired as an active anarchist. He has been and still is, these many years, a professor or assistant professor of philosophy in Rensselaer College, Troy, New York.

In the occasional articles written since he retired, Wieck has unaccountably displayed the most glaring contradiction between anarchist ideas and his ambivalent, if not permissive, attitude toward "Third World" totalitarian regimes:

Totalitarian revolutions could one day have a liberating effect. . . . The Chinese revolution by eliminating poverty and instituting important technological advances is demonstrating that we need not recreate the Russian chaos. . . . In spite of the statist, collectivist, anti-libertarian character of these regimes, this is an encouraging sign . . . as to what can be accomplished in one way or another in the United States. . . . [*Anarchy*, London, No. 8, 1972]

It is worth pointing out that the Chinese Revolution is estimated by some to have cost 20 million lives (about half as many as World War II).

In the midst of the Cuban Revolution euphoria, Wieck wrote me an insolent letter severely castigating our attitude toward the Cuban Revolution: "My old friend Sam is now sucking the CIA tit . . ." The Cuban anarchists, who fought with Castro and the Cuban people against Batista and tried to halt the degeneration of the Cuban Revolution into a totalitarian nightmare, were in thinly veiled language branded "counter-revolutionists" and had to flee to Florida. Wieck insisted that the opposition had no right to call Castro a communist.

Unfortunately for Wieck, Castro himself confessed, the very next morning, that he was, and would remain a communist to his dying breath. I assured Wieck, when he asked me why I did not answer his letter, that no less an authority than Castro himself, had, by this admission, devastatingly refuted his groundless accusations and insinuations. I note, in passing, that while important segments of the European and Latin-American anarchist movement at first levelled similar charges against the Cuban comrades, they did repudiate their mistaken view of the true nature of the Cuban totalitarian regime when facts from unimpeachable sources finally clarified the situation.

I feel it necessary to conclude my remarks about the *Resistance* group with a few remarks in tribute to the memory of Paul Goodman, whom I first met at a *Resistance* forum meeting in the Spanish anarchist Cultura Proletaria center. My comrade-wife Esther told him that she had written a short story, actually an indictment of intellectuals who survived the Nazi holocaust. Instead of revolting against the depraved institutions which must share responsibility for making such atrocities possible, the intellectuals carved out comfortable places for themselves and fitted snugly into the legally sanctioned, criminal "establishment."

Goodman was always willing to help young writers. He read their manuscripts, suggested improvements and, if he found them worthy, did his utmost to get them published. We went to see him on Ninth Avenue in a dingy flat at the head of a steep flight of steps. The door was open. We waited and

Goodman showed up a little later. Goodman read the story. He was impressed and moved heaven and earth to place it with the magazine *Commentary* to which he was a contributor. Goodman was certain that the story was refused not because it lacked merit, but because *Commentary* was itself a loyal member of the "establishment."

Goodman's writings brought him world-wide fame. Large sums from royalties, lecture engagements, reviews and articles did not turn his head. There was no ostentation, no snobbishness. He lived and dressed simply, as he had always done. He remained sensitive and compassionate, a good neighbor, a good friend to his fellow-man—and always a good rebel.

I saw him for the last time when we both addressed a meeting in the assembly room of the publishers Harper & Row, protesting a violation of civil rights. He was emaciated and seemed depressed. He was glad to see us and we conversed for a few minutes. He died prematurely, of heart disease, a few months later.

## THE LIBERTARIAN LEAGUE: VIEWS AND COMMENTS

The Libertarian League was founded July 1954 on the initiative of Russell Blackwell, Esther and myself. I had known Blackwell since the 1930s. He began his radical career as a member of the Communist Party youth. Since he was fluent in Spanish, he was sent to the Caribbean area to organize youth groups. Deeply dissatisfied with the dictatorship of the CP leaders over the membership and its unprincipled opportunist policies, Blackwell left the party.

He became a member of a dissident communist splinter group whose name I do not recall. In the early phase of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution Blackwell left for Europe as a stowaway aboard the French luxury liner *Ile de France* and made his way to Spain. There he fought on the barricades in Barcelona in May 1937 together with the POUM (Marxist Party of Workers' Unity—ideologically close to Blackwell's group) and with other militants of the Friends of Durruti Battalion against the Communist Party's efforts to exterminate

the POUM and the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (National Confederation of Labor).

Blackwell was accused by the communists of being a "fascist spy" and jailed just as he was about to board the ship to leave Spain and return to New York. But thanks to the intervention of the CNT and an intensive nation-wide campaign in the USA, Blackwell was finally released. Shortly after his arrival in New York, he was brutally beaten by the Communist Party gangsters while wheeling his child in a baby carriage. Blackwell became an excellent cartographer and retired from the movement to raise his family, until I again met him years later.

He was now a convinced anarcho-syndicalist, avid for action after his long absence from the movement. We found ourselves in substantial agreement on fundamental principles and launched the Libertarian League. The "Provisional Declaration of Principles," like the moribund Vanguard declaration, restated in modern language a summation of the classical anarcho-syndicalism/anarcho-communism of Bakunin and Kropotkin:

. . . our orientation is towards building of the revolutionary syndicalist movement, in line with which we endorse and support the IWW and the IWA [International Workers Association, first established in 1864 and reorganized in 1922] . . . New members of the Libertarian League cannot be members of political parties or their youth sections or of any other organization which actually works for a separate economically or politically authoritarian system, government, or the State in any form. . . .

The declaration was to serve as a basis for discussion until a more definitive statement was worked out.

We had no money to establish a center of our own. We were desperately in need of a place where we could hold meetings, forums and socials, and dispense literature; a center where people receptive to our ideas could contact us. We were rescued by the solidarity of our Spanish anarchist comrades in Cultura Proletaria. They offered to share their center (a loft on lower Broadway) with us.

The Cultura Proletaria group did not just preach but actually practiced anarchism in their relations with each other.

Everything was done on a voluntary basis. Once a month the comrades seated around a long table assembled, addressed and mailed their monthly organ, *Cultura Proletaria*. The rent for the center and all other expenses were paid by voluntary contributions. The monthly communal dinners were prepared by the voluntary "chefs" in the kitchen space. There was no fixed price. At the conclusion of the dinner everyone contributed voluntarily as much as they could. The contributions never failed to exceed, by far, the cost of food, wine and other refreshments. When later our League followed their example we were disappointed. When a "free dinner" was to be served, the news spread. The hall was packed with freeloaders who would devour everything and then leave without contributing anything to spend their money on outside entertainment.

Two of the most active members of *Cultura Proletaria* with whom we were in close contact were Frank Gonzalez and Marcellino Garcia. I visited Gonzalez in the hospital a day or two before he died. Here are excerpts from an obituary we published in our organ *Views and Comments*:

#### FRANK GONZÁLEZ (1893-1957)

Our movement lost one of its staunchest militants with the death of Frank Gonzalez in New York's Bellevue Hospital last November 21st, 1957. To those of us who knew him and worked with him in New York his passing is also an acute personal loss.

Frank Gonzalez was born in the Province of Santander, Spain. As a child he accompanied his father to the meetings of the "Republican Federalist Movement." . . . With the passage of time the simple political solutions held out by the Republican Federalists were insufficient for Frank, as for many others, and they went on to join the anarcho-syndicalist movement. Those who were most active were soon known to the authorities and Gonzalez fled to Mexico to participate in the Mexican Revolution. Later he came to the United States and was for many years active in the organizational activities of the Industrial Workers of the World—IWW, especially among the sailors where he helped to mobilize the seamen of three coasts against the miserable conditions that prevailed in the industry.

...

For decades, Frank Gonzalez and others published the Spanish newspaper *Cultura Proletaria*, which was largely influential in mobil-

izing the Spanish minority behind the Spanish Revolution. He was one of the leading spirits of SIA (International Anti-fascist Solidarity) through which many thousands of dollars were collected to aid the victims of Franco's terror.

The Libertarian League was born in the shadow of Frank Gonzalez and his group, which in the face of adversity, has been able to keep the light burning in the little hall on Broadway. His cooperation and that of others in his group helped give us a start when it was sorely needed. . . . He lived his ideals. Only those who are capable of this will be able ultimately to adhere to the high goals to which our beloved comrade devoted a half-century of his life. . . . The world is better for his having lived in it. [*Views & Comments*, No. 26, Feb. 1958]

Marcellino García, for many years the de facto editor of *Cultura Proletaria*, was an elevator operator in a New York commercial building. Marcellino was an eloquent orator not only in his native Spanish but also in fluent unaccented English. To rally support for *Cultura Proletaria*, and to coordinate activities, Marcellino periodically visited the Spanish anarchist groups in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and West Virginia, also other Midwestern coal and steel mill areas and auto manufacturing centers in Michigan.

During the Spanish Civil War and Revolution he went to Spain to gather first-hand information about the general situation; the role of the CNT-FAI (FAI: Anarchist Federation of Iberia) in the war; the constructive achievements of the revolutionary agricultural collectives and urban industrial socialization. His direct reports in *Cultura Proletaria*, plus the book by García Pradas, *La Traición de Stalin*, an eyewitness account of the last days of the war in Madrid, and other material also published in *Cultura Proletaria*, constitute primary sources for a comprehensive history of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution.

Marcellino retired in the 1960s. He no longer had any reason to remain in New York. *Cultura Proletaria* ceased publication. There had been nothing he could do to halt the decline of the Spanish movement in the United States, following the Franco victory and the outbreak of World War II. Above all, Marcellino's wife was terminally ill. To prolong her life for as long as possible and so that she could live out her last days in a

quiet, pleasant rural environment, Marcellino bought a small house near Palmerston, Pennsylvania, where Esther and I visited him on two occasions.

The first was a weekend reunion of about fifteen Spanish comrades scattered in West Virginia, Ohio, Pittsburgh, Detroit and points east. They had long since abandoned hope for a revival of the once flourishing Spanish anarchist movement in the US. Marcellino appealed to the comrades not to be discouraged, but it did seem to me that their pessimism was all too well founded.

We saw him for the last time when we accompanied Paul Avrich, who interviewed Marcellino for his projected history of anarchist movements in America. He was 78 years old and lived alone with his son. His son was killed in an auto accident and Marcellino passed away a few years later. The contributions of the Spanish anarchist movement in the United States, and of militants like Frank González, Marcellino García and Jose López Rio merit a prominent and rightful place in the history of American anarchism.

## FEDERICO ARCOS

To Federico Arcos and the few remaining comrades in the Detroit and nearby Canadian district belongs the distinction of keeping alive informal contacts between comrades after the disappearance of *Cultura Proletaria* and the organized Spanish anarchist movement in America.

Largely through the unflagging efforts of Federico, Arturo Bertolotti, and a few others, original Spanish anarchist documents and translations into English of such important works as Jose Peirats's *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution*, and Abel Paz's *Durruti: The People Armed*, together with the immense archives assembled by Federico were made available to interested individuals and researchers.

Federico is not just a Spanish but a *universal* anarchist interested in all facets of anarchism. His archives include not only Spanish events and background, but information about anarchism in general. Biographers of Emma Goldman (for

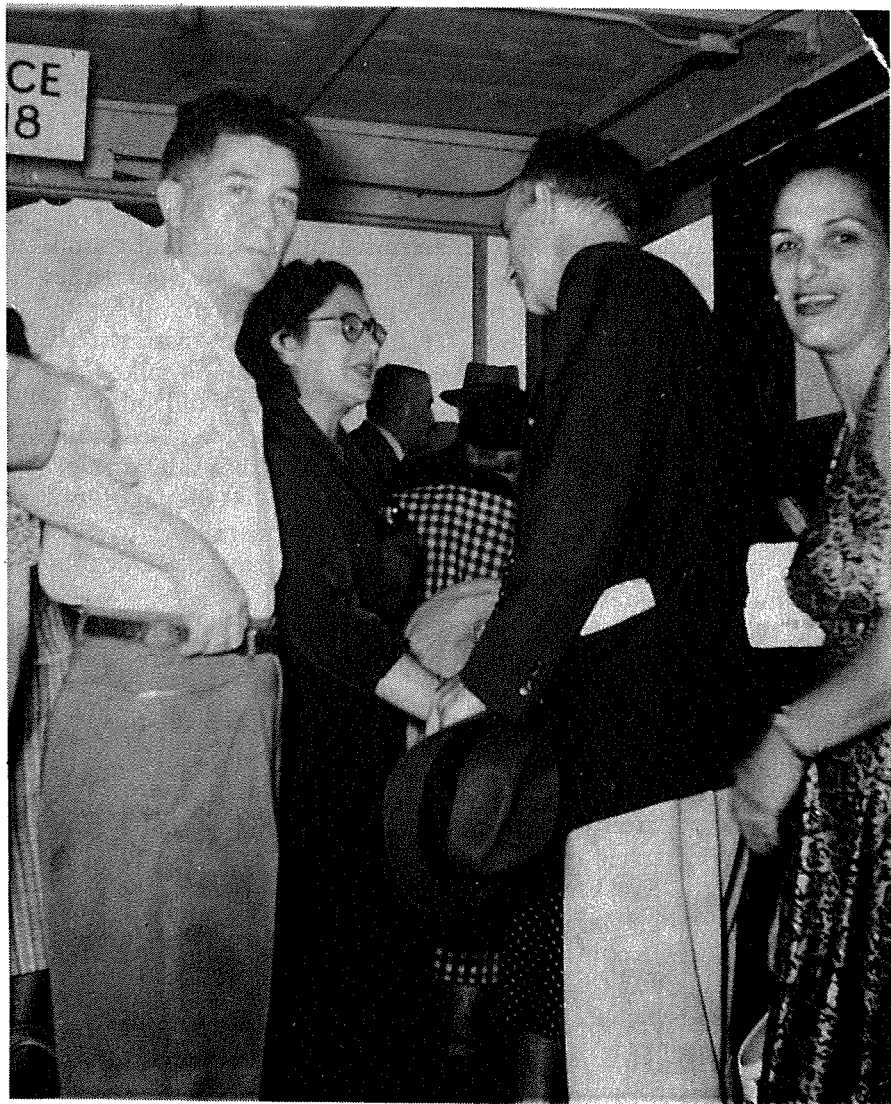
example) and researchers on other subjects gratefully acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Federico Arcos. In many areas his collection rivals or supplements the voluminous anarchist collection of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, a fact which the director acknowledged when I visited the library together with Arcos. Let these few lines register our esteem and appreciation for his dedication to our ideals.

With the increasing nationwide interest in anarchism, a number of young people who attended our socials and round-table discussions joined the Libertarian League. We found that informal round-table discussions—gatherings where all spontaneously participated—were far more effective than strictly organized forums where the speakers harangued and talked not *to*, but *at* the people. Undoubtedly discussions did much to clarify ideas and stimulate self-expression. But such discussions, necessarily confined to a narrow circle, to a considerable extent inhibited the expansion of the group. As one of our younger comrades put it: “We can’t keep on talking to each other indefinitely. . . . We must expand and grow. . . . Our message must reach new people.”

With this in mind we launched our journal *Views and Comments*. The first few mimeographed issues were barely legible. We all chipped in and bought an old Multilith 1200 press. (For articles in *Views and Comments* reflecting the orientation of the Libertarian League, see Appendix A.)

Dick Ellington, a talented mechanic able to operate and repair complicated machinery, did the printing. The press was sold some years later to the *Catholic Worker* after Ellington moved to the San Francisco area. He is an excellent typesetter and printer. In 1955, he lined up in the IWW and he is still a delegate and in continuous good standing. In this connection the official IWW historical publication *The IWW: Its First Seventy Years* remarks:

Most [of the IWW members in New York] were members of the Libertarian League, a discussion and propaganda group which included old time IWWs like Sam (Weiner) Dolgoff who encouraged many of the League’s student or student-age members to join. [p. 201]



Federica Montseny (glasses) between flights at a New York airport, being greeted by Russell Blackwell (dark coat) and comrades of Cultura Proletaria.

Ellington's wife, Patricia, helped with preparation and mailing of *Views and Comments*, taking care of literature, cleaning the hall and doing other necessary tasks.

Dave Van Ronk, who later became a well known radical folk singer, and Vince Hickey, a musician, were primarily attracted to the round-table discussions and socials. The Ellingtons (as already noted), Hickey and a few others later moved to California, thereby restricting our activity. We hoped that they would really expand the range of the League's influence when they organized groups in California. Van Ronk left the League to join the Trotskyites. Highly critical of the Trotskyite program and their dictatorial practices, he helped organize a group which split away. He dropped out of the movement.

Two of our members suffered a tragic fate. Sheldon Deretchin, a very active member, was, unbeknown to us, a chronic diabetic. He disregarded even the most elementary precautions and was only twenty years old when he passed away.

The other member, Walter Coy, was a nonviolent anarcho-pacifist from Louisiana. I first met him in Antioch College, Ohio, where he arranged a very successful talk for me on an anarchist subject. When he left Antioch he came to New York and joined the Libertarian League. He was a good writer and tireless worker for our cause. He had rented an apartment in an East Village slum. Before he could mount the first steps to his flat he was waylaid by a street gangster and murdered.

The League's new members were young, romantic and craved "*action—to do something new now.*" In this connection, I recall a most distressing incident. In 1959, Jerry Marshall (a pseudonym), a forger, petty thief and cheap racketeer, a criminal "Robin Hood" suffering from delusions of grandeur, had concocted a fraudulent scheme to put the IWW and the League "on the map" which was enthusiastically hailed by the young members of the League. They picketed the employment agencies and distributed leaflets urging job seekers to boycott the employment agencies charging exorbitant fees. "You don't have to pay for a job. The IWW will get you a job free of charge. . . . We have our own hiring hall. . . ."

There were no jobs. The meetings and transactions of the

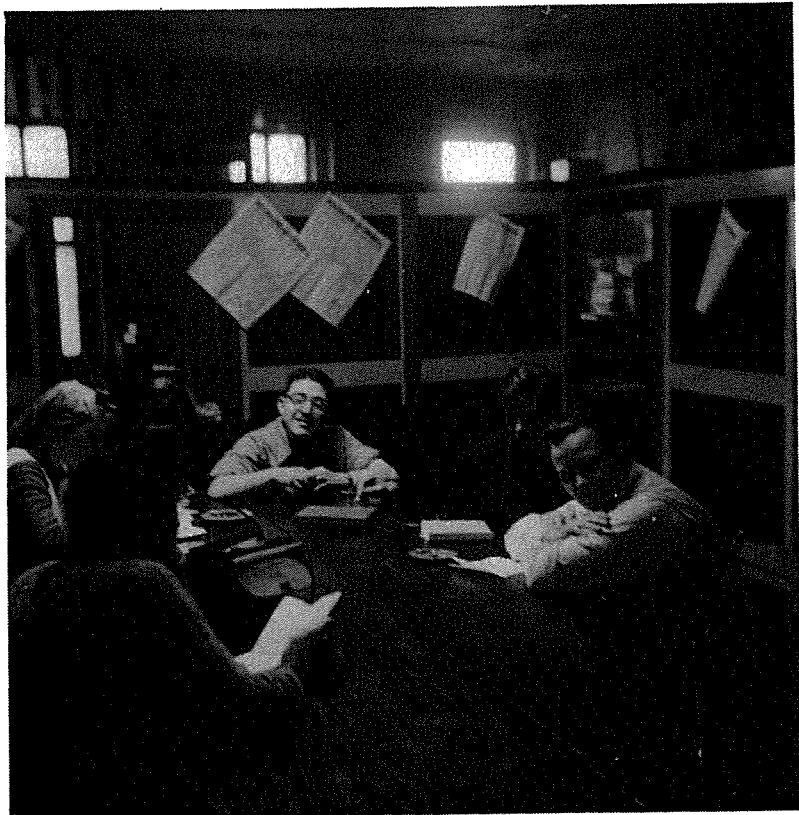
phony job agency were conducted in the Libertarian League Hall on East 10th Street (where we moved after *Cultura Proletaria* abandoned their Broadway hall and moved to a smaller place). About forty unemployed workers (mostly in restaurants) joined the IWW and hundreds sought information. There were no jobs. The whole fraudulent scheme collapsed and the new disappointed members left. The authorities threatened to prosecute the IWW for fraudulently operating an employment agency without a license. My protest against the dishonest conduct as a flagrant violation of IWW principles, never to lie to the workers, or to line them up under false promises, was dismissed in the midst of the youthful euphoria.

When after a three-year imprisonment for forgery, Marshall showed up at the IWW headquarters in Chicago, he managed to make a duplicate key to the premises and the safe. He stole, forged and cashed \$800 in blank checks. When he came to see us in New York a few days later, he gave no inkling of his escape. He later disappeared.

In the late 1950s we welcomed Bill Rose, a new member of the Libertarian League. Bill, the son of a wealthy and socially prominent family, was born and reared in Georgia. A brilliant student, he was awarded an advanced degree in Spanish language and literature by Yale University. Of a most romantic disposition, Bill went to Spain to become a "torero" (bull-fighter). Entranced by the romantic exploits of a few underground CNT anarcho-syndicalists whom he got to know, he too considered himself an anarchist.

Bill was severely mauled by a bull, and while in hospital fell in love with his nurse, Carmen. After they were married they made their home in an Ohio city whose name I do not recall. Bill became a reporter for the local newspaper. While in Spain, he had been given the address of the Libertarian League by a Spanish comrade. Bill contacted us and, after a voluminous correspondence, he was induced by Blackwell to move to New York where an apartment on the lower east side had been prepared for him, Carmen and their little son "Billito."

I could never ascertain why he left the League. Of a restless, impatient disposition, he could not long remain in any organization. I do know that he became a translator for the



A Libertarian League committee meeting in the mid-1950s at the Cultura Proletaria hall at 813 Broadway, New York. Clockwise around the table: Sam Dolgoff, Pat Ellington, Shel Deretchin, Dave Van Ronk, Bill Rose.

Communist Party front *National Guardian*, and also a correspondent for a Mexican communist periodical. He soon left the communists and as far as I know has not been heard from since.

### MURRAY BOOKCHIN

Murray Bookchin “inherited”—so to speak—his radicalism from his grandparents who belonged to the Russian Social Revolutionary Party—the “Narodniks” (populists), the “go to the people” movement strongly influenced by the ideas of

Michael Bakunin. Forced to leave Russia to escape persecution after the 1905 Revolution, the family emigrated to New York. Murray's mother, a sewing machine operator, was greatly impressed by the militant spirit of the IWW.

Murray was born in New York in 1921. Spurred by his mother he joined the Communist Party youth organization Young Pioneers at the age of *nine*! To help support the family, he found work at an early age in a foundry and later joined the auto workers' union. The opportunism and counterrevolutionary role of the Communist Party in the Spanish Revolution and Civil War and the notorious Moscow Trials (the persecution and even execution of old Bolsheviks), together with so many other atrocities of the Stalin dictatorship, completely undermined his faith in the party. After an equally disappointing experience in the Trotskyite faction he gradually became more and more receptive to anarchist ideas. With the brutal suppression of the Hungarian, Polish, East German and other Soviet satellite uprisings, Bookchin became a convinced anarchist.

We learned by chance that Bookchin had organized Anarchos, an anarchist-communist ecology group, and contacted him. Bookchin soon joined the Libertarian League, and soon again left because in the course of our discussions we disagreed on a number of fundamental issues. I sum up the salient points:

Under anarchist-communism the economic problem will be simplified, practically solved thanks to:

the post-scarcity technology which will assure abundance for ALL . . . there is no sector of society which would have anything to fear from communist revolution. [*Post Scarcity Anarchism*—Bookchin's emphasis]

Bookchin's view that the free society is unattainable without abundance, which in turn depends on advanced technology, rests on the economic-determinist theories of Marx. But the deterioration of the labor and radical movements refutes this theory. Abundance, far from promoting the Social Revolution, leads rather to the bourgeoisification of the proletariat, making it the staunchest supporter of the status quo. Moreover, according to this theory, the backward economy of underdeveloped regions will automatically exclude them from the revolutionary

process. Considering the chronic poverty of two-thirds of the world's population, abundance, even under socialism, is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Bookchin elaborated upon utopian formulas well known to "new left" anarchists: a primitive form of organization totally unsuited to a complex modern society which scarcely goes much beyond the narrow limits of local popular assemblies and "affinity" groups (circles of intimate friends), and is divorced from an organized labor movement and from the proletariat as a revolutionary class or even from the concept of class itself. In this scheme of things, federation and confederation, local, national and international, or meaningful coordination in this increasingly complex, interdependent world, are ignored or castigated as a form of statism.

Bookchin rejects the basic principle of the socialist movement, class consciousness, in favor of individual consciousness. He pins his hope for revolution upon an irresponsible conglomeration of disparate, ephemeral ad hoc marginal groups scattered all over the country, who identify themselves, mistakenly, with anarchism. If the modern labor movement is not a revolutionary force, the marginal groups are even less so, nor do they possess the economic power to make a revolution. Bookchin's glorification of the fictitious "counter-culture"—new "lifestyle" groups, etc.—as a "new age of light more brilliant even than the half century of life preceeding the Great French Revolution" is pure fantasy.

This said, I am reluctant to find fault with a rebel seeking new roads to freedom. Bookchin is in many respects a bold thinker, whose insights merit our closest consideration. We agree to disagree and remain, as always, good friends and comrades.

### THE COMMITTEE TO DEFEND FRANCO'S LABOR VICTIMS

In 1956 there was a campaign to free eleven members of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist labor organization CNT (National Confederation of Labor) threatened with death for underground activities against the Franco-Fascist regime.

At IWW veteran Herbert Mahler's suggestion we contacted the secretary of the Workers' Defense League, attorney Roland Watts, who dedicated his life to defend workers caught in the legal trap. Watts explained that a successful campaign depended upon the cooperation of Norman Thomas. For only his close connections could rally the liberal, socialist, religious, labor and progressive political parties to exert maximum effective pressure, locally and nationally, to save the workers threatened with death. Thomas agreed, and The Committee to Defend Franco's Labor Victims was formally organized.

Thomas took an active part. A full-scale publicity campaign was launched; the mass media, who paid no attention to us before, carried reports. Telegrams, cablegrams, protest demonstrations on a vast scale (many of them addressed by Thomas himself), petitions to the State Department, Congress and the president himself finally prompted the State Department, through its ambassador to Spain, to ask for an explanation.

The Spanish Foreign Minister denied that CNT prisoners were labor victims. They were terrorists bent on assassinating Franco and the leaders of his regime. They were determined to overthrow the government and institute Anarchy. The Spanish, like any other state, was therefore in self-defense fully justified in punishing terrorists for treason, a capital crime.

Without a word of explanation, the Committee to Defend Franco's Labor Victims suddenly ceased to exist. When we came to attend a scheduled meeting of the committee, the door was locked. Only later did we find out that when Thomas was informed about the Spanish government's reply, he withdrew his support because it was a "hot potato."

I lost my respect for Thomas when he accepted the right of a fascist government to take such action, even if the alleged charge of "treason" by its victims was true. And this in spite of the Declaration of Independence which asserts that the people have both the right and the obligation to overthrow an oppressive government. Thomas, of course, believed that this was an inalienable right, but he unfortunately lacked the courage to antagonize his political friends.

## CUBA: DELLINGER RETURNS FROM ANIMAL FARM

(title of an article in *Views and Comments*, No. 47, summer 1964)

David Dellinger, an editor of the libertarian-pacifist monthly *Liberation*, attended the May Day, 1964 celebration in Cuba as a guest of the Cuban Castro government. The first lengthy installment of his report reminds us of the glowing, equally "objective" accounts of many international travelers of the 1930s whose chronic euphoria prevented them from seeing Stalin's most glaring atrocities. All was well in paradise. They saw and heard no evil. As to Cuba, Castro himself has been far more critical of defects of his "revolution" than is Dellinger. Dellinger pretends to be an anarchist, but he has become an apologist for the Castro dictatorship. Here is the text of a leaflet distributed at our picketing of a recent meeting in New York sponsored by *Liberation* and addressed by Dellinger. Dellinger was visibly disturbed by our picketing. He was even more embarrassed when I, and a few other comrades, denounced him as a liar and a turncoat. I challenged him to debate the issue anywhere, anytime and at our expense. Our remarks were greeted with cat-calls and demands that we be forcefully removed from the meeting. The leaflet reads:

### "TO CHANGE THE MASTER IS NOT TO BE FREE"

(José Martí—apostle of Cuban freedom)

With the overthrow of Batista on New Year's day, 1959, the Cuban people freed itself from the tyranny of a dictator stooge of American imperialism. They strove to institute long overdue and deep-going social, economic and political changes in an atmosphere of freedom and equality. They had rallied behind Fidel Castro because his original program reflected their needs and their aspirations.

The high hopes of the Cuban people have been sorely disappointed and an old tyranny has been replaced by a new one. Castro's government has denied the right to strike and the right of a free press. It has made State agencies of the labor unions. In place of the heralded agricultural cooperatives, the Castro-communist regime has set up a system of State working conditions dictated by State employees. The so-called "voluntary militias" . . . [have] been superseded by a policy of military conscription, the conscripts being used as forced labor. The autonomy of the University has been suppressed

for the first time in Cuban history. Private capitalism and exploitation have been supplanted by State control. People are encouraged to spy on their neighbors, for the secret political police, through local "Committees for the Defense of the Revolution."

For resisting the counter-revolutionary policies of the totalitarian Marxist State, sixty thousand Cuban WORKERS now languish in prison. Other thousands, including many of Castro's closest early collaborators, have escaped into exile. Most of Castro's enemies are against both capitalist imperialism and communist imperialism, both of which would exploit the country as a semi-feudal sugar plantation. The Cuban workers need not choose between Castro and the CIA, both of which represent the counter-revolution. Actually the activities of the CIA have helped Castro in his internal consolidation—and also propagandistically—throughout the continent. The people of Cuba seek their social and economic freedom. In this we must support them. Workers and lovers of freedom everywhere must support them in their valiant struggle against both groups of exploiters.

#### CUBAN LIBERTARIAN MOVEMENT IN EXILE LIBERTARIAN LEAGUE

A number of readers also pointed to the contradiction between Dellinger's professed anarchism and his endorsement of the Cuban, Vietnamese and other "Third World" dictatorships. David McReynolds, a non-anarchist associate of Dellinger and of the editorial committee of *Liberation* (then secretary of the War Resisters' League) denounced Dellinger and the inconsistent policy of *Liberation*: "Dellinger has put himself apart from Anarcho-Pacifism and fundamentally abandoned anarchism. . . ." Dr. Roy Finch, an editor of *Liberation*, resigned in protest of *Liberation's* tolerant attitude to the Castro and other "Third World" dictatorships.

But the views of the protestors were endorsed only by a small minority. By far the vast majority of the "New Left" enthusiastically shared Dellinger's views. For example: the left-liberal radio station WBAI invited Dr. Finch to interview Blackwell and myself and present our disagreements with the Castroites. The tape of the interview was rejected because WBAI could not afford to antagonize the pro-Castroite "communists" and liberals who made up the bulk of its listeners. Our reminder that we had been invited to present our side of the case without censorship was ignored. WBAI refused to live up to its own solemn obligation.

## CONFERENCE OF THE LIBERTARIAN LEAGUE

A conference of the Libertarian League, the first since the League had been founded in New York on 19 July 1954, took place in Youngstown, Ohio, in May 1959. Comrades from Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee and Youngstown attended.

The host of the Conference was a recent member of the League, George Savchuck. Savchuck worked in a steel mill. His father, a deceased Russian anarchist, left him a house and plot of ground on the outskirts of Youngstown where the conference took place. Meals and sleeping quarters were arranged in buildings in back of the house. Aside from New York, only five or six individuals (there were no groups) could be considered League members, and even they were convinced anarchists long before the League was organized.

The gist of the report indicated that the League was actually in an amorphous embryonic stage; did not exist as a recognizable national organization; that there were no established groups outside of New York. The establishment of a federation can only have meaning if based on a number of functioning local groups.

Although a gathering of comrades from various cities is undoubtedly necessary to get acquainted and to understand each other, to establish, even to lay the groundwork for a solid movement remains a serious, perennial problem for anarchists to this day.

## DEMISE OF THE LIBERTARIAN LEAGUE

The extinction of the Libertarian League and suspension of our publication, *Views and Comments*, in 1965, was not due to lack of funds or the loss of readers. Prospects for rapid growth were never brighter. We were swamped with orders for anarchist literature and information and derived a good income from the sale of literature and contributions.

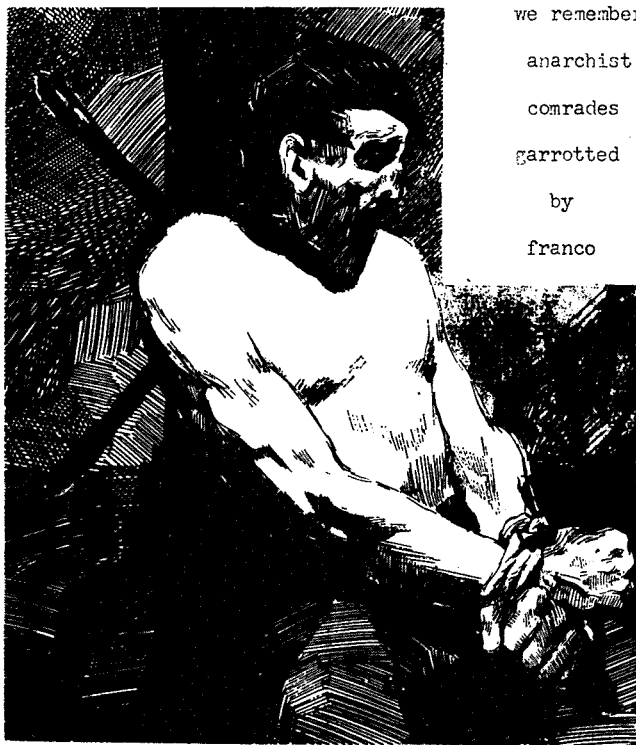
Voluntary associations, particularly radical groups, are prone to large membership turnovers. Members by choice or necessity scatter to different locations; others are compelled to

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**of the libertarian league**



we remember  
anarchist  
comrades  
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drop out to attend to private affairs; tired, disillusioned radicals disappear, etc. In its ten-year existence the League never succeeded in attracting enough militants to replace those who left. This chronic, deplorable situation shifted the burden of carrying on the League's expanding activities to Esther, Blackwell, myself and a few others.

Blackwell now diverted all his efforts to the civil rights movement. He simply dropped out of the League. Only Esther and I were finally left to tackle the mountainous correspondence; to open the miserable little room on Lafayette Street (the building is now owned by the War Resisters' League) for our infrequent, poorly attended meetings.

Russell's experience in the civil rights movement was not a happy one. His zeal and sense of solidarity impelled him to participate in the Harlem, New York City, black ghetto riots. Blackwell was about to be assaulted by a roving gang of black racists bent on driving all whites out of their "turf." Only the timely intervention of the civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, who happened to be passing by, saved him from a severe beating. Rustin escorted Blackwell to the nearest subway entrance and cautioned him to stay away. A League sympathizer, Bob Bates, who participated in the Newark, New Jersey, black ghetto riots was severely beaten.

Russell's tiny three rooms in a lower east side slum were a free, informal one-man social agency, assisting people in distress, promoting neighborhood community initiatives, demonstrations against high rents, poor food, poor schooling, discrimination, low welfare payments, etc. Russell suffered from a chronic heart condition and died suddenly of a massive heart attack.

In my eulogy I noted that a sum of money he inherited was unselfishly spent in a critical emergency situation for the League. Blackwell paid all expenses connected with removal to another hall. At his own expense Blackwell toured a number of midwestern cities to rally support for *Views and Comments*. He consecrated his life to the never-ending struggle for freedom and equality. To say that Russell was always on the side of the underdog is the most fitting tribute we can pay to our departed comrade-in-arms.

### STATEMENT ON THE GALINDEZ CASE

On March 12, 1956, Jesús de Galindez disappeared in New York. Before this happened he had made statements and written letters which showed that his life was in danger because of his outspoken opposition to the dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. This dictatorship was established and is actively supported by the United States.

We had the opportunity to work with Jesús de Galindez. A Basque Catholic Nationalist and an exile from Franco's tyranny, he fought against dictatorship in many parts of the world. He joined with us in protesting the execution and imprisonment of anarchists and socialists in Spain although he differed with us on many questions—his concern for freedom was not . . . partisan. He was an active supporter of the Committee to Defend Franco's Labor Victims. [Already discussed above. —S.D.]

We wish to add our voices to those already raised in protest, against his disappearance, to join with them in emphasizing that those responsible for this crime must be found and brought to justice. In this, we wish to express our solidarity with the group that has been formed and which has offered a reward in this case.

We have every hope that Galindez is still alive. As long as there is any chance that he is, no effort will be spared in searching for him. And if he has paid with his life for his convictions, then it is not only a question of our demanding that the criminals who perpetrated this outrage be apprehended; it seems also that we must rededicate ourselves to the principles of freedom, to that opposition to dictatorship in Spain, the Dominican Republic, Russia, and everywhere else, which Galindez represented.

THE CATHOLIC WORKER  
INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST LEAGUE  
INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD  
LIBERTARIAN LEAGUE  
SOLIDARIDAD INTERNACIONAL ANTIFASCISTA  
WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE  
YOUNG SOCIALIST LEAGUE

[*Views and Comments*, No. 13, May 1956]

Note: Galindez, who taught at Columbia University, had presented a Ph.D. thesis detailing the atrocities committed by General Trujillo, President of the Dominican Republic, and his administration. On the most reliable information, Galindez was drugged while in a restaurant near the Columbia campus, ab-

ducted, placed on an airplane and thrown into the sea by Trujillo's gangsters. We were deeply disappointed by the cool, nonchalant attitude of the Columbia faculty when we appealed to them to join our protest campaign.

## THE LIBERTARIAN BOOK CLUB

The oldest surviving English-speaking anarchist group in North America is the Libertarian Book Club. The idea of organizing a group for publishing and circulating anarchist literature in English was broached by Gregory Maximoff shortly before he passed away in 1950. The club was formally established by a number of comrades a few years later, among them Bill and Sarah Taback, Joseph and Hannah Spivack, Joseph Aaronstam, Ida Pilot (a professional translator) and her companion Valerio Isca, Esther and myself. Until we rented permanent quarters from the Workmen's Circle in their hall in the Penn Station South Housing Cooperative, we rented a room for each meeting on East 14th Street.

The club's first project was the publication of the major part of Voline's history of the anarchists during the Russian Revolution, *The Unknown Revolution*, translated from the French by Holly Cantine Jr.

Holly was a prolific and talented writer. He and his companion, the poet and writer Dachine Rainer, published the lively little paper *Retort* which they composed, printed and mailed themselves in their rural home in Bearsville, New York. Holly, like David Wieck and Paul Goodman, did not conceive anarchism as an organized social revolutionary movement with a mass base and a definite ideology, but as a bohemian "lifestyle." For Holly, "living a simple life like an anarchist" meant regression to a form of organization not much above local groups and an intimate circle of friends called an "affinity group." Holly, convinced that he was a musical virtuoso on the trombone, would unfailingly come to our Libertarian League every May Day celebration to stridently blast out in deafening tones what he supposed to be a rendition of "The International" or "Solidarity Forever."

Since commercial publishers rejected the manuscript, the book club collected enough money to publish it themselves. But distribution proved to be a most difficult problem. We were indeed fortunate that comrade Joseph Spivack (a pharmacist) successfully arranged publication and solved the distribution problem by himself inducing book stores to stock Voline's book at less than the cost of production. What a contrast to the scene a few years later when the market for anarchist literature induced commercial publishers to reprint out-of-print and also new works on anarchism! To save expenses the club republished not new, but older out-of-print works: Eltzbacher's *Anarchism*, Max Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*, and James Martin's *Men Against the State*. For lack of funds the club could not publish other books. The club survived by expanding its activities to provide a book service for the sale of anarchist literature and conducting forum discussion meetings and socials once a month during late fall, winter and early spring.

More importantly, these forums are also social gatherings, a place where people out of touch with each other can meet and newcomers get acquainted. The atmosphere is most friendly and informal. There are no collections, no admission fees. The people help themselves to free coffee, tea, milk and cake. The high point of the club's activities was the annual testimonial banquets, addressed by notable speakers, and as usual, much socializing in a cheerful, stimulating environment. In a letter to the *New York Times* (unpublished) demonstrating that the famous Negro educator Booker T. Washington was in friendly contact with Kropotkin, Esther relates an account of one of these banquets which was the occasion for a memorial gathering in honor of Peter Kropotkin. Here is a resumé:

At a memorial meeting for the great humanitarian, geographer, historian and writer on social questions, Peter Kropotkin, we were privileged to listen to an anecdote told by his daughter, Alexandra, in her delightful humorous way. The meeting was held under the auspices of the Libertarian Book Club of New York City and chaired by Sam Dolgoff, writer and speaker for the libertarian movement and the IWW. At this meeting, Roger Baldwin, founder of the American Civil Liberties Union and veteran fighter for human rights, was also an honored speaker.

To the home of Peter Kropotkin came men and women of good will from around the world, like Mahatma Gandhi. His daughter, Alexandra Kropotkin, an old lady, told that Booker T. Washington was an honored guest at her parents' home. She still remembers sitting on his lap as a child, listening to his fascinating stories. Her father encouraged Booker T. Washington to write his memoirs.

Alexandra was not liked by many comrades because she had turned conservative and dishonored the memory of her father who abhorred such titles by calling herself *Princess Alexandra Kropotkin*, even writing under that title for a fashionable periodical as an advisor on social etiquette and proper manners. The comrades were further outraged when she voted for the reactionary Republican candidate for president, Barry Goldwater. Nevertheless, she remarked meaningfully that: "Now that I have trouble seeing with my *right* eye, I am inclined to look through my *left* . . ."

I liked her as a person, in spite of her shortcomings. Alexandra was always ready and willing to lend her presence at meetings honoring her father whom she had always loved deeply. I last talked with her briefly in 1958 at the funeral services for Rudolph Rocker, her dear friend whom she had known since childhood days in England.

After a great many tribulations Alexandra Kropotkin finally settled in the United States. She married a journalist on the staff of the low-grade sensational scandal-mongering sheet, the *Daily News*. I have long since given up the illusion that the offspring of radicals will naturally also become radicals. Nor has anyone the right to castigate either parents or children for it.

The annual banquets have long since been discontinued. Almost all the active comrades have passed away or been forced to retire because of old age (we had an impromptu, surprise birthday party at one of the forums for comrade Brandt, who at the age of ninety still attends the meetings). When the few remaining comrades could not possibly attend to even the limited affairs of the club, it seemed certain that the Libertarian Book Club could not survive. Fortunately, the club has taken on a new lease on life with the coming of energetic young members of the Libertarian Workers Group and a few anarchist individuals.

## THE CATHOLIC WORKER

The Catholic Workers are an independent lay movement not officially part of the Catholic church. The movement dedicated itself to put into effect the original christian communism of Jesus and his disciples as proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount: personal reform; living and sharing everything equally with the needy; absolute pacifism; repudiation of man-made law, nationalism, militarism, private property, rent interest and profit, etc.

The Catholic Worker was founded by Dorothy Day in 1933. She was inspired by the ideas of Peter Maurin and his practical program which included discussion of christian social thought; the establishment of self-sustaining rural farming communities; communities ("Houses of Hospitality") in the cities; catering to the wants of the needy, the bewildered and the troubled, etc.

Such ideas attracted radically inclined Catholics (many called themselves "Catholic Anarchists") who, while retaining their loyalty to the established Catholic church, found an outlet for their radical sentiments in the Catholic Workers. We were on friendly terms with these young radicals who attended our discussions, joined our picket lines, sided with us against Catholic priests who tried to break up our Spanish antifascist demonstrations, charging that the antifascists were burning churches in Spain and persecuting priests and nuns. The young militants earned our respect when they supported striking gravediggers in Catholic cemeteries and denounced Catholic seminarians for scabbing.

I was one of the speakers who addressed their forums at their House of Hospitality near the Bowery skidrow. For the young idealists who left reasonably comfortable homes to suffer in the decaying slum, House of Hospitality life was far from being a bed of roses. Our close friend Roger O'Neil not only got up before dawn to serve breakfast and to tend to other wants of the needy. He somehow managed to pacify the mentally deranged derelicts and alcoholics who quarreled and raved, keeping the House of Hospitality in constant turmoil. Roger hardly had a moment to himself. He nevertheless seemed calm

and even cheerful. To this day I still cannot understand how he endured so long.

At the risk of being misunderstood, I tried to explain that, without in the least downgrading the voluntary efforts of selfless Catholic Worker groups, it must be conceded that the variety of services and facilities for the disadvantaged provided by dozens of religious denominations, Protestant, Jewish and the Catholic church, and also by fraternal, municipal and other public agencies (with all their obvious defects), still provided social services on a far greater scale, unmatched by what the Catholic Worker was able to render to a comparative handful of the underprivileged.

The faithful did not react kindly to this viewpoint, probably because boasting their help for the poor stimulated sizable contributions, an important source of income. However inadequate its services, the Catholic Worker is morally obliged to serve the poor and the downtrodden.

Roger finally did leave the Catholic Worker House of Hospitality to marry Mary, an ex-nun who taught in a Catholic parochial school in Nova Scotia, Canada. Mary revolted against the tyranny and reactionary conduct of the mother superior and her clique and finally left when her progressive suggestions for improvement of the school were disdainfully ignored.

Mary's parents bitterly condemned her renunciation of her vows and getting married. They were somewhat mollified when Mary gave birth to their three lovely granddaughters. After his marriage, Roger went to work for the *New York Times*. He reconditioned an old house and settled down in the former Glen Gardner Colony where the anarcho-pacifist periodical *Liberation* was first published.

Mary came to a tragic end. In poor health and depressed spirits after a major operation for cancer, she cried out in her misery and frustration, "If God can do this to me, there is no God." Mary was killed in an auto accident near their home.

## AMMON HENNACY

Ammon Hennacy was well known and respected in our

circles as a courageous anarcho-pacifist Tolstoyan Christian anarchist. He acknowledged in his autobiography that he was greatly influenced by Alexander Berkman when they were both imprisoned in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary for opposing American entry into World War I. Through the years he had fearlessly proclaimed opposition to established religion which was in flat contradiction to the true communitarian christianity proclaimed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

I, for one, was not surprised when Hennacy became a devout Roman Catholic and joined the Catholic Worker movement. He had already propagandized and practiced the Catholic Worker program years before the movement was organized. Nor did he become a Catholic church convert because he did not already know and denounce the Catholic church as a flagrant violation of the true principles of Tolstoyan Christian anarchism. He knew full well that the Catholic church was itself an ultra-authoritarian hierarchical ecclesiastical state. I attributed Hennacy's conversion to the Catholic church and his entry into the Catholic Worker movement to his one great failing. He suffered from delusions of grandeur. I gradually realized that he really believed that he was a martyr and a prophet. He acted as he did not because he suddenly discovered the virtues of the Catholic Worker program, but primarily to enhance his own self-image. Everyone attending his discourses or in conversation was unfavorably struck by references to himself. We called him "Mr. I" because the word "we" was not in his vocabulary.

There was a certain "method in his madness." In joining the Catholic Worker movement, Hennacy, through its organ the *Catholic Worker*, with its fifty thousand readers, its hundreds of devout activists, its wide unofficial connections with progressive priests, nuns, and influential Catholic laymen, immeasurably widened the scope of his activities, further projecting his self-image. Hennacy could not possibly exert meaningful influence in a movement like the Catholic Worker, unless he too, became a Roman Catholic convert like Dorothy Day and others. In Hennacy, its prominent convert, the Catholic Worker found an able, skillful, and much needed propagandist. Hennacy's delusion of grandeur was further reinforced by the extravagant praise showered upon him in the pages of the *Catholic Worker*

by its de facto leader and editor Dorothy Day. (It was even hinted that Ammon was unsuccessfully courting her.)

This idyllic relationship was in a relatively short time shattered by hard realities. Serious differences of opinion about the holy of holies, the Catholic church itself, and Ammon's stubborn insistence on acting as a free agent in spite of the policies of the Catholic Worker members ended in his estrangement from the Catholic Worker.

In this connection two crucial developments should be noted. When I told him that converting to the Roman Catholic church violated Tolstoy's (and therefore his) principles of Christian anarchism, he let the cat out of the bag. He insisted that he had been, was, and would always remain a Tolstoyan: "I never intended to recognize the supreme authority of the Pope or any other church. I will continue to act according to my convictions. . . . If they interfere, I will just pack up and leave . . ." When he repeated this publicly he aroused a storm of protest from Catholic Worker members who called him a turn-coat. The second event was his love affair with a much younger Catholic girl, younger than his daughter, and subsequent marriage without consultation, and, as far as I know, "without benefit of clergy." They moved to Utah, where Ammon died at the age of 79.

## DOROTHY DAY

Contrary to the opinion of the anarchist Nicolas Walter, who called the founder of the Catholic Worker movement, Dorothy Day, "the saintly Dorothy Day," I argued that while she claimed to be a Catholic Worker (as I have already mentioned, in accordance with the teachings of Christ proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount), she nevertheless, above all, asserted her loyalty and adherence to the Catholic Church, itself a super-authoritarian, super-hierarchical state.

Through the centuries, to this day, countless "heretics" and martyrs to Christian ethical principles have been persecuted because they dared criticize its reactionary character. In recent times the Berrigans, ex-nuns, ex-priests and devout Catholic

laymen (and we met many on our extensive journeys) have repudiated the church. But Dorothy made no move to join them. She remained.

On the contrary, her piety earned the friendship of the reactionary Cardinal Cooke (deceased) who transmitted the Pope's greetings to her. Dorothy, together with the most reactionary churchmen, shared their antipathy to birth control, so much so that she urged her daughter not to commit the "sin" of practicing birth control and to act only in accordance with the dictum of the Catholic church: "Be thou fruitful and multiply." The columns of her de facto organ the *Catholic Worker* (and her other writings) were filled with ecstatic accounts of the masses, retreats, confessions, and many other rituals she faithfully attended, as well as her hosannas to the saints and the popes. This obsession dominated her life. By way of illustration:

At one of our meetings, Dorothy Day described her pilgrimage to the shrine of Mexico's patron saint at Guadalupe. In glowing tribute to the devotion of the Mexican people who crawled on their knees to the holy shrine, the symbol of their eternal faith to their savior and his eternal church, Dorothy Day exclaimed: "She [the church], as strong as ever, continues to live in the hearts, the minds, in the very soul of her faithful children, the Mexican people . . ." During the discussion period I took the floor and rebuked her in the following terms:

"The oppressed Mexican people, peasants and workers, and with them the anarchist militants, the Magón brothers, Práxedes Guerrero, Librado Rivera, Camilo Arriago, Juan Sarabo, and so many others in the glorious Mexican Revolution of 1910, fought, bled and died to break the power of the church over the life of the people and achieve freedom and social justice. That you, a professed anarchist (even a civil libertarian) should now glorify the church and ignore their valiant struggles is an intolerable insult to their memory."

When, several months later, she complained to some comrades that I had mistreated her, they told her that "If he did, he probably had a very good reason for doing so."

## “NEW LEFT” AND “OLD LEFT”

The increasing interest in anarchism already manifest in the emergence of “New Left Neo-Anarchism,” a few years before the dissolution of the Libertarian League in 1965, fostered the altogether erroneous conceptions about the new left movement, summed up in an article I wrote in *Le Mouvement Social* (University of Paris, April-June 1973).

The myth of the “old left” must be exposed. Except for the revolutionary syndicalistic Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) founded in 1905, and various anarchist groups—Jewish, Italian, Spanish, etc.—there was no genuine left movement in the United States. Neither the social democratic political parties who integrated themselves into the structure of the capitalist “welfare state” nor their enemies, the totalitarian communist parties and groupings, could really be called radical leftist movements. All of them became part and parcel of their respective authoritarian “establishments.” Their sharp decline was a blessing in disguise.

Just as the influence of the spurious “old leftist” authoritarian parties and assorted groupsicles to some extent contributed to the collapse of American radicalism, so did the rivalry between “new left” authoritarian elements (Trotskyites, Du Bois clubs, “communists,” Maoists, etc.) to capture the student movement precipitate the collapse of the “new left” Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1969.

While I was addressing a meeting of student radicals in Hamilton Hall, Columbia University, in the 1960s, I found, to my dismay, that “these ambitious, power hungry young Lenins who want to lead the masses” (as a friend of mine put it) were reenacting the same scenario that I witnessed thirty years before.

The disintegration was hastened by groups like “Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers” who could be called the “lunatic fringe of the new left” movement. Their name, taken from the command of the police for demonstrators to line up against the wall, was meant to issue the same command to the police when the demonstrators had the power to do so.

The Motherfuckers, seeking an alliance with street gangs (who assaulted them and denounced them to the police),

wanted to launch a guerrilla war in the streets against the police, the fire department, the municipality and all the other institutions of the state. One of their proclamations reads:

The cities are the new front line of the war. We defy law and order with our bricks and bottles, our shit, our long hair, our drugs, our rifles and fire! We are the forces of chaos and anarchy! We lie, we swindle, we hide and we kill!

Notwithstanding their uncompromising opposition to the state, they nevertheless needed money for a lawyer to defend them in court and bail money to release them when arrested until they were tried. Five or six Motherfuckers came to see me and asked me to introduce them to the Italian anarchist group and urge them to help finance their legal expenses. I was far from enthusiastic about this proposal, but deemed it my moral obligation, in solidarity with victims trapped in the legal maze, to introduce them to the secretary of the Italian group at his home in Brooklyn that same evening.

The secretary emphasized that he did not speak for his group but gave only his personal opinion. The Motherfuckers, in seeking legal aid, were violating their own principles. To hate the police is one thing. But what would they have against the firefighters if they extinguished fires in their own homes and saved their lives? The Italians respect and revere motherhood. They violently object to the term "Motherfuckers" and would indignantly refuse to help anyone using such language. Rendering financial aid implies agreement with the Motherfuckers' aims and procedures, thus committing the Italian comrades without even consulting them.

The Motherfuckers disbanded a little later. I had known them for some time. They were actually very gentle people, absolutely incapable of putting their threats into effect. Although we did not take their bloodcurdling pronunciamientos seriously they unfortunately increased animosity toward the anarchists.

Other "neo-anarchists" were also obsessed with their romantic glorification of violence and conspiracy in the amoral tradition of Nechaev, whose notorious Revolutionary Catechism (falsely attributed to Bakunin) was reprinted and widely

circulated in radical circles by the Black Panthers, whose leader, the turncoat Eldridge Cleaver, is now an ultra-reactionary patriot. *Prolegomena*, a periodical published by a group of young Chicago anarchists, glorified violence, terrorism, bombings, attentats, etc. committed by anarchists. Its sixty-four pages were filled with illustrations on how to make bombs and other weapons, expropriations and counterfeit documents.

Another young anarchist Vietnam war veteran whom we had not seen before came to our discussion meetings and announced that he did not come to talk:

We want action NOW. We are at war with the establishment. We must immediately organize self-defense, armed militias in the factories and communities. Our enemies the capitalists and the state have *their* army. We must have *our* army. It takes an army to fight and defeat an army and we must win.

He talked like an agent of the Department of Justice. But we found out later that he meant what he said.

## PERSISTING INTEREST IN ANARCHISM

Neither the collapse of the official organization of the "new left," Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), nor the disappearance of the ephemeral lunatic fringe of the "new left" signified the end of anarchism among the young. The vitality of the new left rested upon the thousands and thousands of unaffiliated young militants who far outnumbered the comparative handful of would-be leaders.

It is not my intention to downgrade the magnificent struggles of the young rebels against war, racism and the false values of that vast crime "the establishment," struggles which sparked the revival of the long dormant radicalism. But the "new left," lacking a clear, consistent theoretical base, composed of a chaotic mélange of quarreling sects, was bound to disintegrate.

The disintegration spurred young libertarians to search for constructive alternatives—for a new direction. A young leftist with whom I was in touch observed that:

unfortunately, the irresponsible exhibitionism personifies and perpetuates the false image of anarchists as ultra-individualists, opposed to all organization. Trapped in the myth of the "counter-culture" [escape to live like anarchists in communes and other lifestyle groups—S.D.] they are incapable of doing anything constructive . . .

Many young militants joined the IWW, infusing the near moribund organization with new blood. In response to information on this point, one of the anarchist members in a letter to me, summed up the changing "new left" attitude:

. . . it seems to me—maybe I am terribly old-fashioned—that true anarchism must be a movement of the poor working class people—not FOR, but OF. But the new generation of revolutionaries, at least some of them, are meeting to study and put into practice the true principles of working class anarchism. Most of the young comrades—of whom I am one—discovered anarchism almost by accident, reading Kropotkin, Emma Goldman and several other works. . . .

A strong anarchist current permeates radical circles. Studies of anarchist history and ideas are included in the curriculums of educational institutions all over the United States and Canada. Esther and I were at various times interviewed by students in Professor Paul Avrich's class on anarchism at Queens College. I also spoke about anarchism to Dr. Terry Perlin's class at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and also in a week-long symposium at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon and Oregon State College.

In 1972 my editor at Alfred A. Knopf publishers remarked that my anthology *Bakunin on Anarchy* was being published in response to the great interest in anarchism which spawned a substantial and growing literature on anarchism and related themes. My other books, *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers Self-management in the Spanish Revolution (1936-1939)* and *The Cuban Revolution: A Critical Perspective*, as well as numerous pamphlets and articles, were well received.

My talks sponsored by student and other groups include, among others, those at or to Hampshire College, Cambridge, Mass. and the University of Massachusetts, Boston; the Emma Goldman Club, Amherst Campus, University of Mass.; the University of Illinois, Chicago Campus; Oberlin College and Antioch

**Tuesday May 23 2:30-4pm**  
**Sam and Esther**  
**Dolgoff**

**SPEAKING ON**  
**MISCONCEPTIONS OF ANARCHY AND MODERN**  
**INTERNATIONAL ANARCHISM**  
**ROOM TO BE POSTED**  
**SPONSORED BY CCC PROGRAM DEPARTMENT**

Poster for a speaking engagement at the University of Illinois.

College, Ohio; groups in Minneapolis, New Haven and the University of Oregon; and McMaster University, Waterloo College and the Anarchist-Communist Federation, Toronto, all in Canada.

The choice of subjects—Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society, Misconceptions of Anarchism (for a resumé of this talk see Appendix B), Constructive Achievements of the Anarchist Collectives in the Spanish Revolution, Development of Anarcho-Syndicalism, to name a few—indicate a healthy and encouraging interest in anarchism, not only as a rebellion against the status quo, but as a practical and necessary alternative to authoritarian institutions.

A case in point: in April 1974, I spoke in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The subject was *When Anarchism Worked: The Spanish Revolution 1936-1939* (based on my book, *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' Self-Management in the Spanish Revolution [1936-1939]*). After she had read my book, Myrna Breitbart was seriously considering writing a major part of her Ph.D. thesis on the constructive achievements of the Spanish

collectives during the Spanish Civil War and Revolution. Myrna and her friend Dolores made a special trip to hear me and after the meeting introduced themselves, explaining that they were graduate students in geography at Clark University, Worcester, Mass.

I accepted their invitation to speak at Clark University. We stayed overnight in Myrna's home where we discussed her project. I gave Myrna and Dolores the names and addresses of knowledgeable and reliable militants like Federica Montseny and José Peirants living in France, as well as Spanish anarchist refugees in Mexico, the United States and Canada. Myrna, as far as I know, knew little if any Spanish and Dolores performed invaluable cooperation as translator.

I do not know what happened to Dolores, who later returned to Barcelona to join the faculty of a college or university. Myrna assembled an immense amount of information for her thesis. She was awarded her Ph.D. degree from Clark University and kindly gave me a copy gracefully acknowledging my cooperation. She now teaches in Hampshire College, Northampton, Mass., where I spoke a few times. She has since then sponsored and written articles in anarchist journals and cooperated in other projects.

In the summer of 1979, John Morris, attending the School of Integrated Studies, University of Waterloo (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada) wrote me that in order to qualify for his bachelor of arts degree, his thesis, "Anarchism," would have to be examined and recommended by two faculty members and one, myself, chosen by him. I agreed to help and after a great deal of irrelevant objections by the faculty sponsors were finally overcome, John was at last awarded his B.A. degree. I was particularly gratified, not so much that he recommended me, but more importantly, that he had chosen anarchism as his subject.

In an article in the university newspaper (2 November 1979) my talk, *Misconceptions of Anarchism*, and the talk delivered the next day, *Libertarian Tendencies in the American Labor Movement*, were highly praised for their emphasis on constructive alternatives to authoritarianism. (The talks were arranged by John.) A letter of appreciation signed by twenty-eight students reads:

We, at Integrated Studies, University of Waterloo, would all like to thank you for your interesting and very enlightening talks. We hope that you enjoyed your visit and will continue with your program.

In Chicago we had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with Mermin Saltanlar, a young Turkish anarchist studying at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle. In fluent, unaccented English, she deplored the ignorance of anarchism in her native land. Hardly anyone ever heard of Kropotkin, Bakunin or any other anarchists. This, while progressive, radical minded circles were strongly addicted to the "Marxist-Leninist," social democratic and other varieties of Marxism. She herself had come to anarchism when she "accidentally," so to speak, got to read one or two works by Kropotkin and a few pamphlets. She was deeply impressed by Kropotkin's ideas and planned to translate some of his works into Turkish. "Even here, the misconceptions of anarchism are truly astonishing. People are tired of listening to what we are AGAINST. They rightfully want to know what we are FOR. What is our constructive alternative?"

With this in mind, Mermin persuaded the administration to allow me to speak to the student body on Constructive Anarchist Alternatives to Authoritarian Institutions. She was delighted that the talk elicited interesting discussion and a favorable response.

Recently we accepted an invitation of the Emma Goldman Club of the University of Massachusetts (Amherst Campus) to speak on The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society. They too, like the new generation of young radicals, stressed the importance of working out realistic alternatives to authoritarianism as a guide to action for establishing the Free Society. The discussion indicated a lively response. Insistent demand for our literature temporarily exceeded the supply.

## RUDOLF ROCKER

An account of Rudolf Rocker's long and fruitful career would encompass more than half a century. His autobiography alone, to say nothing of his other voluminous writings, is more than two thousand pages long. Excerpts from his autobiography,



Rudolf Rocker

badly selected and badly translated (*The London Years*), which Rocker deplored, and his *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, with *Nationalism and Culture* and a few pamphlets, is all there is in English. An adequate translation of the autobiography and other major works as well as a comprehensive history of his times and influence await publication.

Rocker was born in Mainz, Germany, on 25 March 1873. His father was a music copyist. When he was about six years old, his parents died and he spent his childhood in a Catholic orphanage. Rudolf Naumann, his mother's brother, introduced him to the socialist movement.

At the age of fourteen he was apprenticed to a bookbinder. As was then the custom, journeymen traveled throughout Europe working at their trade. During Rocker's travels he met and became friends with such outstanding anarchists as Peter Kropotkin, Elisée Reclus, Domela Nieuwenhuis, Errico Malatesta, Louise Michels, Max Nettlau, Francisco Ferrer and others, thereby broadening his libertarian concepts and contacts.

From Paris, where he lived from 1893 to 1958, Rocker moved to London. Although a non-Jew, Rocker learned to read, write and speak Yiddish and even edited the Yiddish anarchist papers *Arbeiter Freund* and *Germinal* (a literary monthly). Because Rocker opposed World War I and was a German he was interned by the British government as an enemy alien and his non-German wife Milly was arrested and jailed as an anti-war subversive.

For me, his great achievement began when he returned to Germany after the war. He became intensely active and helped organize the revolutionary German anarcho-syndicalist labor organization the FAUD (Free German Workers' Union). Rocker was an eloquent orator and delivered propaganda talks all over Germany. In 1921 he took a major part in the reorganization of the old International Workingmens Association (IWA) which still survives with headquarters in Madrid. If Rocker did nothing else but organizing and drafting the Declaration of Principles of the IWA, he would still have earned a prominent place in modern revolutionary history.

From his arrival in 1933 till his death in New York on 10 September 1958, Rocker lived in the United States, devoting

the rest of his life to writing and speaking. A bibliography of his books, pamphlets and articles would make a fair-sized volume. Rocker complained that hundreds of thousands of the Spanish translation of his works were published at great profit by commercial publishers, without his permission and without a cent in royalties.

Before and after Rocker settled in the United States, he made several extensive speaking tours in the United States. It was on one of these tours in the 1920s that I heard Rocker deliver a lecture in Chicago arranged by the Free Society group. He spoke in Yiddish on a cultural subject, *Six Characters in World Literature*. Our comrade Paul Avrich kindly gave me a copy of a photo with Milly and Rocker in the center, and myself in the back row, taken at a reception of the Free Society group in the home of the secretary, Boris Yelensky. The photo also included Gregory Maximoff and members and guests of the group.

In 1937, Rocker and Milly, having four years before been forced to flee Germany with only the clothes on their backs, and the manuscript of Rocker's masterpiece, *Nationalism and Culture* (his five-thousand volume library was burned by the Nazis), settled down in a house in Michigan rented from the anarchist bookseller, Kramer (later moving to a house provided for him by the Mohegan comrades).

One day Esther and I, with our young son Abraham and Bill Taback of the Libertarian Book Club who drove us, went to Mohegan to see Rocker about writing an obituary article for our journal *Vanguard* in memory of Alexander Berkman who had just committed suicide. Rocker was a close personal friend of Berkman. We wandered around trying to locate the Rocker house without success until we asked a young boy for directions: "You mean the man with the beard and the cane who looks like an Italian king and his wife who looks like a gypsy?" We found the house at last. Milly was seated on the lawn at her easel sketching, while Rocker could be heard typing the manuscript of his excellent *Anarcho-Syndicalism*. Milly went into the house and came out with a big red apple for our son. Rocker came out a few minutes later. He agreed to the obituary article for our *Vanguard* provided that we did not reveal his name, as

negotiations for the periodic renewal of his temporary permit to remain in the United States were not yet concluded. The Rockers were constantly harrassed by the Department of Justice and the immigration authorities. They were even commanded to present themselves for deportation within thirty days. The harrassment and deportation proceedings finally ceased when a number of influential labor organizations and individuals testified in their behalf.

In occasional discussions, Rocker, referring to his own predicament, pointed out that we must, in the absence of a powerful revolutionary movement, accept the intervention of influential reformistic organizations because there is no workable alternative. To defend the right of political asylum and all civil rights which governments are *forced* to grant after hard struggles, is *not a violation*, but a *confirmation of anarchist principles*.

On the question of colonies, Rocker did not agree with Alexander Berkman and others that:

maintaining the colony communes is not worth the effort . . . I have little faith in colonies. You cannot build the new society that way and generally, these experiments with colonies end disastrously . . .  
[quote in Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*]

Rocker enthusiastically praised the Stelton and Mohegan colonies. Despite their failure they were nevertheless of permanent value. We can learn a great deal even from failed social experiments. Participants in such experiments attain a higher degree and nobler sense of personal fulfillment, enriching their lives.

Through the years, I met the Rockers on various occasions. My orientation was enriched by the study of Rocker's more important writings and in informal discussions about our ideas and the problems of our movement. His practical, constructive approach to social and movement problems, his willingness to adjust his ideas to changing circumstances impressed me most. In this respect our journal *Vanguard* was enriched by his (necessarily anonymous) articles and his giving us the benefit of his vast experience. He popularized and interpreted the classical anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin in terms of modern events.

The most controversial issues avidly debated in our movement concerned the role of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT-FAI in the Spanish Civil War and Revolution (1936–1939), particularly their governmental membership; our attitude towards World War II—should the anarchists support the war against the fascist powers, Germany and her allies?; and what changes would our movement find necessary after the war?

In articles and informal discussions Rocker's position on the CNT-FAI's entry into the government could be summed up as follows: what the CNT-FAI should or should not have done under such desperate circumstances is, of course, debatable. They may have been mistaken. But the critics did not seem to grasp the magnitude of the tragic dilemma of the Spanish anarchists. The libertarian movement was hopelessly trapped between the cruel, inconsistent choice of collaboration with its anti-fascist enemies, violating anarchist principles by joining the government, or trying to establish a dictatorship in Catalonia, the anarchist stronghold, and the rest of Spain—an obvious impossibility and even greater violation of anarchist principles. If the anarchists were to attempt dictatorship they would provoke a civil war within the anti-fascist camp, thus accepting, at least partially, responsibility for a Franco-fascist victory. The critics could offer no better alternative under these circumstances. In a situation where important decisions had to be made—so to speak—at the spur of the moment mistakes are unavoidable.

Rocker bitterly denounced those comrades who, while the Spanish comrades were fighting with their backs to the wall, were slanderously accusing the CNT-FAI “leaders” of bureaucracy, lust for power, and imposing their will over the membership. He praised Emma Goldman for standing by our embattled comrades in their hour of need, denouncing malevolent critics who, instead of helping, stabbed them in the back and rubbed salt in their open wounds. What was needed in that critical moment was understanding and solidarity—not fault finding.

Like Rocker, and by far the bulk of the anarchist movement who had opposed World War I, we now agreed that we must support the war against the Nazi fascists and their allies and this included the Spanish refugees in France. We did so not

because we suddenly became pro-capitalist patriots; we felt that the precious civil rights which the great struggles of oppressed peoples *forced* "democratic" states to grant must still be defended against any attempt to curtail them. We could not do this alone. Only the democracies commanded the resources to defeat the fascist hordes. Our very lives, the existence of civilization, depended upon crushing the fascist armies.

I do not understand how intellectuals such as John Hewetson, the liberal academic George Woodcock, and the London *Freedom* group, not to speak of the "pure" anarchists (which included Marcus Graham, editor of the defunct anarchist journal *MAN*!) could oppose the war. Did it make no difference to them if the fascists or the democracies (deficient and vile as they are) won the war? Did the slaughter of six million Jews and millions of anti-fascists, the literal enslavement of conquered peoples, domination of the world by the "superior Aryan race" mean little or nothing to them? Even more reprehensible were insinuations that Rocker and the other supporters of the war were "war mongers." I remember a meeting where Rocker was insulted by "pure" anarchists who continually interrupted him.

Although I realized that the war against the fascist powers was necessary, I could not overlook the blatant contradiction between Rocker's assertion that England and France wanted peace and could not be blamed for the war and his admission that the democracies, England and France, provided Hitler with war material and allowed him to build up his war machine. Does it not follow that the democracies were also responsible for the outbreak of the war? I found that this superficial, inaccurate analysis ignored a number of extremely important points which are specified as follows:

This is all the more disappointing in view of the fact that Rocker himself emphasized the fascistic tendencies in *all* states, including democracies. For example: the partition of Africa and the enslavement of its peoples, the annexation and oppression of the peoples of India, Ceylon, Malaya, Indonesia, the Caribbean islands and many other areas by the *democratic* colonial imperialisms of England, France, Belgium, Holland, etc., constitute, as Rocker himself repeatedly emphasized, an immense

historical tragedy whose magnitude it is impossible to assess.

No less criminal were the practical extermination of the native Americans, an "inferior race," in the United States and black slavery, abolished by the Civil War, the blacks also being held to be "an inferior race," to say nothing of the blatant anti-Chinese racism. Nor should it be forgotten that "democratic" American imperialism accumulated a sizable empire of its own with a territory greater than Germany, Italy, Belgium and Holland combined and a population of twenty million. Nor the establishment of army, navy and air bases encircling the globe.

Rocker's assertion is all the more difficult to comprehend in view of the fact that he himself knew full well that there were strong fascist tendencies within England (the Mosley movement and the powerful ultra-reactionary Hitler sympathizers, the "Cliveden set") while in France there were the notorious pro-Nazi military collaborators, Marshal Pétain, Prime Minister Daladier and others.

In view of such considerations it was imperative that the war against fascism be regarded as a *two-front war*—defeat of fascism abroad by military victory and a relentless campaign to exterminate "fifth-column" movements in the democracies. We could not, in view of their record, trust the "democratic" governments to extirpate all vestiges of fascism even after peace was declared. We had to fight on, on the condition that nobody was enriched by profits from the war. We must make sure that social justice was instituted simultaneously in the course of the war.

I did not have a chance to discuss these points with Rocker. I assumed that he agreed with us, but he did not, as far as I know, indicate that he did. Be that as it may, Rocker's failure to note these points led to misunderstandings and seriously diminished the force of his arguments.

Unfortunately, after World War II, in his declining years, Rocker abandoned the revolutionary anarchism he so selflessly and ably championed all his life. This became painfully evident in his voluminous articles and informal discussions. His views did not differ substantially from those held by the bourgeois liberals. I refer for example to passages in the chapter "My

Impressions of the United States" (*Autobiography*, Vol. 2, *Revolution and Regression*, Yiddish translation).

Rocker ascribed the marvelous growth of American industry solely to the alleged "federalist" unity of the then forty-eight states: ". . . without the federalist structure the abundant natural resources and the vast territories would never have been developed. . . ."

There are two things seriously wrong with this assumption. First, and most importantly, the alleged federalist structure of the American state decisively negates a key principle of anarchism, clearly expounded by Bakunin:

No state, not even a republican state, founded on any form of exploitation can in good faith enter a national federation or international confederation. . . . although the internal political structure of the Southern United States was, in certain respects, more federalistic, even freer than the Northern states, the freedom of its citizens, the false federalism was founded on the forced labor of slaves. . . . [*Socialism, Federalism and Anti-Theologism*]

Responsible historians repeatedly emphasize that the Constitution of the United States, upon which the political structure of the United States is based, in glaring contrast to the Articles of Confederation which preceded it, is not at all federalistic. It is common knowledge that the powers of the president and the senate exceed, by far, the power of European monarchs and heads of state. Furthermore, the constitutions of the counterfeit "federalist" states are no less, if not more, undemocratic than the Constitution itself.

The second part of Rocker's assumption, that "without the federalist structure, American industry would never have been developed," is historically false. Not fictitious "federalism" but the ruthless exploitation of foreign immigrant labor (which spurred bloody class struggles between workers and employers) is responsible for the phenomenal development of American industry. Rocker, on the contrary, notes that he is not, in the context of his remarks, discussing this important factor. How anyone with the least knowledge of American history—much less Rocker—can possibly exclude the decisive impact of immigrant labor on America's industrial growth cannot be explained.

There is no evidence to back up the ridiculous assertion that capitalism is not the important cause of war, because the capitalists stand to lose more than to gain from war. Rocker, as much as anyone (although he reversed himself), always correctly maintained that capitalism is an irrational system. When trapped in an economic crisis which they themselves create, capitalists resort, in desperation, to war profits to rescue them, regardless of consequences to the capitalist system or the war's victims. He ignores the fact that war production temporarily rescued capitalism from the acute European economic crisis. The American "recovery" from the Depression of the 1930s was primarily due to the war economy; preparation for war revived American industry and the capitalists reaped huge profits. The history of capitalism is indelibly marked by recurrent economic panics only temporarily alleviated by war production. Rocker's arguments, to the contrary, indicated the extent to which bourgeois ideas permeated his thinking.

Rocker's claim that the counterfeit united federation of the forty-eight states constituted a harmonious, unified economic system is not true. The "free enterprise, free competition" economy of the United States is marked by never-ending competition between rival capitalist firms to dominate and monopolize the market regardless of artificial local, provincial and even national frontiers. This applies not only to the American economy. It is inherent in the very nature of capitalism itself.

Like Rocker, I do, of course, realize that nuclear war would exterminate the human race, that it involves *all* the people, rich and poor alike. But I do *not* agree that the class-war concept is for this reason obsolete. A growing new middle class consisting of the expanding local, provincial and national bureaucracies, the scientists, engineers, technicians, academics, professionals, etc., all of them enjoying a far higher standard of living than the average worker, whose privileged status depends upon the existing establishment, immeasurably reinforces capitalism, particularly state capitalism where nationalization and regulation of economic life is already far advanced.

The *de facto* alliance between this new middle class, the government and the subsidized technological, scientific and

educational institutions dominates the political, social and economic life of modern democracies. To safeguard and enhance their superior status they support war preparation, and if need be total nuclear war.

In short, we may conclude that Rocker (unintentionally to be sure) echoed typically conventional bourgeois ideas. Nor did the ideas of the veteran anarchists Augustin Souchy and Diego Abad de Santillan differ substantially from those advocated by bourgeois liberals.

Like Souchy, Santillan (whom I visited while we were in Madrid), citing the Scandinavian countries as an example, argued that great social progress can be achieved peacefully in capitalist democracies without violence or class struggles. Modern democratic capitalism, he held, is progressively achieving the socialization of economic life. In capitalist democracies there is no opposition to direct management or co-management with employers of the economy by peoples' organizations. The workers, in demanding a share in management, and in establishing producers' and consumers' cooperatives and similar palliatives, would gradually come closer to anarchism. Santillan even suggests that workers and peasants, organized into consumers' and producers' collectives and cooperatives, could, if efficiently managed, compete against the capitalists and price them out of the market. (*Estrategia y Práctica*, Mexico, 1971, pp. 84 ff.)

It seems necessary to repeat that at no time did the cooperative movement from its inception two centuries ago—today with over 400 million members—constitute the slightest threat to the capitalist system or the state. On the contrary, municipal, state and national governments, even the United Nations, have for years encouraged and heavily subsidized all sorts of cooperative enterprises. Under capitalism there is no substantial difference, in effect, between such fraudulent "cooperatives" and trusts established by cooperating capitalists bent on monopolizing industry and commerce.

Souchy and Santillan knew full well that the pros and cons of cooperatives were exhaustively debated over a century ago in the first International Workingmen's Association. The conclusions are still timely. They emphasized, even then, that the pernicious obsession that the chronic afflictions of capitalism

and statism can be alleviated or altogether cured without class struggles imbues the workers with perhaps the greatest drawback to freedom, namely the erosion of revolutionary vitality, the atrophy of the will to revolt. The pioneers of the International insisted that the cooperative movement in the free society will reach its full potential only after the revolutionary revolt of the oppressed against capitalism and the state.

Anarchists who reject "old tactics," who hold that "not nineteenth century revolution but twentieth century reform is the real revolution," that cooperatives and other schemes make—or can make—capitalism acceptable or superfluous, will be enthusiastically hailed by bourgeois liberals, even "enlightened capitalists"—certainly not by anarchists. It must be repeatedly stressed that such *counter-revolutionary* attitudes amount to the *emasculat[i]on of anarchism as a living movement of revolt for freedom*. Anarchism means rebellion: "The passion for destruction is a creative passion"; and "[only by] fecund and renovating rebellions are new worlds born." (Bakunin)

Federica Montseny told us, when we spent an hour or two with her in the New York airport, before she continued her flight to France after a visit to Mexico, that the exiled Spanish anarchist CNT-FAI movement repudiated Santillan's opportunism and no longer considered him a member of the revolutionary movement. A similar reception awaited him after he returned to Spain after the death of Franco.

The Spanish anarchist group in Mexico, Tierra y Libertad, told us privately "Souchy is no longer an anarchist," and publicly reproved us for allowing Souchy, even unofficially, to represent the CNT-FAI.

At the International Anarchist Congress in Paris in 1971, Souchy and the Secretary of the Cuban Libertarian Movement in Exile presented a resolution summarizing their changed ideas:

The period of heroic revolution is past and we renounce revolution for the realization of anarchism. We make a distinction between totalitarian governments in favor of democratic governments because democratic governments make possible legal anarchist propaganda. Anarchism will eventually be achieved by building producer and consumer cooperatives and through free libertarian labor unions . . . our resolution was violently rejected.

The anarcho-fanatics strongly protested my participation in the Congress, denounced the Cuban Libertarian Movement in Exile and applauded Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.

I and other comrades deplored the insulting way in which a man of Souchy's caliber and record in the revolutionary movement was treated. The old fighter was saddened and deeply offended. His ideas had changed, but in fighting spirit, in devotion to our cause, he remained steadfast. He enthusiastically hailed the revival of the CNT-FAI after the death of Franco. At the age of eighty-six and in poor health he made an exhausting propaganda tour in the United States to collect funds to help our Spanish comrades. To save hotel bills and other expenses he stayed in the homes of comrades (with us while in New York). At the conclusion of his talks he recalled the heroic revolutionary spirit of these stirring times and in a voice ringing with emotion sang the battle hymns of the CNT-FAI, *Hijos del pueblo* and *A las barricadas*. Souchy died on 18 January 1984 at the age of ninety-one.

I have good reason to believe that the changed attitude of these militants is primarily due to the disillusionment that followed the defeat of the Spanish Revolution, the apathy and failure of the international labor movement to support the embattled Spanish workers and their impotence to offer effective resistance to fascism. To this was added the de facto extinction of the once flourishing anarcho-syndicalist movement in Europe and Latin America by fascist and neo-fascist governments.

Rocker, Santillán (he died a few months after Souchy), Souchy and so many others remained faithful to their anarchist ideal to their dying breath. In spite of bitter disappointments, ill health and old age they sought alternative roads to freedom. In their quest they unintentionally and gradually developed attitudes which, in effect, unfortunately repudiated fundamental anarchist principles.

It is hoped that their heroic efforts to establish the revolutionary organization of our movement will inspire new generations, while their aberrations will be forgiven.

## CONTROVERSY: ANARCHISTS IN THE SPANISH REVOLUTION

In 1974, or early 1975, I reviewed in the English anarchist paper *Freedom* a book by Carlos Semprun Maura, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Catalonia* (French edition). In my review I criticized both Semprun Maura and Vernon Richards' book *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution* for presenting a distorted, over-simplified interpretation of events—a scenario. This provoked a heated rejoinder from Richards (three or four articles in *Freedom*).

Over forty years after the tragic defeat of the Spanish Revolution—1936 to 1939—the question of anarchist participation in the Republican government and the role of anarchists in a revolution is a fundamental problem still debated—still relevant. I include my polemic with Richards in these memoirs because of the emotional impact of these stormy years and the great extent to which these events influenced my thinking and the course of my life.

Since Richards' main source for his criticism of the anti-anarchist policies of the CNT-FAI—governmental participation—are the anti-participation historians José Peirats and Gaston Leval (Leval's *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution* was translated by Richards), I refer, in the main, to both Peirats and Leval to refute his contentions. Richards writes like a prosecuting attorney, but I do not consider myself a lawyer for the defense. No one can be altogether objective but I have done my best to present a well-documented, impartial analysis of the issues involved.

Both Semprun Maura's and Richards' "bête noir" is the CNT-FAI "bureaucracy." For them, the "bureaucracy" is to a great extent responsible for the defeat of the anarchist revolution. That a "few officials became infected with the virus of power" (as Leval puts it) is true enough. But to charge that the CNT degenerated into a virtual bureaucratic dictatorship is a gross exaggeration, bordering on slander.

Richards' attempt to refute my statement that the CNT was so structured as to reduce the danger of bureaucracy to a minimum only shows that he does not know what he is talking

about. He inadvertently admits that he has no real evidence to substantiate the existence of the alleged "bureaucracy": "I have never seen detailed accounts of the composition [of the bureaucracy], its role, or whether [the bureaucrats] are paid or unpaid. . . ."

Abel Paz, who fought in the Revolution, in his eyewitness account, *Durruti: The People Armed* (pp. 244-5), tells how Durruti, always alert to the dangers of bureaucracy, investigated:

. . . the national headquarters of the CNT were not centralized. All the people working in the national headquarters and in the organization were employed, not by the National Committee, but were elected by and accountable to the plant assemblies. They were paid not by the National Committee, but by enterprises in which they were employed. . . .

Both Augustin Souchy, who administered the Foreign Information Bureau of the CNT, and one of his coworkers, Abe Bluestein, of New York, told me that everyone working in the National Headquarters from responsible officials to porters and maintenance workers were paid the same equal wages. Durruti and others who investigated were convinced that there was no bureaucracy in the CNT anywhere.

The contention that the anarchist "leaders" joined the Catalan "Generalidad" government without consulting the members is also false. Peirats, in an interview with John Brade-mas (12 September 1952) informed him that the decision to join the "Generalidad" government was adopted by a vast majority vote in the Plenum of Local and District Federations. (*Anarcho-Syndicalism and Revolution in Spain*, Spanish translation, pp. 211, 214).

As I write these lines I read a review by my old friend and comrade Abe Bluestein further emphasizing this point:

. . . and I saw equally strong commitment to anarchist principles in Barcelona. I saw a regional meeting of the CNT with more than 500 representatives affirm the policy of participating in the government of Catalonia. At the same time, they voted to continue financial support to the Libertarian Youth of Catalonia who opposed such government collaboration publicly in their uncensored leaflets and pamphlets distributed throughout the city. [*Social Anarchism* No. 7, p. 9]

The accusation that there was no control from below is emphatically denied by Gaston Leval in his chapter on libertarian democracy. Leval, after describing in meticulous detail the democratic libertarian procedures embedded in the nature and structure of libertarian organization, declares that libertarian procedures, the fullest people's direct grass-roots democracy, were practiced

. . . in ALL the syndicates THROUGHOUT SPAIN. In ALL trades and industries. In assemblies which in Barcelona brought together hundreds of thousands of workers. . . . In ALL the collectivized villages . . . which comprised at least 60% of Republican Spain's agriculture. [*Collectives in the Spanish Revolution*, Freedom Press, p. 206—Leval's emphasis]

In its report to the Extraordinary Congress of the International Workers' Association (IWA—anarcho-syndicalist), the National Committee of the CNT refuted charges that the National Committee violated anarchist federalist principles by imposing its own decisions on the rank-and-file local and regional organizations. The decision to join the Catalan government "Generalidad" was ratified by plenums of local, district and regional committees in August 1936 and the decision to join the central government was ratified in a national plenum of regions in Madrid on 28 September 1936 (the CNT actually entered the government on 6 November 1936). From 19 July 1936 to 26 November 1937, seventeen regional plenums and dozens of local plenums and district federations were called as well as various regional congresses of unions. (See José Peirats, *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution*, pp. 185, 186.)

The replacement of the brutal professional police, the Civil Assault Guards, far from being as Richards contends an ". . . example of a politicized bureaucracy," constitutes one of the truly great achievements of the revolution. His own evidence contradicts his charge that the patrols received orders from the government. The patrols were chosen not by the government but by the people themselves: "various organizations and parties, CNT-FAI, UGT etc. . . ." (Richards)

Richards and other critics do not seem to grasp the magnitude of the tragic dilemma of our comrades, the Spanish anar-

chists. The libertarian movement was hopelessly trapped between the cruel choice of collaboration with its anti-fascist enemies, thereby violating the principles of anarchism, or trying to establish an anarchist dictatorship over all the other anti-fascist organizations, an obvious impossibility and even greater violation of anarchism, or accepting, at least partially, the awesome historic responsibility for a fascist victory.

What the CNT-FAI should or should not have done in such desperate circumstances is, of course, debatable. What is *not* debatable is that there *is* a dilemma. I criticized Semprun Maura because he called this, the most crucial problem of the Spanish Revolution, "a false dilemma" and I criticized Richards because he labelled it "Dolgoft's dilemma."

"Dolgoft's dilemma" is, however, shared by Gaston Leval, José Peirats and almost all other anti-collaborationists as well as *all* responsible non-anarchist writers on Spain. Leval graphically portrays the tragic, heartbreaking situation that our comrades had to face far more truthfully, with far greater understanding than Richards and the "pure" anarchist critics:

All those among the anarchists preoccupied primarily with the revolutionary question oversimplified and overestimated the political problem. The Social Revolution, they believed, would sweep away the state and the other entrenched authoritarian institutions . . . but the necessity of fighting the war against fascism upset these expectations. . . .

While the state was severely crippled after the fascist attack of 19 July 1936, it was by no means as impotent as is generally assumed. All the machinery of the state was still intact; the ministries, and their officials, a police force, an army though weakened, and the entrenched bureaucracy still survived . . . notwithstanding the over-optimism of the revolutionaries, the state still constituted an effective force in many provinces and cities . . . it was only in three or four cities (Barcelona was the most important) that the anarchists dominated the situation, and then only for three or four weeks . . . it is therefore fallacious to assume that the anarchists were the masters of the situation. . . .

Another serious problem was that in all of Eastern Spain there were no arms factories, no raw materials, no iron or coal. The principal arms factories were in fascist territory. . . .

It is obvious that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible,

to make the Revolution under such circumstances . . . it became necessary to collaborate with our anti-fascist enemies against the much more dangerous common enemy. We could not sweep away the political parties controlling the municipalities, who with equal fervor were fighting with the anarchists against fascism. [see Leval, *Ni Franco—Ne Stalin*, pp. 76, 94]

Richards ignores a most revealing passage in Peirats' *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution* (English translation, p. 188):

We all understood perfectly that leading to the period of collaboration was a chain of events that placed the CNT in a helpless situation . . . the only alternative of those who consistently opposed collaboration with the government . . . was a heroic *defeat* . . . they could offer no solution that would simultaneously preserve victory in the war against fascism; progress in the revolution; complete loyalty to their ideas and the preservation of their own lives . . . they lacked the power to perform miracles. . . . [my emphasis]

The situation was all the more aggravated by the fact that the millions of sincere rank-and-file workers, socialists belonging to the Socialist Party-controlled General Workers Union (UGT), republicans, Catalan and Basque separatists, petit-bourgeois peasant owners, etc., by far outnumbered the CNT-FAI members. Gaston Leval emphasizes this point:

The vast majority of the population living in the republican part of Spain were, above all, dominated by the fear of a fascist victory. They did not understand why all the political parties and social movements did not constitute a united anti-fascist front regardless of their ideological differences. The people wanted the CNT and the much less important FAI to join the united front government which was, for them, absolutely necessary to guarantee the defeat of fascism. . . . [*Collectives in the Spanish Revolution*, Freedom Press, p. 322]

Nor were all the members of the CNT convinced, unpromising anarchists. They, too, insisted that the CNT should collaborate with the anti-fascist parties and even enter the government. On this important point Peirats takes issue with Richards: "realities are and always will be more decisive than philosophical speculation. . . . It is unrealistic to expect absolute fidelity to principles in an organization like the CNT, numbering millions. . . ."

Leval explodes the myth that the CNT-FAI "bureaucracy" supinely capitulated to the counter-revolutionary Republican government:

The leaders of the CNT-FAI, first of all, did what they could not to give in [join the government—S.D.]. They were undoubtedly inspired by their traditional opposition to all governmentalism . . . and all government parties. But in the face of the growing danger [fascist victory—S.D.] the greatest unification possible was needed. They thought up a revolutionary solution: the government should be replaced by a Defense Council of five members, five from the UGT, four from the republican parties, five members of the CNT. In this way they sought to make clear the supremacy of workers' syndical organizations over the political parties. [Ibid., p. 322]

The CNT proposal was made not by the "leaders," but only after thorough discussion by the National Plenum of Regions in Madrid, 3 September 1936. The proposal was published in the CNT and republican press.

Needless to say the proposal was rejected by the 1,200,000 Socialist Party-controlled labor union UGT and also rejected by the political parties. Leval, in my opinion, was absolutely right in making a distinction between an ordinary parliamentary government of political parties and one conducted by a coalition of genuine labor organizations, not by any means a perfect libertarian solution, but one in which workers' organizations certainly exercise a greater measure of control.

Leval also notes that the successful organization of the libertarian collectives was to a great extent undoubtedly due to the fact that in Granollers, Gerona, Hospitalet, Valencia and many other centers the mayors were libertarians and they expedited social transformation (ibid., p. 281). Since the CNT was forced to collaborate with other anti-fascists in village, municipal and provincial governments, it stands to reason that it was just as unanarchistic as participating in the national government. If I were a consistent anti-collaborationist I would oppose collaboration not only in the central government but also its subdivisions, without which any government is inconceivable.

Leval even goes so far as to defend a libertarian proposal to establish a national state financed health insurance fund:

That libertarians should have thought of such a solution which implies the recognition of the existence of the state . . . may surprise and shock the theoreticians who ignore the practical facts. . . . As we have repeated many times, we were in a mixed and most complicated situation in which private capital and individual property persisted, in which the socialized economy paid taxes, etc. . . . In this situation many activities escaped our control. . . . [ibid., p. 273]

In respect to the refusal of the anarchists to "take power," for which the Trotskyites and assorted "Marxist-Leninists" also criticized them, Leval remarks:

It only needs a modicum of common sense to realize that it was quite impossible for us to wage war against the other anti-fascist sectors who would not allow themselves to be wiped out so easily. It would have been a nonsense and a crime. . . . [ibid., p. 82]

These quotations (and the anti-participationist literature is filled with more) read like justifications for governmental participation. There are undoubtedly quotations from the same sources refuting such statements. But these contradictions reflect the tragic dilemma of our valiant comrades. What is most disturbing is Richards' refusal to take these facts into account, instead misleading his readers by concocting a false account of the situation in Spain: selecting and twisting only the kind of "facts" which support his baseless arguments and accusations.

Although both Leval and Peirats were strongly opposed to governmental participation, the case for the CNT participation policy could not be better stated. Their willingness to give full consideration to policies they did not agree with earned my lasting respect. I sincerely regret that I could not feel the same way about Richards' shabby, ungenerous presentation.

Richards believes that the Spanish anarchists, instead of joining the united front republican government, should have abandoned the fight against Franco fascism and lived to "fight another day." He admits that ". . . such a course could well have ended in defeat in the first few weeks." when it was by no means certain that the fascists would win and hopes for final victory ran high. The anarchists would rightly be accused of cowardice and held responsible for the disastrous defeat by the masses who at that time were by no means ready to surrender.

Richards himself admits that the “. . . revolutionary expectations still ran high and the people still armed . . .”

This absurd strategy is based upon the unrealistic notion that the million and a half members of the CNT would accept such a proposal of the anarchists. There is very good reason to believe that the CNT members would indignantly refuse to be moved around like checkers at the behest of the “pure” anarchists. Without the CNT the comparative handful of anarchists would lose their influence and finally become an impotent sect absolutely incapable of meaningful action. The anarchist historian Peirats, for example, makes clear that while the anarchists did influence the CNT, the CNT made the “anarchists into its own image . . . provided them with a sphere of action, masses and positions of leadership . . . the anarchists were run by the union. . . .” (*Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution*, p. 239) In a great many situations the CNT, instead of implementing the policies of the anarchists, acted independently.

Anarchists desperately searching for a practical anarchist alternative to governmental participation cite the example of the heroic exploits of the Nestor Makhno anarchist guerilla movement in the Ukraine during the Russian Revolution as an example to be followed by the CNT-FAI. But they ignore the fact that this heroic movement was crushed and Makhno himself barely escaped abroad, a mortally sick man, to die in despair in Paris.

The perennial problem of what should be the role of anarchists in a revolutionary period is always relevant. Many are the lessons to be learned from both the mistakes and the achievements of our comrades; from the tragic events in Spain and its international repercussions manifested in the outbreak of the World War. Regretably, neither Richards nor too many others have provided a reasonable basis for discussion.

## THE NEW YORK CITY PAINTERS' UNION

Institutionalized corruption and gangsteism, particularly in the building trades, is almost as old as the labor movement itself. Back in the 1880s, the corrupt business agents ruled their

domains like graft-ridden Tammany Hall politicians ruled New York City. Samuel Parks, Secretary-Treasurer of the Structural Iron Workers' Union, was a dominant figure in the New York City building trades. He remained on the payroll of both the union and the Fuller Construction Company. Samuel O'Donnell, former President of the Chicago Building Trades, collected "strike insurance" from construction companies and employed gangsters to enforce his demands for money.

This pattern was, in the main, duplicated in the early 1930s by the administration of the czar of the New York Painters' Union, Philip Zausner. The notorious gangsters Buchalter and Shapiro, who extorted millions of dollars from both the employers and the clothing union for "protection," also served the Zausner machine.

When the Zausner dictatorship was finally deposed, the membership was convinced that the new "left wing" administration led by the newly elected Secretary-Treasurer, the communist Lewis Weinstock, would at last, as promised, transform the corrupt machine into a model democratic union faithfully putting into effect the aspirations of the membership.

In the midst of the general euphoria we were accused of defaming the union, by falsely charging that neither the communist Weinstock nor his party gave a damn about the welfare of the members. As expected, the communist machine quickly consolidated its power. Communist Party members in the Fur Workers' Union, dominated by the communists, who knew nothing at all about our trade, were planted and given key posts in the union. Members were pressured to make contributions and assessments were imposed for Communist Party purposes. The members finally revolted and voted the communists out of office when their administration, *after* Russia was invaded by the Nazis, proclaimed a "no strike" pledge, abandoned enforcement of union standards on "war work" and called for "victory work days" with wages contributed to the "war effort."

The popular new administration was headed by the ex-Trotskyite Martin Rarback, who was really a very sincere militant. I had known him since his participation in the United Anti-Fascist Front during the Spanish Civil War and Revolution (he boasted that he was for a short time one of Trotsky's

numerous secretaries). Unfortunately, as Bakunin pointed out over a century ago:

. . . even the best of men are rendered corruptible by the temptations of power . . . having convinced themselves that what they like is what the membership wants and needs . . . the leaders become despots, even while deluding themselves that they are actually working for the benefit of their victims. . . . [*Protestation of the Alliance*]

In the pattern set by Zausner, the Secretary-Treasurer, Rarback, the business agents, the foremen and the shop stewards built up a self-perpetuating machine. The business agent ruled his fief like a feudal lord. Members seeking jobs depended on his goodwill and he reserved the best jobs for his psychophantic favorites. He extorted graft from employers to violate union rules and contracts. He was actually a broker, profiting from transactions between the employers and the workers.

The business agent of my local, Al Scardino, like the other officials, exercised his illegitimate power to remain in office for over twenty years without ever again working at his trade, amassing a lot of money accumulated from graft and more liberal union retirement benefits than those granted to "ordinary" members. (I heard that Scardino died some years ago in his Florida home.) Rarback himself was voted out of office in disgrace when it was revealed that he extorted a percentage of the immense amounts paid by the city to painting contractors in housing projects in exchange for allowing the contractors to violate union rules and agreements (Rarback, too, died a few years ago).

Despite our meager resources, the few of us did the best we could to outline a few constructive proposals for the regeneration of our union, which we hoped would arouse the interest of at least some members:

1. No administration, however corrupt, can long endure without at least the tacit support of the bulk of the members. Even the Zausner autocracy, to retain the allegiance of the painters, negotiated the seven-hour day, five-day week, with no reduction in pay. Contracts negotiated by Rarback stipulated modest wage increases, slight improvements in working conditions—seldom, if ever enforced—and a variety of "welfare fringe

benefits" actually paid for by a percentage of the wages deducted by the employers and transmitted to the union "welfare" department. In all too many cases the employers did not transmit the full amount deducted from the workers' wages—often not at all.

2. As far back as 1940 the labor historian Philip Taft noted that: "control of union benefits to members has given union officials power over locals . . . power which might be abused by unscrupulous office holders. . . ." (*Economic Problems of Labor*, p. 561)

3. The selection of new administrations, even when accompanied by some beneficial measures, would still leave the underlying causes of this situation untouched because they are inherent in the very structure of the union.

4. Wages and "fringe benefits" paid to officials shall not exceed the amount paid to the workers they are supposed to represent.

5. No paid official shall remain in office longer than two years before returning to work nor be eligible for re-election more than once, three years after returning to work.

6. Officials during their restricted term of office and unpaid delegates must, at all times, be subject to recall if they violate the instructions of the members.

7. The powers of the business agents must be drastically curtailed. The number of locals, each with its own flock of parasitic officials and hangers-on, shall be reduced to the absolute minimum and eventually dismantled.

8. Business agents and all the other officials of the union shall under no circumstances be allowed to act as a de facto employment agency. How this could be done was avidly debated. It was suggested that this could best be accomplished by the establishment of a union coordinating bureau through which employers in need of workers and workers looking for jobs will make their needs known to the bureau. The bureau would then allot jobs only in rotation. First come, first served.

9. We, on the other hand, alert to the ever-present danger of bureaucracy and favoritism, which so complex an arrangement is bound to encourage, urged that a truly independent and experienced agency is best qualified for this purpose.

10. We also stressed that important decisions must be ratified, amended or rejected by referendums of the membership.

It must be reluctantly acknowledged that almost half a century later there has been no progress in this direction either in the Painters' Union or in the labor movement as a whole.

## THE IWW

### HERBERT MAHLER AND 94 FIFTH AVENUE

My closest contact with the IWW centered primarily in New York, Philadelphia, and, to a lesser extent, in other areas, spanning fifty years from the panic (depression) days of the early 1930s to this writing—1985. The Italian, Hungarian and Finnish locals—each with a center of its own (the Finns occupied a whole building in Harlem)—together with other language groups plus ex-members and sympathizers, as compared with today, made up a substantial “movement.” It was not at all unusual to attain an attendance of five hundred or more at the annual Christmas Class-War Prisoners Ball, May Day, Eleventh of November and other proletarian rallies.

In large measure the revival of the IWW in the New York area was due to the initiative of Herbert Mahler, his wife Bessie and a handful of New York wobblies determined to put the IWW “on the map.” Mahler, who began his career in the lumber camps of the Pacific Northwest, Seattle, Washington area, came from Western Canada where he was known as an outstanding amateur boxer. He was a sparring partner to the then-heavyweight boxer Victor McLaglen, later to star in the film *The Informer*.

Mahler was the Secretary of the Seattle IWW branch during the notorious massacre at nearby Everett, Washington of 11 November 1916, when seventy-four wobblies charged with murder were finally acquitted. Together with attorneys Fred Moore and George F. Vanderveer (later defense lawyer for the great Chicago Class-War Prisoners Trial of 1918), Mahler was the most active member of the joint AFL-IWW Defense Committee.

Mahler loved to recount an example of how the IWW organized lumber workers which I still remember. A wobbly organizer trying to organize lumberjacks was confronted by the foreman: "You can organize if you can lick me in a fair fight. If not, out you go." The defeated organizer reported this to Mahler when he returned to Seattle. "What you need," said Mahler, "is training." After several weeks of intensive training the organizer went back and licked the foreman and lined up the lumberjacks in the IWW.

The IWW was then very popular in the Seattle district for its outstanding record in sports and other events. Mahler felt that the wobbly success was in large measure the result of its friendly relations with the AFL locals and the city administration, particularly the mayor.

When in the 1930s the Cleveland wobblies organizing workers were being framed and, in the case of Mike Lindway, sentenced to many years in jail on false charges, when striking workers were harassed and assaulted by the police and company goons bent on breaking the strike, the Cleveland wobblies sent for Herbert Mahler to organize the defense. Mahler and a few other fellow workers on the strike committee were arrested when they joined the picket line of the striking IWW charwomen. Which reminds me that while I was in Cleveland for a few days, I was one of the fellow workers who spoke at plant gates during lunch time—the best time to reach the workers and urge them to join the IWW. When I got up to speak the rattling stones and rocks in an empty concrete mixer installed by the Lincoln Electric Company made such deafening noise that I could not even hear myself.

After serving five years in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary with the 101 class-war prisoners labeled "subversives," Mahler became the Secretary-Treasurer of the IWW with headquarters in Chicago. Later he moved to New York, where he reorganized the General Recruiting Union branch of the IWW in a new hall at 94 Fifth Avenue. The front windows emblazoned with the letters IWW looked out on Fifth Avenue, one of New York's most fashionable and heavily traveled streets. The walls of the new hall were decorated with an immense mural painted with the help of artistic members, by

the artist Carlson who lived in his skylight studio on the top floor.

The mural, in the prevailing proletarian style, depicted in lurid colors the stages of the class struggle from the bloated greedy employer smoking a big cigar and the priest representing the clergy lording it over their victims, the women and children, and ended with the defiant workers waving red flags, chanting "Solidarity Forever," crushing the cringing capitalist and priest, with the radiant sun of the new day illuminating the scene.

Picturing the clergy as enemies of the workers aroused the antagonism of religiously minded sympathizers whom we were trying to reach. This reminds me of how the Newark branch lost a newly organized shop when the new members protested the inclusion of anti-religious songs like "The Preacher and the Slave," a parody of "Onward Christian Soldiers," etc. in the wobbly *Little Red Songbook*.

When I discussed this question with Benjamin Fletcher, one of the 101 class war prisoners jailed in Leavenworth Penitentiary for opposing World War I, he chided me: "What the hell do you care if they go to church if they beat up scabs after the services and practice solidarity on the job? Don't interfere. Give them a chance to learn from their own experience."

Ninety-four Fifth Avenue! The whole building was occupied by the IWW, the studio of the artist Carlson, the anarchist-communist Vanguard group, and Carlo Tresca's *Il Martello* group. Members and sympathizers of these organizations in close contact with each other created a comradely atmosphere, an "esprit de corps" which actually constituted a libertarian fraternal community.

Ninety-four was also a cultural center with classes in the arts, journalism and other subjects. The well-known socialist Samuel H. Friedman (various times Socialist Party candidate for the US vice presidency and other posts) taught the public speaking class. The graduate exercises were held at an open-air street corner meeting. Friedman was the chairman. The speeches of the graduates were rated according to the applause of the audience.

The direct action tactics of the IWW were dramatized by seasoned militants who participated in organizing drives and

strikes. In this connection I recall an amusing incident. Andy Liporati, a chef who helped organize restaurant workers in New York, told how IWW strikers picketing a restaurant got quick results by organizing the strike from the inside. Wobblies, whom the employer did not know, hired out as "strikebreakers." No sooner did the "strikebreakers" begin to serve lunch than strange "accidents" began to happen: a waiter "accidentally" spilled a bowl of hot soup on the table cloth, hamburgers were "mistakenly" fried in fish oil, coffee was flavored with soap suds, sugar dispensers were packed with salt, full meals were marked on the check as coffee and cake, etc. The "strikebreakers" were fired immediately after lunch and the victorious strikers returned.

My activities consisted primarily of "popping off" (addressing street meetings). I was considered a fairly good "rabble rouser." I also often spoke at our open forum meetings and gatherings sponsored by other organizations. We were able to conduct street meetings only after winning violent free speech fights, not against the authorities, but against the communists who persistently tried to break up our meetings.

Although the forum committee, most of the branch members and Mahler himself were social democrats (he was a close friend of Norman Thomas), my talks were well received. But criticism of Marxism and the close connection between the principles expounded by the IWW and the anarcho-syndicalist ideas of Bakunin, about which they knew nothing, angered the Marxist socialists. One of my talks contrasting the failure of the Marxist German Social Democratic Party to offer effective resistance (if any) to Hitler and the heroic resistance of the "Bakunist" CNT to Franco Spanish fascism aroused the furious opposition of Justus Ebert, the IWW writer. He defended Marxism and the conduct of the German Social Democratic Party and repeated all the slanderous attacks on the integrity and the ideology of Bakunin and the libertarian wing of the First International.

It must be admitted that the anti-IWW attitude of quite a few anarchists who favored the AFL-CIO was also responsible for this anti-anarchist attitude. Our attempts to make the anarchists realize this met little response or were altogether ignored.

This was all the more regrettable because important sections of the wobbly movement, the Marine Transport Workers (MTW), members of the Hungarian, Italian, Slavic, Finnish, Russian and other language groups, were most receptive to anarcho-syndicalism; the Chilean administration of the IWW joined the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers' Association (IWA).

Although the 1934 referendum to affiliate the IWW to the IWA was later rescinded by another referendum, the IWW had the most friendly relations with the anarcho-syndicalist labor organizations in Latin America, Spain, Portugal, other European countries, Australia and other lands. To this day, the IWW is consistently demonstrating its 100 percent solidarity with the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist CNT. For me, what is important is not formal affiliation to the IWA, but actual comradesly relations, actual solidarity. For example, members of unions affiliated to the IWA are automatically accepted as members of the IWW and vice-versa—a reciprocal arrangement.

I did not directly participate in the attempts of New York wobblies to take advantage of the pro-union mood of the workers to organize food, transportation, building workers and other trades. The failure of these attempts to produce tangible results, despite the herculean efforts of the fellow workers, was due primarily to the ludicrously insufficient manpower and meager finances, making it impossible to compete with the immense resources, facilities and prestige of the "responsible and respectable" AFL-CIO.

I recall how we rejected the request of a delegation of the Brooklyn Painters' Union local who asked the IWW to exterminate the gangsters and racketeers who dominated their union. When asked why they did not do this themselves, they replied, in effect, that they did not have the guts. They were told that cowardly workers unwilling to help themselves and stand up for their rights must suffer the consequences. They would not be eligible for membership in the IWW even if they did apply.

A disastrous attempt to organize workers came when I and another fellow worker, Red Shannon, agreed, against our better judgment, to convince women beauty salon attendants to join the IWW. Our dungarees and overalls shocked the delicate women and discouraged them from joining the IWW. It

turned out that the young ladies were ashamed to picket, considering it unbecoming and undignified. They finally joined an AFL union which paid unemployed workers to picket for them. Both Shannon and I complained that our attempt to organize beauty salon workers would have had a far better chance of success if it were handled by our women fellow workers.

A chronic obstacle to organization were the frustrated lawyers. Their inflexible, literal adherence to the regulations of the organization, obeyed with all the fanatical fervor accorded to a papal encyclical, regardless of circumstances and common sense, still plagues our movement. Business was smoothly transacted. But when the amateur lawyers were present discussions of minor, routine proposals which otherwise took a few minutes at most were at last concluded only after hours of intricate legal wrangling. Members repelled by this sort of thing simply stopped coming to business meetings.

We were at times unexpectedly confronted with undreamed-of situations. A store keeper asked the secretary if a few people claiming to be wobblies displaying IWW picket signs, threatening to call a strike if he refused to pay them several hundred dollars immediately, really represented the IWW. He was informed that the IWW was not on strike. The petty extortionists disappeared when confronted by our committee. We found out later that one or two were actually members and the others were ex-members who were expelled for unethical conduct damaging to the integrity of the IWW. Members involved in this scheme were of course also expelled.

Herbert Mahler has been dead many years now. Let it be known that he has been given far less than the recognition he so richly merits for the part he played in exposing the notorious Harlan County, Kentucky, gangsters and gunmen paid by the mine owners to break the strike and destroy the mine workers' union. Mahler succeeded in organizing the defense and achieved the release of innocent workers framed and sentenced in 1931 to life imprisonment. Mahler devoted ten years of his life from 1931 to 1941 to unrelenting efforts to secure the release of William Hightower, Elzie Philips (in May 1935) and William Hudson (December 1935). I had the pleasure of meeting Hightower in our hall shortly after his release. Although he was then

eight-one years old he was married to the thirty-one-year-old mother of his child!

People tended to forget the plight of the other four imprisoned miners: Jim Reynolds, W. B. Jones, Chester Poore, and Al Benson. But Mahler did not in the least relax his efforts to secure their freedom. Seven years later, in 1941, at the risk of his life, he came to Pineville and other Harlan County locations to gather the incontrovertible evidence that brought their release on parole. The approved parole papers were delivered to the Kentucky Reformatory by Herbert Mahler of the Kentucky Miners Defense, the Secretary of the Kentucky Federation of Labor and the President of the Tobacco Workers' Union.

To help the miners' defense, a Pittsburgh woman sent a substantial sum, noting that her contribution would probably be diverted to other purposes, which was all too often the case. Mahler, in a note returning her check, wrote that: "We do not accept contributions from people who question the integrity of the Kentucky Miners Defense Committee." A few days later the contributor came to New York, apologized for her mistake and demonstrated her respect for the defense committee by increasing her original contribution.

As in many cases, one of the chronic reasons for the collapse of the branch was the apathy of the members. The unglamorous tasks absolutely necessary to the maintenance of the hall was left to a few dedicated, woefully overworked members. The rest of the members and sympathizers willingly "left the dirty work to George" as the saying goes, self-righteously accusing them of "dictatorship" when they were forced to act without their help or even attendance at branch meetings.

"Old timers," ex-wobblies, loafed around the bars and restaurants on 14th Street, betting on horse races, boasting about their alleged past exploits for the IWW, but would not lend a hand or even attend our street meetings around the corner. But when a member was being tried for misappropriation of funds or other scandals the hall would be packed with self-righteous wobblies and ex-wobblies seeking a thrill. At other times the hall was practically deserted.

The breakup of movements because of personal feuds, internal dissension, and petty bickering is unfortunately an

ever-present affliction. At 94 Fifth Avenue the bitter, ongoing feud between Herbert Mahler and his supporters, on the one hand, and Joseph Wagner, Secretary-Treasurer of the IWW on the other hand, which led to the opening of rival branches by the Wagner faction, and the grievous expulsion of Mahler from the IWW, forced the closing of the 94 Fifth Avenue hall and the prolonged collapse of the IWW in the New York area. All this could have been averted if the contending factions would have overcome their squabbling, reached an understanding, and practiced the solidarity they so zealously preached.

The gallant efforts of John Shuskie, Anna Matson and a few others to revive the IWW and open new halls in the years following the collapse of the 94 Fifth Avenue branch failed because they did not get the necessary solidarity which they had every right to expect. Morale was so low that the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the IWW was initiated, not by the wobblies, but by our Libertarian League. There was no IWW hall in New York City and the commemoration took place in the headquarters of our comrades of Cultura Proletaria on lower Broadway. All the arrangements, the program, refreshments and the innumerable details which made the occasion a success were due solely to the efforts of John Shuskie and Anna Matson. The hall was packed. And then: silence!

Bakunin, in despair, in his last years when his hopes were shattered, consoled himself with the melancholy realization that "When the people have lost the habit of freedom . . . nothing can be done." We too, for what ever little it is worth, can feel better about this when we attribute the collapse of the IWW mainly to the post-1945 disintegration of the once-flourishing radical movement. There is a great deal that could be said to support the objection that this movement was by no means as radical as it is cracked up to have been.

### THE MARINE TRANSPORT WORKERS INDUSTRIAL UNION OF THE IWW (MTW)

The feuds, the bickering and the general apathy that wrecked the 94 Fifth Avenue hall repelled the very people the

IWW so desperately needed. I was deeply disappointed. In contrast, the free, spontaneous atmosphere pervading the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union No. 510 of the IWW (MTW) best embodied the spirit of the IWW. This impression is based on my contact with the MTW in the New York and Philadelphia areas spanning the thirty years from the early 1930s to the 1960s. Maritime workers not only worked together, but *lived* together as they constantly shifted and intermingled from one ship to another and again intermingled between voyages in the Atlantic, Gulf, Pacific and foreign ports. The international character of the marine industry and the cosmopolitan lifestyle of the marine workers stimulated international solidarity, "the Brotherhood of the Sea."

From 1913 to 1925 the MTW successfully organized seamen, engineers, stewards and longshoremen on the New York, Hoboken, Norfolk, Lake and Gulf waterfronts. Its unswerving participation in all strikes regardless of union affiliation, unswerving solidarity and devotion to principles inspired the best elements to join the MTW. The MTW was also enriched by the adherence of the Spanish militants and their propaganda organs, *Solidaridad Obrera* and *Cultura Obrera*. I learned a great deal about this from my old friend Manuel Rey—now over ninety years old—a Spanish member of the IWW who was one of the 101 class-war prisoners railroaded in the 1918 "espionage" trials to Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary. After his release he settled down in the Ferrer Modern School Colony in Stelton, New Jersey, with his wife, the anarchist Lilly Sarnoff who corresponded with him and with Ricardo Flores Magón, the Mexican revolutionist, when they were still in Leavenworth (Magón died there in 1922).

According to Patrick Renshaw (*The Wobblies*, p. 140), between 1905 and 1924, the IWW issued 100,000 membership cards to negroes. The IWW pioneered the integration of white and black workers on the Philadelphia, Baltimore and Norfolk waterfronts. Over half the members were negroes. In promoting racial integration, the negro organizer Benjamin Fletcher, one of my closest friends, played a prominent part. Fletcher also was one of the 101 class-war prisoners. I knew Fletcher during the thirty years that elapsed from the time I first contacted the



**Ben Fletcher holding his namesake, Andrew Homer's son.**

MTW. He vividly recalled an incident when he was organizing negro and white longshore workers on the Norfolk, Virginia waterfront: Fletcher, undoubtedly the most eloquent, humorous speaker I ever heard (his ringing voice needed no microphone), was addressing an open-air street meeting attended by white racists out to make trouble. They flung the sure-fire embarrassing question: "Do you approve of intermarriage or sexual intercourse between whites and blacks . . . have a nigger marry a white woman?" To show that the racist troublemakers were hypocrites when it was common knowledge that intercourse between white men and black women produced racially mixed, lighter skinned children, Fletcher remarked: "I don't see anyone as black as I am. But we all damn well know the reason." The meeting proceeded without further interruption.

When he moved to New York, Fletcher was one of the most popular and effective wobbly propagandists on the New York waterfront. He was unfortunately partially crippled by a

major stroke. When he recovered some of the use of his limbs, he and his wife, a registered nurse, owned or rented a small rooming house in the Brooklyn negro Bedford-Stuyvesant district. Ben attended to the daily chores while his wife was at work. He died suddenly of a massive heart attack in the late 1940s or early 1950s.

During the catastrophic economic panic—the Depression—in the 1930s, the MTW, a mere handful of militants valiantly struggling to defend revolutionary industrial unionism, was fighting for its survival against the combined power of the corrupt capitalist-minded unions, the shipowners, the government, the Communist Party and communist splinter groups, bent on “capturing the waterfront.”

These were hectic days. The MTW hall on Coenties Slip was from early morning until late at night in constant turmoil: distribution of thousands of bulletins and leaflets all over the waterfront, conducting outdoor street meetings (I addressed several), protest demonstrations in city “welfare” centers and charitable agencies for more help to the unemployed who crowded the port area, heated debates with the Communist Party Marine Workers Union—the “MEOW!”—and the aforementioned splinter groups.

A retired Swedish sailor, “Red Shirt Anderson,” ran a cheap “soup kitchen” or “filling station” (also called a “pot-maine factory”). The MTW opened its own soup kitchen serving better food at cost to the members and sympathizers.

There was no set term of office for branch secretaries or other “officials” in the MTW. The personnel changed as members drifted to other ports. Nor were they paid. A member willing to serve as secretary would, if able, himself pay his lodging, food and other expenses. If he ran out of money he would either ship out, if he could find work, or if not, as in Coenties Slip, sleep in the back of the hall, eat in the hall’s soup kitchen and for incidental expenses rely on occasional members’ contributions. Hall rent and other upkeep necessities were provided from dues, initiation fees, and contributions. The sole obligation of the branch secretary was to issue a full financial report to be audited by an auditing committee of three members in good standing. In Corlears and other branches

decisions concerning local affairs were made by members in good standing who were in port. Regional and national policy decisions affecting the whole MTW were made at regional and national conferences, subject to ratification by referendums of the membership.

The hall was actually an informal social center boasting an excellent library on labor, radical and cultural subjects, a reading room, where members fraternized, played chess, cards and "shot the breeze."

The MTW fought the early threat of government control of unions, particularly the Copland Continuous Discharge Book, called the "Fink Book." As a condition of employment, the "Fink Book" listed all a worker's places of employment, employee discipline in willingness to obey orders, his patriotism and record as a "subversive." Another law ended shipping through the union hall and instituted all shipping by the shipowners.

The MTW conducted a free speech campaign to force the authorities not to curtail or prevent the exercise of free speech in indoor or outdoor meetings. We conducted a free speech rally in New York's bohemian Greenwich Village, not against the police but against a hostile crowd of reactionary patriots. When I began to speak I was greeted with catcalls, jeers and insults. Some hotheads shouted "Throw him off the platform!" A furious patriot proudly boasted that his son was killed in combat in World War I. I replied that he was a coward: "Even a rat when cornered will fight to the death to defend its young." the crowd chanted: "Sammy, Sammy. Why don't you go back to where you came from?" I told them that I would answer their question if they stopped chanting long enough to listen. The tension broke into prolonged laughter when I declared that to go back to where I came from was a biological and physiological impossibility. Before I concluded I asked the audience to respect free speech and fair play and pay attention to the next speaker, Franz Fleigler, an MTW member. After the meeting one of the hostile listeners said that my talk reminded him that his grandfather was a wobbly. Another patriot suddenly discovered that there were even a few wobblies in his family tree. To my surprise, I was even invited by vociferous opponents

to join them in a nearby tavern for the "drop that cheers."

Among historians there is an unfortunate tendency to glorify the "big shot" leaders while obscuring, or not even mentioning the forgotten men and women who built the labor movement—the anonymous heroes. There were no "big shot leaders" in the MTW. For example, among the scores of worthies I knew, I remember Nick the Greek, a talented artist who sketched portraits, illustrated leaflets, etc. Nick was a man of considerable culture, but he insisted that everything worth while and lasting was discovered by the Greeks before the birth of Christ. Nothing new was accomplished since then.

J. B. Childs, a veteran wobbly who served five years in San Quentin Prison in California, accused of "criminal syndicalism," was the secretary of the MTW branch when it moved from Coenties Slip to Broad Street. He served for years without pay, and slept in the hall, depending on contributions for food and incidental expenses—mostly snuff which he consumed in great quantities (his favorite brand was Clark and Snovers Panther Piss). The severe beatings in San Quentin affected his mental condition. When I and Phil Mellman, who also did time with Childs in San Quentin for "criminal syndicalism," visited Childs in Pilgrim State Hospital on Long Island he seemed to be in good shape. When we again came to see him a year later we were told that there was no such person in the hospital. We were not at all surprised. It was generally known that patients who escaped, had no known relatives or died were simply expunged from the records.

Melman, now ninety years old, lives in San Francisco. When he lived in New York, Melman, who is immensely proud of his culinary talent, occasionally prepared meals for us. He became impatient at the last minute and scorched the food. But when we came to see him in San Francisco a year or two ago he was no longer impatient. He prepared a sumptuous meal in an immense kitchen stuffed with enough glassware, pots, pans, knives, forks, spoons, dishes, ladles, mixing machines and paraphernalia to equip a good sized restaurant.

There was our very close friend Eugene Covington, who married an Australian woman, had two grown children and lived alone with his wife in a small house in Portland, Oregon. We met

again years later on my West Coast tour arranged by Covington. He died of heart failure soon after we returned to New York. We heard that his wife died of emphysema contracted during the years she slaved in unhealthy work places. Covington remained a dedicated revolutionary wobbly to his dying breath.

We remember our old friend Doc Sizemore, a "wood butcher" (ship's carpenter), a good speaker and a good organizer. His manuscript on alcoholism impressed Bellevue Hospital doctors. Since the MTW had no job control, Sizemore belonged to the Sailors Union of the Pacific, but remained true to his principles. He was foully murdered by the Los Angeles police and buried by the union.

"T-Bone Slim" (Valentine Huhta), a talented writer with a rare sense of humor and a biting sarcasm, was a regular columnist in the *Industrial Worker*. He turned down a well paid offer to write a column for the Hearst newspaper syndicate. "T-Bone," a barge captain in New York harbor, would sit silently in the MTW hall. He spoke little about his background, but I do know that he was of Finnish extraction, a good rebel and an effective organizer for the MTW in the lake ports. When I last saw him we had a few drinks together in a nearby tavern. A little later "T-Bone" was drowned when he accidentally stepped off a barge in the darkness.

As in other organizations, the MTW also suffered from more than its share of sick egos, demented scoundrels, perpetual brawlers who vented their frustrations on their friends, their workmates, their neighbors and themselves. Alcoholic "bar flies," waterfront derelicts and other parasites loafed around the hall, roamed the waterfront searching for handouts from the "live ones" (workers paid off after voyages). Their antics repelled prospective workers and discouraged new ones.

The MTW was also joined by new members who never even glanced at our literature, called us "International" instead of "Industrial" Workers of the World. They "lined up" (joined) only to cultivate social relations with wobbly shipmates, to be "one of the boys," then disappeared. The initiation fees and the few months' dues they paid were regarded as contributions and, as such, were welcomed.

There were, fortunately, only a few periodic boozers, who

upon being paid off after a voyage did not, as usual, come to the hall and contribute to its upkeep. Instead, they found themselves a room near a saloon, leaving only after they had squandered every cent on liquor. They would then show up at the hall, dead broke and sober, ready for another voyage. When sober, they were, between sprees, conscientious members of the MTW.

The MTW as an organization was dead. Bob Willock, who moved to New York, could not be called "Branch Secretary" of a non-existent MTW. He was actually the caretaker of the defunct New York hall—soon to disappear. It was no longer even a social center. The seafaring unions moved to Brooklyn, followed by the few survivors and sympathizers. The hall was practically deserted—a ghostly reminder of its former vivacious self. Bob could not even get together an ad hoc committee of fellow workers to liquidate the hall, dispose of its excellent library, furniture and office equipment, the records, the artistic paintings and ship models and other beautiful artifacts accumulated through the years. Bob was forced to dispose of everything. In desperation he gave everything away indiscriminately, free of charge, to anyone willing to take what they liked.

There was no income, no money, not even enough for Bob's food and lodging. Thanks to the consideration of my old and valued friend and fellow worker Oscar Sokol (deceased), Willock was in this emergency given a temporary job in a building where Oscar was the superintendent. Some time later Bob, in poor health and low spirits, disappeared. We last heard that he had settled down in the Virgin Islands, where we hope he has at last found a measure of contentment. We will always remember Bob, the gallant rebel, who "held the fort" to the bitter end.

The disintegration of the MTW was primarily due to unfavorable circumstances beyond its control. It had neither the financial resources nor the backing of the immensely powerful AFL-CIO maritime unions. The new generation of maritime workers who were enjoying all the benefits which the MTW and other militants had forced the shipowners to grant remained in the conservative unions. They had no desire to join "subversive" unions like the MTW. A lot of good rebels were lost at sea during

World War II. Many of our best fighters were beset by the infirmities of old age and many retired or passed away. Since the MTW had no job control members were forced to find a livelihood by belonging to seagoing or longshore waterfront unions, settling down to family life.

Nevertheless, the few remaining members and ex-members do to a certain extent continue to the best of their ability to spread the message of the IWW. I have lately had the pleasure of again meeting my old friends, the veteran IWWs Freddie Hansen and Phil Melman. I learn from them that they, A. L. Nurse, and a few others are still paid-up members of the IWW. They are still "holding the fort"—still faithful to the IWW and revolutionary industrial unionism.

## NEWARK

The following report, dated 5 June 1935, telling how dedicated militants organized the Newark, New Jersey, local of the IWW says more about the spirit of the IWW than any number of abstract dissertations:

The fellow workers of Newark, New Jersey, started the year 1934 as a small group, without meeting place, without funds and without local organization but with definite objectives and plenty of enthusiasm for their accomplishment. These objectives were to educate the local workers and line them up in the organization, to build up the local membership to at least charter strength and obtain a charter and to obtain a hall of our own.

As the year ends we are all gratified to find that we have met these objectives 100 percent. We have lined up a considerable number of workers in the organization, we are applying for a charter this week and our new hall of which we are very proud, having been renovated and painted entirely by the labor of the local fellow workers, will be opened Friday evening, January 11th. We are located on one of the most concentrated and least organized centers in the country and with added facilities of increased membership and our own hall we are ready for an even more ambitious program for 1935.

Both the halls at 8 Center Street and 394 Market Street



IWW Hall, Newark, New Jersey.

were located in downtown Newark near the Hudson Tubes, railroad and bus terminals. The weekly forums, ably organized and widely publicized, were addressed by veteran wobblies like Pio Monaldi, Jack Walsh, Justus Ebert and outstanding representatives of other organizations and individuals. I was a frequent speaker. My talks interpreted events not from the Marxist, but from the anarcho-syndicalist viewpoint. For example, a series of four lectures were titled: (1) The Foundations of Socialism from the French Revolution to 1848, (2) The Two Main Tendencies of Modern Socialism, Authoritarian and Anti-authoritarian: Marx and Bakunin—1848–1871, (3) Anarchism, Socialism, and Industrial Unionism—1871–1917, (4) The Russian Revolution, the Rise of Fascism and the Bankruptcy of Marxian Socialism—1917–1934.

In 1935 the Newark branch featured a debate advertised as: Who Will Emancipate the Working Class? The IWW—Says Sam Weiner; The Fourth International—Says Hugo Oehler (for personal reasons I then adopted the name “Sam Weiner” in the movement). Neither I nor Oehler prepared for the debate. We had discussed the subject at least half a dozen times from St. Louis and points east and could repeat each others’ arguments to the letter. Oehler and I remained good friends. We lost track of each other. I heard later that Hugo repudiated Trotsky and his “Fourth International” who in his opinion were not really good Marxist-Leninists. While in Spain, his position was close to that of the POUM (Marxist Workers’ party of Unity) and “The Friends of Durutti.” In addition to the forums and socials the wobblies staged outdoor propaganda meetings and demonstrations in Military Park, the heart of Newark. The meetings often drew as much as five hundred listeners, a huge attendance for a city the size of Newark.

All the more remarkable was the fact that the performance of these unglamorous but indispensable tasks—“the dirty work”—namely keeping the hall open and in good condition, getting speakers for the forums, mimeographing and distributing leaflets, chairing the meetings, raising money to pay rent and utility bills, attending to voluminous correspondence, keeping accounts, and so on, fell upon the shoulders of a mere handful of dedicated volunteers.

They, like the true-to-life character of Upton Sinclair's novel *Jimmy Higgins*, were the backbone, the unsung heroes of our organization. Doc Clark, a former physician or advanced medical student, was jailed a year, falsely accused of performing an illegal abortion. He became an engineer in the New Jersey Telephone Company. Though of an eccentric disposition, he, among many other tasks, capably and reliably recruited and made the arrangements for speakers to address the forums which involved a lot of time and correspondence.

The fellow workers Ruggerio and Petricelli, both on welfare, carried on intensive propaganda, protest demonstrations, pressurized welfare agency bureaucrats for more help. It still pains me, when I recall eating a sumptuous meal as guests of Ruggerio while two or three of his little ones hungrily eyed the delicious goodies. They were admonished by their father: "Remember. We must always be hospitable to our guests."

"Red Danton" (real name Purcelli) was a veteran wobbly, a very active member organizer of the agricultural workers around Wichita, Kansas. He recalled how he "highjacked the highjackers." The "harvest stiff" (agricultural workers) traveling in empty boxcars to and from jobs were forced to hand over their wages to the "highjackers." Red Danton highjacked the highjackers and returned the money to the harvest stiff. The card sharp gambler was likewise forced to return his phony winnings. In those days the harvest stiff, to ride the rails, had to show his "passport," the little red wobbly membership book, or get off. Danton and the Wichita wobbles were arrested, framed on a phony charge in a phony trial and jailed as were the Chicago wobbles in 1918.

Danton belonged to the United Rubber Workers Union. While picketing during a strike, he beat up a scab who tried to attack him. His union did practically nothing to defend him or help his family while he was in jail. I and my wife Esther took up a collection to help his family. I urged the New York IWW General Defense Committee to allot some money from its class-war prisoners fund. Danton's outstanding record in the IWW in behalf of the oppressed for which he was jailed for years, the fact that he was involved in a legitimate strike—a real class-war prisoner—all that was ignored. To their everlasting shame they

refused to help his family on the flimsy, shabby pretext that Danton "was not a class-war prisoner." Both Danton and his wife have been dead these many years. As I pen these lines about half a century later, this flagrant breach of elementary solidarity still sickens me.

Although I was not involved in the internal affairs of the Newark IWW, I deplored a number of unfortunate factors, developments which finally led to the disintegration of the Newark local. Good relations between militants began to deteriorate. Doc Clark and another member who lived in his apartment were hardly on speaking terms. Because of domestic friction Clark moved to New York. Since there was no one else to recruit speakers, the weekly forums upon which the branch depended were abandoned. The active fellow workers Ruggiero and Petricelli were also no longer on friendly terms. A number of religious Catholics dropped out of the IWW because, as mentioned earlier, they did not like songs like "The Preacher and the Slave" and "Christians at War" published in the IWW song book. Temporary welfare project workers moved to other locations or dropped out because there were no longer wobblies around to encourage sustained interest. With no one around to explain the fundamental difference between the IWW and the CIO, prospective members believed that the CIO too, in addition to vastly better advantages, also championed industrial unionism.

## REVIVING THE IWW

In 1974 or 1975, I, and a number of other fellow workers, confronted with the inability of the IWW to establish a foothold in industry, or even hold on to the shops we did organize in the 1930s when sentiment for organization was at its height, submitted constructive suggestions for discussion to the membership (which I drew up).

The IWW cannot possibly compete with the wealthy, powerfully entrenched AFL-CIO conservative, pro-capitalist unions for the allegiance of the workers. IWW organizers first trained in the IWW, when they were so badly needed for wobbly organizing

campaigns, left to work for the AFL-CIO for much better pay and permanent positions. Many CIO organizers boasted that they were former wobbly organizers.

In the early 1950s Cleveland Metal and Machinery Industrial Union No. 440, which had successfully organized shops in the Cleveland, Ohio, area launched an organizing campaign in Torrington and Bridgeport, Connecticut. Organizer Anderson left in the midst of the campaign to take a well-paid job in the CIO as organizer. Because of unscrupulous tactics and the stressing of the superior advantages of joining the AFL-CIO, the IWW lost control of the shops it had organized and held for so many years.

Revolutionary unions cannot possibly provide the conservative worker interested only in "What's in it for me?" with the benefits that a "legitimate respectable" union is able to provide: strike benefits, annuities, pensions, health and life insurance, vacation and retirement benefits, an adequate staff to administer the "welfare" programs, a capable legal staff to draw up contracts and defend the union in the courts, plenty of money to pay for all these and many other services, a "responsible" union enjoying the respect of the employers, who are willing to sign contracts with it, as well as the respect of the government.

It should be obvious that workers most likely to join the IWW are the unconscious rebels who, by direct action, *themselves* call and settle strikes, without the interference of any outside agency whatever, reject tricky contracts cunningly imposed by top union officials, disobey anti-labor laws and resist government regulation.

These demands and these tactics practically duplicate those voiced by the IWW since its inception in 1905. Today's rebels should be most receptive to our message because it relates to their own experience and because the IWW is itself a rebel "wildcat" movement. If the IWW is to become a potent force challenging capitalist "business unionism" it will have to go all-out to reach the rebels.

Regardless of changing circumstances—primarily the growing weakness of the unions and the immensely powerful counter-offensive of international capitalism to rob the workers of the gains which their valiant class struggles *forced* the capitalists to

grant—our revolutionary convictions are more timely than ever if we continue to proclaim the international solidarity of labor, continue to “fan the flames of discontent,” with “Solidarity Forever” the guiding, inspiring watchword of the IWW.

At this writing, I note with pleasure that our very capable and energetic fellow workers Rochelle Semel and Paul Poulos and a few others have at last succeeded, after intensive efforts, in organizing a new, flourishing IWW branch in New York City and encouraged initiatives to organize branches in Washington, DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia and upstate New York. The new branch, in solidarity with other rebellious groups, is actively participating in protests, demonstrations and rallies involving a wide range of social issues. I have myself addressed joint rallies on behalf of the striking British miners and political prisoners here and abroad. New branches have also been organized in Alaska by dissident rank-and-file fellow workers Goodman and Chris White, fighting dictatorship and racketeering in the Laborers’ and other unions, as well as a branch organized by fellow worker Ruth Sheridan in Anchorage.

Those taking an altogether too pessimistic view of the possibilities for the revival of the IWW, holding that its principles and tactics are no longer relevant, should take note of the fact that rank-and-file oppositionists like Goodman and Chris White in the Laborers’ Union and Paul Poulos in the Teamsters for a Democratic Union concluded that the program, principles and tactics of the IWW best corresponded to their own experience and aspirations and joined the organization. It is surely worth noting, in passing, that the now world-famous Living Theatre joined and gave a special benefit performance to raise money for the IWW.

## ISRAEL

In the mid-1970s Esther and I embarked on a two-week tour of Israel, not merely to see the sights, but to contact our anarchist comrades publishing their organ *Problemen*. We also wanted to contact Israeli settlers whom we already knew at home. We felt that the trip was all the more necessary because

altogether too many comrades did not even know that there were a few anarchist groups in Israel, much less an anarchist publication there.

We immediately contacted the editor of *Problemen*, Joseph Ludin, a prolific writer, himself an anarchist refugee from Poland. Ludin and the comrades were most hospitable. "You are most welcome to stay with us and save hotel bills." We spent some time at Ludin's home in Tel-Aviv where we were informed about the situation in Israel and what our comrades were trying to do. A little later we were escorted to the anarchist center in Tel-Aviv, a good-sized hall with an impressive library of Hebrew, Yiddish and a sprinkling of Russian and Polish literature, a well-equipped kitchen and other conveniences.

It was at the center where we had the pleasure of meeting Dina, the widow of the unforgettable Polish anarchist Eliesor Hirshauge. Dina lived on the premises and took care of the hall. She presented us with an autographed copy of Eliesor's work, *The Anarchist Movement in Poland: Memoirs and Comments*. The little book is really a most important work, a primary source which should be translated into English and other idioms. Dina passed away a few years ago. The center was closed and the books donated to libraries.

While in Israel we were anxious to meet F. Hochhauser Armony, listed in the directory as a "teacher of languages." I greatly enjoyed reading his dispatches and articles in the Spanish anarchist periodicals *Solidaridad Obrera*, *CNT*, and other anarchist journals. Armony was a talented and prolific writer who, before coming to Israel, lived in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and other countries. He and his comrade, Simcha Hamburg, now co-editor of *Problemen*, spent a few hours with us at our hotel in Haifa. Armony was by no means an uncritical Israeli patriot as were so many settlers, but he deeply deplored the attitudes of many anarchists who, while rightfully condemning Israeli nationalism and chauvinism, ignored the atrocities committed by the Arab tyrants against their own subjects. We mourned his death a few years ago.

We noted considerable interest in anarchism in student circles manifested in conversations with students we met at the universities in Haifa and in Tel-Aviv. Ludin, Dina and other

comrades informed us that the anarchist center was overcrowded for the occasional discussion meetings. All the young people we talked with violently denounced the outrageous conduct of the fanatical orthodox Jews. In their attitude toward women, their contempt for legal restrictions and traditional conservative attitudes toward sex and parental authority, the young Israeli rebels are just as, if not more advanced than the young nonconformists elsewhere.

We came across quite a few Israeli imperialists who insisted that Israel should by force of arms reconquer territories which they claimed belonged to Israel thousands of years ago. However, sentiment for peace was so intense that many Israelis would gladly make peace even if further concessions had to be made.

Although Israeli Arabs are entitled to the same legal rights as other Israeli citizens, there are, unfortunately, many Israelis who mistreat their Arab neighbors as "inferior" menials fit only to do the low paid "dirty work" which nobody else wants. They look upon the Arabs somewhat like American racists do negroes. (The Jewish fascist Rabbi Kahane was lately elected to the Israeli legislature, the Knesset.)

We felt better about all this when we visited the Jerusalem studio of our old friend the artist Rohr whom we knew in New York. Rohr is not an anarchist, but his tolerant humanistic attitude impressed us. Rohr maintained that if Israeli Jews were ever to attain good relations with the Arabs here in Israel, their whole attitude toward them must change. They must adopt a truly brotherly attitude toward their Arab neighbors in Israel, learn to live together in mutual esteem and respect as equals.

Rohr did not merely preach, but lived his ideals. He conducted his life in accordance with the noblest libertarian traditions of the pioneers who built the Israeli kibbutzim. When he made his periodic trips to the United States and other countries to sell his paintings (we have a few) and deliver talks about life in Israel, *all* the proceeds went, not to him, but to his kibbutz. Unfortunately we could not accept his invitation to visit his kibbutz. I do not know what happened to him or to his family, but did hear that they suffered a number of misfortunes.

## THE ISRAELI ANARCHISTS

*Problemen*, the first bi-monthly periodical of the Israeli anarchists whose first editor was the Russian Jewish anarchist Abba Gordin (deceased), was originally published in both Yiddish and Hebrew, the official language of Israel. I was told that *Problemen* was no longer published in Hebrew, only in Yiddish, which many, if not most, Israelis did not understand, because there were not enough capable Hebrew anarchist writers and, more importantly, that *Problemen* was really an international periodical: the only surviving Yiddish language paper in the world. In view of this, *Problemen* publishes cultural, historical, literary articles and essays and news of common interest to the former readers of the defunct Yiddish anarchist papers. Comments on Israeli problems are usually found in the editorial article. There is no official policy or formal statement of principles. Important points are summed up in the following extracts:

Everyone knows that by us in Israel there is no shortage of demagogues and liars. The government ruined the economy, spread chauvinism, reinforced the power of the clergy, sharpened the enmity between us and the Arab people. . . . We deplore the hypocrisy of the Israeli Labor Party. They blame the Begin government for everything, but they have themselves been guilty of the same crimes when they were in power.

We know from our own experience that politicians and diplomats neither will, or can, ever achieve peace between nations. They find it easier to make war than to make peace. A state of peace involves understanding and agreement between peoples, not capitulation of one party to another. But peace is never made in good faith or without ulterior motives. This is why it would be easier to conclude peace with the Arab people than with their rulers. To achieve this we must renounce ruling the Arab people in Israel, abandon our snobbish attitude, and together with them live in brotherhood.

(In this connection we were impressed by the declaration of an old settler in a kibbutz we visited that the pioneer settlers in Israel were welcomed and assisted by their Arab neighbors *before, not after* the Israeli state was established.)

As far as the eleventh election campaign of both the reactionary and liberal parties to the Knesset is concerned, we know full well that both these parties are ideologically bankrupt, without social vision. Their one aim is the conquest of power. Their party and personal interests are, for them, more important than the interests of the people. Neither one nor the other will solve the difficult problems facing Israel. Neither one nor the other has a constructive social program for the people; obliterate the gulf between the few rich and the many poor or establish peaceful relations with the Arabs living in Israel. Neither one nor the other will, or is able to do away with the bureaucratic state apparatus; end the shameful parliamentary intrigues which are for both blocs necessary to promote their political careers and secure for themselves well paid and privileged posts.

Especially tragic for the Israeli masses is the domination of the minority of orthodox religious politicians over the majority of the people. Their hooligans terrorize the non-religious citizens, stone passing vehicles violating the Sabbath. They connive to obtain for themselves the best well paying job in the state agencies, supporting administrations that give them more. The religious politicians blackmail both the liberal and reactionary parties to grant their demands in exchange for their indispensable support in coalition governments. All this, and more, is why even the most "liberal" parties are, for their own self-interest, unwilling and unable to curtail the power of the ultra-religious well-organized power bloc. This can only be accomplished by organizing free *non-party* people's clubs to protect them from religious domination.

Unfortunately, the Israeli masses, the only ones able to break up this criminal alliance between the powerful, all-pervasive governmental bureaucracy, the military adventurers, the ultra-reactionary clergy and the capitalists, are psychologically and educationally unable to revolutionize Israeli society. As children they are already indoctrinated to blindly obey their parents, their elders, their "revered leaders." Later, they are taught never to question the "revealed truths" hammered into their heads by their teachers and their "superiors." They are taught that for "success in life" they must conform to things as they are, to respect authority—never revolt.

What has become of the libertarian grass-roots people's movements that flourished *before* the establishment of the Israeli state—the communes, the settlements, the kibbutzim, the cooperatives, the self-managed workers industrial and agricultural enterprises? . . . The constructive libertarian institutions are now becoming

increasingly corrupted by the cult of state centralization. Now, over thirty years later, we see how heavy a price in freedom of action, in loss of morale, in creativity, in self-management, the Israeli people are paying for their submission to the state; a swollen bureaucracy, the continuing degeneration of the kibbutzim into de facto capitalist enterprises with low-paid wage labor, private property, production for profit and the other "blessings" of capitalism.

In spite of all this, the Israeli comrades are forced, like the other tendencies, to accept the fact that Israel must be defended. The day after the proclamation of the state of Israel (15 May 1948) Assam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, threatened that: "This will be a war of extermination and momentous massacres like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades." In discussion with Israeli anarchists it was emphasized that the unilateral dismantling of the Israeli state would not at all be anarchistic. It would, on the contrary, only reinforce the immense power of the Arab states and actually expedite their plans for the conquest of Israel.

Israel is a tiny, impoverished land lacking the indispensable military and economic resources to defend itself without outside help. Its very existence depends upon the military, financial and economic support of the United States, and, if need be, its direct military intervention. It is to all intents and purposes reduced to the status of a satellite subject to the control of the United States.

Far from curtailing the concentrated power of the state, the necessity for defense of Israel—freely acknowledged by our comrades—depends upon putting into effect the indispensable military, economic, legislative and social measures needed to keep Israel in a permanent state of war preparation. Such war preparations, instead of lessening, only accelerate the trend toward despotism, the permanent characteristic of every state. The Israeli anarchists (and they are not the only ones, the non-anarchists too) know only too well that curtailing the power of the state under such circumstances offers no real alternative. But they do feel their moral obligation as anarchists to resist as much as they can the growing despotism of the Israeli state.

Since "politicians and dictators" will not, and cannot in good faith, conclude peace with Israel, it would not, as claimed

by *Problemén*, be at all easy, but actually *impossible* to consummate peace with the Arab *people*. To achieve a true accord and alliance with the Arab people, the Arab masses would have to defy their rulers by refusing to obey their commands. This the backward, fanatically religious Arab masses, who are by no means more progressive and perhaps more reactionary than their rulers, are not inclined to do. With relatively few honorable exceptions, the majority of Arabs hate the "Israeli invaders." Under such deplorable circumstances "peace and brotherhood" between Arab and Israeli people is doubtless a laudable but impractical proposal. But it is still their moral obligation, as anarchists, to plant by word of mouth and by example, that voluntary cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity of all peoples in brotherhood must, and can eventually be achieved.

There is no anarchist movement in Israel. If Joseph Ludin could no longer edit the paper, there would be no one to replace him and *Problemén*, the only anarchist paper in Israel, would disappear. Yet the few aging comrades courageously continue to propagandize the necessity for the disappearance of the state, to be replaced by free local, provincial, national and international federations and confederations of free peoples. They know, of course, that our ideal cannot be realized in the foreseeable future. But for them, the essence of anarchism as a living movement of the people is to stimulate the spirit of revolt and influence movements for the free society in an anarchistic direction.

This is a realistic policy. A small, but growing movement of progressive workers, radical minded students and oppressed feudal agricultural toilers in revolt against political-social-economic despotism is, however faintly, beginning to emerge. Many of these rebels (I met quite a few in American academic circles on my tours) are receptive to anarchist ideas.

Iran is a good example. As I write these lines I read a graphic report by the Iranian militant Alexander Bazarov in the Canadian anarchist journal *Strike!* (February 1985). The headline "STRIKE WAVE SWEEPS IRAN: A CLASS RE-AWAKENS!" refers to a month-long strike of twenty thousand workers in the great iron industry of Ispahan. During the height of the strike, the workers detained the management inside the

plants as hostages. This strike was by no means an isolated incident. In the past six months there were a hundred spontaneous rank-and-file workers' strikes.

In another article in the Iranian bimonthly émigré journal *Ezane Azad* (The Free Man) dedicated toward the spread of anarchist ideas among the exiled Iranian community we are informed that "The courageous individuals and groups both inside and outside of Iran continue to organize for the overthrow of religious autocracy."

We left Israel in the hope that the inspiring efforts of the little band of comrades, struggling against such great odds, will be encouraged and sustained.

## IN SPAIN

The paucity of news about the revival of the anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labor—CNT—after Franco's death led a number of American anarchists to launch the Libertarian Press Service and organize a national information tour by Augustin Souchy, a prominent anarcho-syndicalist who headed the Foreign Language Information Service during the Spanish Civil War and Revolution (1936–1939) in Barcelona. Souchy was very well acquainted with the Spanish labor and revolutionary movements long before the outbreak of the Revolution and was fluent in both Spanish and English as well as other languages. In spite of his advanced age (we celebrated his eighty-sixth birthday) he agreed to make the tour.

In 1976 we also launched an information journal, *News from Libertarian Spain*, edited by Abe Bluestein, Murray Bookchin, Gabriel Javsisus and myself. Javsisus died suddenly of a heart attack and Bookchin did not participate, leaving Bluestein and myself to edit our paper. Later the name was changed to *Anarchist News*. The excellent make-up and valuable information, not otherwise available in English, was highly praised. But the praise was not accompanied by the funds needed to sustain the paper. Despite our best efforts we were forced to suspend publication in 1982.

In publishing our paper we were helped by young Spanish

comrades temporarily in the United States: a Barcelona graduate physician and his *compañera*, a biologist on leave to Columbia University, who spent a full day guiding us while we were in Barcelona; he spoke fluent English. A young Spanish comrade, María Rodríguez Gil, who graduated from elementary school in the United States, merits special acknowledgment for her tireless cooperation. Spanish comrades working for Iberia Airlines came to see us during the short span between flights. Another year-long propaganda tour was made by Miguel Mesa, a former employee of Iberia Airlines again employed by the airline when he returned to Spain.

To meet our Spanish comrades and gather first-hand information about the Spanish situation, my *compañera* Esther and I spent a few weeks in Madrid, Barcelona and Malaga. What follows could be called a joint report, supplemented by some remarks on the situation in Spain at this writing.

## BARCELONA

On 2 October 1977 my *compañero*, Sam Dolgoff, and I—as in a dream—found ourselves on a plane bound for Spain. Through the long years of Franco's repressive regime we worried about the plight of the valiant comrades of the Spanish labor movement who kept the fascist hordes and their allies at bay and began to institute a new world order based on libertarian principles. Franco is dead! But lo and behold, the brave fighters for freedom left many seeds and now the CNT blossoms again! Now Sam and I are in Spain to hear and see with our own eyes the great awakening. Tens of thousands of young people, the children and grandchildren of the Civil War fighters proclaim their true identity with the CNT and the anarchists!

It is truly amazing to see how eager people are to buy and read books and pamphlets on serious social and political subjects hitherto unobtainable under Franco; books on history, politics, sociology, psychology, classics and avant-garde literature fill bookstores and open-air booths all over Barcelona's famous *Ramblas*, where huge crowds ceaselessly promenade and browse. Sam's *Bakunin on Anarchy* is displayed everywhere. The Spanish title is *Anarquía segun Bakunin*.

We visited the offices of Tusquets Editor, a commercial publisher of social, historical, progressive and radical literature. We were royally welcomed by the staff. One of the chief editors whom we liked immediately was Beatriz De Maura, a Brazilian anarchist sympathizer who fluently spoke a delightfully accented English. I complained that not only had they published my book without permission, but did not even send me a copy, to say nothing at all about sizable royalties I was entitled to from the sale of my book in Spain and abroad.

Beatriz explained that Tusquets did not have my address: "We will, of course, be glad to give you the royalties as soon as we can determine how much is owed. This will take a day or two. In the meantime, you are cordially invited to your birthday party which we will celebrate tomorrow. Here is the address of the restaurant . . . congratulations on your seventy-fifth birthday!"

When asked how she knew this she replied vaguely that the news does get around. The day after the sumptuous dinner a staff member came to our hotel, made a royalty payment of 500 dollars in US currency and arranged for me to write a short introduction to Augustin Souchy's *Among the Peasants in Aragon* (translated into English and published in 1982).

At Tusquets we met Mary Nash, whose book *Mujeres Libres* (Free Women) is, like my book, also in its third edition. Mary Nash, born in Ireland, besides now working on a more extensive history of women in the revolutionary labor movements, is also an instructor of history at a college. She is the mother of a baby girl. She offered her services as translator for which we are most grateful.

At the headquarters of the Regional Federation of Catalonia CNT (writes Esther) I met a very young woman who spoke English. She told me that the women's liberation movement in Spain was in its infancy:

Don't be misled by the women you see in our halls. They are really the exception. Our Spanish women are still clinging, in the main, to old ideas and customs. However progress is being made. And I must tell you that as far as I am concerned, I am for legal abortion, but I do not think that nature has played a mean trick by making us mothers. I do think that we do not want to become walking

incubators. . . . At first the women in our union were against the men. It was sexism in reverse, but we are getting over it. We realize that we cannot make the revolution all by ourselves. . . . Men and women, all, must work together. . . .

In Barcelona we met Miguel García, for twenty years "Franco's Prisoner" (this is the title of his book describing his experiences—available in English). Garcia died of tuberculosis in 1983. We also met our long-time friend and correspondent, the English militant Albert Meltzer. He too, like the rest of us, was there to draw inspiration from the revival of our movement. He is fluent in Spanish. We were his guests a year or two later when we came, at his invitation, to England for a few weeks. While we were in the CNT local hall in Barcelona a number of younger comrades were trying to take back the CNT premises confiscated by the fascists which the authorities now refuse to return.

The euphoria of the Spanish people following the death of Franco does not mean that the reactionary fascist forces have capitulated. They are quietly but surely still going about their business of arresting and imprisoning militants. Thus, when we came to visit an anarchist professor to exchange views about our movement, his wife slowly and carefully opened the door. Her husband had fled their home. She would take us to him. A neighbor and a comrade in the same building had been arrested on suspicion of robbing a bank, but there was no definite charge. Since our comrade had just been released from prison where he had been tortured during prolonged interrogations he thought it precautionary to go into hiding. His brave wife led us to him.

Although on a smaller scale than previously, house arrests of CNT militants continue to be fairly common. The Barcelona CNT allots 1,000 pesetas weekly in addition to food and clothing for the prisoner's families and 500 pesetas weekly to the prisoners themselves. A percentage of the dues is allotted for this purpose.

## MADRID

CNT centers are closed during the day when everyone is at work. But they come to life around 7 P.M. and stay open until

midnight, bubbling with enthusiasm and activity, crowded with young people mingling with older comrades. One of the American comrades keeps on repeating that it is easier to see the President of the United States than some of the union "bureaucrats." But here in Spain it was easy to meet the Secretary of the National Committee of the CNT, Juan Gómez Casas, in spite of the fact that he was a very busy man. When I told him that people were worried about bureaucracy, he replied: "I work all day at my trade to support my family. . . . All the work for the CNT is voluntary and unpaid. I can hardly wait till another comrade takes my place and relieves me of my burden to do his share. . . . Just don't worry about bureaucracy in the CNT. . . ."

In Madrid we visited the offices of the anarchist publishing collective Campo Abierto (Open Field). The collective publishes anarchist books, pamphlets and other literature at the lowest possible prices, making good literature affordable to poorly paid workers. Campo Abierto will publish Sam's book about the Cuban Revolution in December or January (it was published a few months after our return). The members of the collective, including a number of capable women, work very hard.

While we were in the Campo Abierto office we met the anarchist militant writer Louis Mercier Vega, with whom Sam has been in correspondence for at least twenty-five years. We also met Marianne Enckell, the librarian of the International Center for Anarchist Research in Geneva, Switzerland. Several months later Marianne wrote us that Vega had, for unclear reasons, committed suicide after arranging for disposal of his remains and affairs.

Vega was a prolific writer, an expert on Latin American affairs, on the situation and the problems of the international labor and anarchist movements, and at the time of his death founder and editor of *Interrogations*, a very high quality journal of opinion and analysis. At Vega's request I wrote several articles. Articles were printed in the original languages—French, German, Italian, Spanish and English with résumés in the other languages.

In Madrid we interviewed the veteran anarcho-syndicalist militant in the Civil War and Revolution, writer, historian, journalist and translator, Diego Abad de Santillán. His studio was

filled with the papers and books he needed for preparing his three-volume history of the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Santillan sharply, to say the least, modified his bitter self-criticism and condemnation of CNT-FAI policies in Spain during the Revolution in Spain during the Revolution in his *Por que perdimos la guerra* (Why or How We Lost the War). When I asked why he so drastically modified his views he replied: "We were beset by innumerable difficulties and did the best we could under the circumstances. There was really no alternative. . . . We did not really lose the war. . . . Anarchism flourishes in the new youth movements . . . in our literature and our traditions."

He looked frail and worn and his hands shook. Santillan passed away a few months after Souchy in 1984. He spent his last days in a Barcelona nursing home after a long and fruitful career. He lives in the hearts and the minds of his comrades and the hundreds of thousands of readers inspired and enlightened by his writings.

The very capable member of the National Committee of the CNT responsible for international correspondence and information, José Elizarde, in fluent English, attributed the disparity between the relatively few active CNT members and the hundreds of thousands who in spectacular rallies hailed the CNT, to the euphoric wave of enthusiasm following the death of Franco. The romantic revolutionary tradition and the exploits of the anarchists appealed to the marginal groups not directly affiliated to the CNT—ecology, feminist liberation, sexual freedom, artist communes, etc.—that make up the Spanish equivalent of the fictitious "counter-culture." By far most of the members of these groups are restless romantics continually shifting from one group to another in search of a thrill. They are not really interested or psychologically prepared to tackle the slow, unglamorous, laborious task of building a serious revolutionary movement.

In respect to the Spanish labor movement the position of the CNT as expounded in its official organ *CNT* and in the informed opinion of militants with whom I spoke is as follows: the Spanish unions, in line with the class-collaborationist partnership between the unions, the employers and the government, are instituting the *Pacto Social*, a form of "workers' consulta-

tion" prevalent in capitalist democracies like Germany, Sweden and England, where the union leaders participate in the exploitation of the workers, and the unions in turn are dominated by the political parties. Power will rest not with the rank-and-file assemblies of the workers but with union officials who will exercise their power to build up a machine to perpetuate themselves in office. Like the parliamentary system, the electoral process to be introduced in the unions is actually a *de facto* dictatorship periodically renewed in elections.

The benefits dispensed by the government and the employers to the unions for their cooperation in stabilizing Spanish capitalism, plus the substantial resources of the Socialist Party-controlled UGT (General Union of Workers) and the Communist Party-dominated CC-OO (Workers' Commissions), supplied by the socialist parties of Europe and the Soviet Union respectively, give them a great advantage over the CNT which has no such backing.

A serious impediment to the growth of the CNT is that 90 percent of the members are inexperienced young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. There is very little connection between them and the historical traditions, ideology and struggles of the CNT, because a whole generation of militants who could have guided the young members have long since passed away. The little layer of militants who survived in the anti-Franco underground are unable to bridge the generation gap.

In addition to these obstacles the CNT is forced to contend with the ex-CNT "renovados" who split away from the CNT in favor of adopting substantially the same class-collaborationist policies as the socialist and communist parties, retaining, with democratic trimmings, the arrangements initiated by the Franco regime.

The "renovados" repudiated the anarcho-syndicalist IWA (International Workers' Association) in favor of alliances with reformist organizations. The "renovados" fraudulently appropriated the name, seal and official organ of the legitimate CNT in the hope that they, with the help of the Socialist Party government, will receive the eighteen million pesetas owed the CNT for Franco's expropriation of CNT premises.

The CNT is valiantly resisting the combined power of the reformist unions and the political parties to destroy the organization because the CNT exposes their anti-working class policies. Although the CNT is a minority movement it richly deserves the respect and the solidarity of the oppressed. As the most radical organization in Spain its credentials cannot be questioned.

## FREESPACE

Freespace Alternate U (1972–1979) was an open anarchist group that grew out of the free-school movement at the time of the anti-Vietnam War protests. It was a center for studies and actions on the ways and means of liberation. Classes, lectures, and all sorts of events took place seven days a week in its home in the War Resisters' League Building at 339 Lafayette Street. There might simultaneously be a class in solar energy, a lecture on anarchist theory, a planning meeting for an antinuclear action, a videotape workshop, and a meeting of one of the human-liberation movements. In some weeks, 100 or more people would participate in Freespace events. Also, Freespace was the co-sponsor of the 1970s anarchist conferences at Hunter College, the 1976 Bakunin Centennial, and the twenty-fifth anniversary Sacco-Vanzetti vigil at the New York Public Library.

Freespace people opposed the traditional anarchist affinity-group idea, believing that "anarchist membership cards" were not necessary to build a movement. Anyone—regardless of political orientation—could participate in the regular Thursday night meetings or set up a class or happening. There was no censorship, except that the regular meeting took responsibility for the publication, *Freespace*, and for all statements or actions made in the name of the group as a whole. There was no voting and all decisions were made by consensus.

All the comrades in New York came to Freespace at one time or another. Among the speakers were Stanley Aronowitz, Paul Avrich, Abe Bluestein, Dorothy Day, Jack Frager, Bill Koehnlein, the Living Theatre, Nancy Macdonald, and José Peguero. Many friends—not anarchists—also spoke there, among others, Bill Kunstler, Olga Lang, and David McReynolds.

For some years the organ of the group, *Freespace*, was the only weekly anarchist publication in the English-speaking world.

It was ragged in quality—sometimes a very good piece would be next to a very bad piece. The Freespace people were struggling to develop an anarchist journal that would have quality but at the same time would be open to all. This was the same dilemma that *The Road to Freedom* had. A publication in which many people present as many different opinions may serve as an internal discussion document, but it is not very effective in attracting converts to anarchism.

Esther and I were there many times. She once spoke on “The Unknown IWW of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.” I spoke many times and always found an audience eager to learn about anarchism and discuss it. One of my most enjoyable visits was on the occasion of the publication of Paul Avrich’s biography of the great American anarchist, Voltarine de Cleyre.

Some Freespace people are now working in the Anarchist Switchboard at 324 East 9th Street, a group set up to give out anarchist information and to sponsor anarchist events. As of this writing, I am scheduled to talk there soon on “Mutual Aid Through Modern Technology.” In addition, the Radical Walking Tour that began at Freespace is still being carried on by Scott Lewis and Bob Palmer.

## CONCLUSIONS

I wish to close these fragmentary memoirs on a hopeful note. An ex-radical whom I had not seen for many years exclaimed: “You are still at it! . . . I deprived myself, sacrificed everything for the sake of the movement . . . it did no good. Only disillusionment. Wake up!” But I, on the contrary, in spite of inevitable mistakes, disappointments, heartbreaks, feel that my participation in the movement has enriched my life—given me more than I can ever hope to repay.

I am only too well aware of my shortcomings, but I have been able to bear up under such circumstances because people afraid to act because they might make a mistake will never do anything—and that would be the biggest mistake of all.

During these many years I have seen movements grow and movements decline; people come and people leave. But I am sustained by the conviction that the perennial struggle for freedom and social justice will continue.

# FREESPACE

Volume II, Number 4

December 2, 1977

FREESPACE IS A MEMBER GROUP OF S.R.A.F.

FREESPACE ALTERNATE U 339 LAFAYETTE STREET, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10012 (212) 228-0322

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## BECK AND COHN-BENDIT SPEAK IN ROME

Earlier this month Julian Beck of the Living Theater and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the Franco-German anarchist, spoke about the current governmental terror in Europe - and especially in West Germany - following the tragic week that saw the deaths of the hijackers in Somaliland, of the members of the R.A.F. in their cells, and of the industrialist, Hanns Martin Schleyer. A tape on this by Julian was broadcast on Nov. 28th by WBAI and will be rebroadcast later.

Julian said that the atmosphere in Munich was very frightening; that the people of the left that they met kept constantly telling them, "We're afraid, we're afraid." No criticism of the government is now being allowed in West Germany, as witness Julian's own arrest. The government has called for a massive campaign against anarchism, which they equate with terrorism; this seemed to receive the support of almost the entire German populace. The government asked anyone to report any suspicious persons; thousands of denunciations came in to the police. The government continues to call for stronger laws, more police, more order, more support by the citizens.

When Beck, who described himself in the tape as an "anarchist-pacifist," spoke in Rome, members of the Living Theater performed on the stage behind him - each member of the company continuously "shooting" another in the back of the neck. Beck, who was speaking in Italian, described to the 5,000 people present, his arrest in Munich.

...continued on page 2...

## Shamrocks & Roses

Sometimes a letter, or a personal document, or a piece of writing not meant for everyone to see can contain greater political statements than all the revolutionary tracts and broadsides ever issued forth by the theoreticians of the movement. Certainly many more honest feelings and genuine human truths are contained. The Freespace Collective recently received a letter from a political prisoner in Northern Ireland. The letter was smuggled out of Long Kesh prison, which is rather well-known as a torture chamber for revolutionaries and political dissidents. It was written on toilet paper, because inmates there (those in solitary confinement, anyway) are allowed only two letters per month, one page each. This letter was sent originally to his lover in the United States, who in turn sent it to us, asking that it be publicized. An accompanying letter from his sister in Belfast provides a little background. His family is constantly harassed by the

...continued on page 2...

The Mental Patients' Liberation Project (MPLP) is at Freespace Alternate U. You may write, phone, or leave messages there: (212) 228-0322. Or, come down to the workshop on Friday nights from 6:15 to 8 p.m.

☐ IF THIS BOX IS RED, then time is running out. You should write to FREESPACE now or be dropped from the mailing list. Simply send in the coupon and whatever you can afford to keep the news coming for six months.

Above and top of page 169: cover and portion of page 2 of Vol. II, No. 4 of *Freespace*.

## BECK AND COHN-BENDIT

.....continued from page 1

In Seven Meditations on Political Sado-Masochism, which delineates the sadistic nature of the modern state and its culture, there is a scene in which one member of the company is put on the Parrot's Perch and tortured with electrodes. (This actually happened to one of the members of the Living Theater in Brazil.) After the scene Julian denounced the use of torture against political prisoners in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, West Germany, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Israel, and 52 other countries. The special torture used in West Germany, he said, is the "white torture," that is, isolation for long periods in a soundproof cell. Julian was in jail for nine hours under interrogation and posted approximately \$1,000 bond. The trial will be in his absence, but he expects to be found guilty.

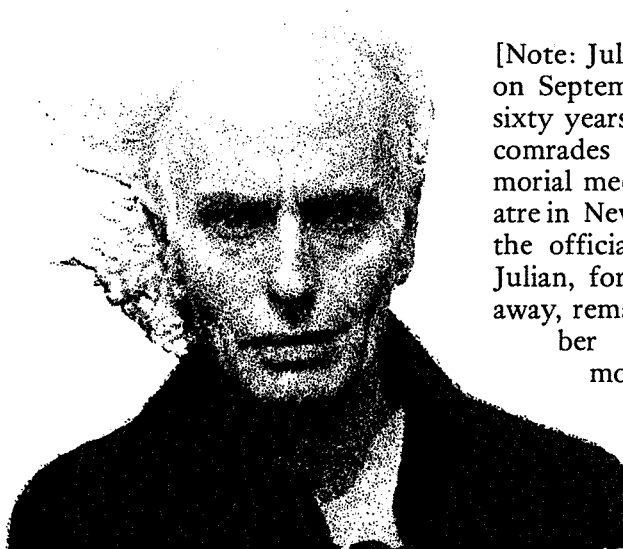
The only public protest in Munich against the governmental terror was a silent march of 100 to 150 people to protest Julian's arrest. But there were large demonstrations in Bonn and Stuttgart, at one of which 20,000 people were present.

Julian remarked that "we are caught up in a system of violence." All over the world the power structure has been escalating the use of violence against people, including torture, the taking of hostages, and the murder of innocents. Horst Mahler, the left-wing lawyer now in Moabit prison in Berlin, recently said in an interview that the R.A.F. (the Baader-Meinhof Group) began as a response to the slaughter by the U.S. Army at My Lai.

Julian concluded his talk in Rome by saying that "we do not want to plan revolution that will lead people to a bloodbath" and that "it is a myth that violence can be destroyed by violence." He said that we must push the sexual revolution, because violence is a substitute for love, which is repressed.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit spoke in sympathy for the members of the R.A.F., but criticized their methods as untenable. He stated that he was opposed to the death penalty - whether it is effected by the government or by "us." He also said, "The new world must be demonstrated by the means we use."

-Bob



Julian Beck

[Note: Julian Beck died of cancer on September 14, 1985. He was sixty years old. I was one of the comrades who addressed a memorial meeting at the Joyce Theatre in New York and transmitted the official regrets of the IWW. Julian, for years until he passed away, remained a dedicated member of the IWW. Some months before he was hospitalized, I attended the Living Theater's performance of the classic drama *Antigone*.]



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LEAGUE

## VIEWS & COMMENTS

New York City

May 1955

Number 3

Today and yesterday are never very far apart; seventy years ago, workers gathered together to celebrate another May Day, and the issues were drawn as sharply as they are today.

Then, it was such an issue as the eight hour day; an issue which was a very serious one at that time. The workers had tried legislative remedies, and they had tried negotiation, but not until direct economic action and solidarity that cut across all artificial boundaries between the workers, was there success.

This is what happened in May, 1886, and what led to it.

By a resolution of the Knights of Labor, and the Federation of Organized Trade and Labor Unions, the historic date of May 1st was set as the day for the general inception of the eight hour day. For more than two years, intensive work had been going on to prepare the way; and opposition in the capitalist world had grown equally fast.

The New York Times, May 1st, 1886. "Strikes to enforce the demand for eight hours work a day cannot succeed."

This was said as 340,000 workers went on strike in all the major cities of the nation, for the eight hour day. A week before there had been a tremendous mass meeting in Chicago, addressed by Parsons, Spies, Fielden, Schwab, and others.

In Chicago, there was immediate success; more than 45,000 workers gained the eight hour day at once when they struck. But in many other areas the strike continued through May 1st, and went on. Lumber, iron and steel, shoe manufacturing, and others rejected the demands of the workers, and organized their own united front to crush the unions.

On Monday, May 3rd, police and Pinkertons broke up meetings and clubbed workers; every way of breaking the strikes was brought into use. By Monday afternoon police had fired on crowds of unarmed workmen, and six were dead. And within hours after the murders August Spies' leaflet went out to the workers of Chicago.

"...They killed them because they dared to ask for the shortening of their hours of toil. They killed them to show you 'Free Americans' that you must be satisfied and content with whatever your bosses condescend to allow you, or you will be killed."

The third issue of *Views and Comments* (mimeographed).

# Appendix A

*The following extracts from various issues of Views and Comments are meant to indicate the nature of our publication.*

## HORSE'S MOUTH DEPARTMENT

"The Challenge of Political Courage" was the title of an article which appeared some time back in the magazine section of the *New York Times* . . . [by] John F. Kennedy, Democratic senator from Massachusetts. He played a big part in the last Democratic National Convention . . . [and] also wrote a widely read book, *Profiles in Courage*. . . . He shows that [for a legislator] there are too many temptations, too many political obligations that must be paid. The path of true virtue is rocky and straying from the straight and narrow road is easy. We will let the senator state his difficulties in his own words. . . . Kennedy gives a few examples:

"People don't give a damn," a syndicated columnist told millions of readers not so many years ago, "what the average senator or congressman thinks. The reason they don't care is that they know what you hear in Congress is 99% tripe, ignorance and demagoguery, and not to be relied upon . . ."

Kennedy should not go too hard on the columnist for he admits that this feeling is shared by "too many Americans," including quite a few senators, and even a cabinet member in a former administration from whose diary he quotes:

While I am reluctant to believe in the total depravity of the Senate, I place but little dependence on the honesty and truthfulness of a large portion of the senators. A majority of them are small lights, mentally weak, and wholly unfit to be senators. Some are vulgar demagogues, some are men of wealth who have purchased their positions. . . . [Some are] men of narrow intellect, limited comprehension, and low partisan prejudice . . .

The senator also quotes Walter Lippmann who, "after nearly a half century of careful observation rendered a harsh judgment both on the politician and the electorate." Says Lippmann:

With exceptions so rare that they are regarded as miracles of nature, successful democratic politicians are insecure and intimidated men. They advance politically only as they placate, appease, bribe, seduce,

bamboozle, or otherwise manage to manipulate the demanding elements in their constituencies . . .

Another pressure is the necessity for the legislator to get along with his fellow members. Kennedy compares the Senate to a club where one is expected to abide by the "rules and patterns, not to pursue a unique and independent course which would embarrass or irritate the other members. . . . 'The way to get along,' I was told, 'is to "go along."'"

"Going along" means following the party leadership. If the senator dares to do what is right he is blackballed and, worst of all, he arouses the antagonism of the contributors to his campaign fund. He must, according to Kennedy, reckon with the fact that he will not be reelected if he doesn't behave himself. Not to be reelected can have severe repercussions. The senator lists some of them:

Defeat is not only a setback for the senator himself. . . . He is also obliged to consider the effect upon the party he supports, upon his friends and contributors who have gone out on a limb for him or invested their savings in his career . . .

. . . But, strange to say, the list of resignations from the Senate or any other legislative body is practically nonexistent. The politicians do not seem to mind the drawbacks—on the contrary, they rather like it. Kennedy is objective. He lists some of the advantages as follows:

Few senators "retire to Pocatello" by choice. The virus of Potomac Fever, which rages everywhere in Washington, breeds nowhere in more virulent form than on the Senate floor. The prospect of forced retirement from the "most exclusive club in the world," the possibilities of giving up the interesting work, the fascinating trappings and the impressive prerogatives of Congressional office, can cause even the most courageous politician serious loss of sleep.

Kennedy had inadvertently let the cat out of the bag. Seldom have we had the pleasure of reading a first hand report of what goes on behind the scenes. The evils of the parliamentary system which were exposed by such Libertarian militants as Bakunin, Proudhon, Kropotkin, Godwin, Malatesta, Mella and many others, are fully substantiated by Kennedy. . . .

[No. 17, September 1956]

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## CUBA: REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

[To outline the position of the anarchists in the controversy with the pro-Castroites, *Views and Comments* translated this concise summation pub-

lished in *Acción Libertaria*, organ of the Argentine Libertarian Federation (Buenos Aires, July 1961).]

To cleanse the country of the abuses of the regime that has been overthrown—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to establish terror for the shameless, pitiless extermination of those who will not conform to the new dictatorship—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To assume the direct participation of the people in all of the new creations and accomplishments—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to dictate by decree how things should be done and to canalize the accomplishments under the iron control of the state—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To seize the lands for and by those who work them, organizing them in free peasant communities—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to twist the Agrarian Reform, exploiting the guajiro as an employee of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To expropriate capitalist enterprises, turning them over to the workers and technicians—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to convert them into State monopolies in which the producer's only right is to obey—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To eliminate the old armed forces such as the army and the police—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to establish obligatory militias and maintain an army subservient to the governing clique—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To oppose foreign intervention in the lives of the people and repudiate all imperialism—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to deliver the country to some foreign powers under the pretense of defense against others—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To permit the free expression and activity of all truly revolutionary forces and tendencies—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to recognize only one single party, persecuting and exterminating as counter-revolutionaries, those who oppose communist infiltration and domination—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To make the university a magnificent center of culture, controlled by the professors, alumni and students—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to convert the university into an instrument of governmental policy, expelling and persecuting those who do not submit—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To raise the standard of living of the workers through their own producing efforts inspired by the general welfare—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to impose plans prepared by the State agencies and demand obligatory tribute from those who labor—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To establish schools and combat illiteracy—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to indoctrinate the children in the adoration of the dictator and his close associates, militarizing these children in the service of the State—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

. . . . .  
To sow the countryside with new constructive peoples' organizations of every sort, stimulating free initiative within them—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to prohibit them or inhibit their action, chaining them to the doctrine and to the organisms of State power—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

To call on the solidarity of all peoples, of the decent men and women of the World, in support of the revolutionary people who are building a new life—THAT IS REVOLUTION.

But to identify with Russian totalitarianism as a "Socialist State" of the type acceptable to the Soviet Empire—THIS IS COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

All those forward steps that were taken by the Cuban people under the banner of liberty, which shone forth as a great hope for all the Americas and the World, WAS THE CUBAN REVOLUTION.

The bloody dictatorship of Fidel Castro and his clique, whatever the mask it may wear or the objectives it may claim to have—IS THE REAL COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

## STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

*The following excerpts from an article that appeared in the organ of big business—The Wall Street Journal (Feb. 27, 1958)—reveal a few of the disgusting aspects of class collaboration which is the main root-cause for corruption in the American Labor Movement.*

. . . Most of the 70 executives interviewed by *The Wall Street Journal* admitted they use a variety of techniques to try to smooth working relations with union members and their leaders. Among them: Testimonial dinners to union chiefs, contributions to union charities, informal socializing with labor officials, subsidies to union schools and newspapers, token gifts to union officials. . . .

"We often have union leaders, especially new officers, in for lunch with various company or division officials, says Paul E. Minsel, vice president in charge of industrial relations of Eaton Manufacturing Co., Cleveland, maker of auto parts. "We feel it's absolutely beneficial." He adds that when he passes through the headquarters city of any of the unions represented at the Eaton plants, he drops in to see the international officers and invites them out to dinner.

United Air Lines threw an elaborate dinner party several weeks ago for union and management representatives to celebrate signing of a new contract with the Airline Stewards and Stewardesses Association. Some union personnel were flown to Chicago by United—free of charge—for the talks and the party from as far away as Denver and New York. "When you need a friend, you can't create one overnight," says Russell Ahrens, United's senior vice-president in charge of personnel.

Union leaders aren't content to play the role of constant guests, however. In Pittsburgh, union brass occasionally invite their corporate counterparts to their homes or country clubs. And many labor chieftains in other cities pick up the tab after a dinner-time get-together. . . .

When a company is about to introduce new machinery in its plant, a common tactic is to take union leaders on an expense-paid tour of other plants where similar machinery is in operation. Companies argue this is simply good business, since it often helps to head off union grievances. . . .

Still, in some cases union men have been called in to help work out the details of certain company policy decisions. Officials of one major union now are cooperating with the executives of an electrical equipment company in forming a plan for a reduction in the working force. The union agreed to the cutback but insisted on having a hand in working out a severance pay plan for senior employees. . . .

Many other corporate officials also observe that union leaders occasionally may be harmed by an overly solicitous corporation labor relations man. . . . Pittsburgh businessmen recall the case of an extravagant

\$20-a-plate testimonial dinner honoring David J. McDonald, President of the United Steel Workers of America. This 1953 banquet was heavily subsidized by local industry. Many union men openly expressed resentment at the time that McDonald should accept such adulation after only one year in his presidential assignment.

Similarly, several union leaders also criticized McDonald for joining the then President of U.S. Steel, Benjamin Fairless, in a series of "good will" plant tours. This project, which was abandoned after a year or so, at first won the approval of both management and labor.

[No. 29, July 1958]

### FOOTNOTE TO A PICKETING

On the afternoon of April 14th, approximately 50 people assembled in front of the residence of the mayor of New York, Gracie Mansion, in answer to a call issued by the Committee to Defend Franco's Labor Victims. The group consisted in the main of members and sympathizers of the Libertarian League, the Young Socialist League, the I.W.W. and the Catholic Worker. A number of them carried Anti-Franco placards. They had gathered to protest the official reception being tendered Señor Martín Artajo, the Foreign Minister of Franco Spain.

A sizable contingent of police shooed the demonstrators well out of sight of the mayor and his guest—some distance away in fact. There they explained to the surprised tenement dwellers that it was the mayor's mansion that was being picketed—by proxy.

The metropolitan press had been notified well in advance and the picketing was covered by numerous photographers and reporters. In spite of this coverage there was very little publicity and it is anyone's guess whose files the numerous photographs went into.

Presumably, the reception was a great success, with the liberal mayor of the liberal city of New York welcoming the Fascist foreign minister and presenting him with the keys to the city. What we did not know at the time was the following, published in the Mexican daily *Esto*:

One of the most vociferous of the anti-falangist agitators during the student strike in Madrid was none other than the youngest son of Don Alberto Martín Arrajo, foreign minister and a power in the Franco government.

Rumor has it that the young man was sent away to continue his studies in England, where he would not be exposed to the seditious influence of the young people of his own country. Once in England, he promptly went over to the Protestant faith and proceeded to

publish scathing denunciations of the Franco regime and of his own father.

The Spanish gestapo, the D.F.G., sent a little group of plain-clothesmen to shadow him. They followed him about until he made a trip to Paris, and there they pounced. The young Artajo was bundled into a car and spirited over the Spanish frontier. In Spain he was declared hopelessly insane and committed to a luxurious asylum where he has been locked up ever since. . . .

The pillars of the Franco-Artajo edifice are indeed firm and strong. All they need now is one good final shove.

[No. 15, July 1956]

[Note: When we picketed the Spanish consulate several priests tried to stop the picketing, shouting that the anti-Franco organizations in Spain were burning churches and persecuting priests and nuns. General Asensio, commander of the Central Front Republican Army removed by the communists, wrongfully blamed for the fall of Malaga to the fascist forces, always came to our demonstrations. This time he reported the incident to the world anti-fascist press, which featured his protest.]

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### GROOMING THE CROWN PRINCES

A. H. Raskin, labor expert of the *New York Times* (April 13, 1959) writes about the leadership training program of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union [ILGWU]. The article reveals—once again—the progressive degeneration of the American Labor Movement. David Dubinsky, the secretary and treasurer, who is getting on in years (he is now 67), is worried about his successors. He has been labor faking since 1932 and wants to leave the union in good hands when he goes to his reward. The members who built the union and whose dues paid his salary and the salaries of the hordes of lesser officials, are [in Dubinsky's opinion] incapable of running their own union. Therefore, the new leaders must be trained under Dubinsky's general direction and be prepared to take over when the old line pie-cards retire. New leaders must be sought—not from the membership—but from outside.

The reason for this violation of the old union principle that leaders should be elected from and by the ranks and trained in the shops, was explained by Dubinsky, who told the General Executive Board [of the ILGWU] that: "The increasing complexity of union affairs make it necessary to rely on men trained as lawyers, accountants and technicians for much of the union's future direction." It is natural that this state within a

state, which is called a union, needs an army of bureaucrats and politicians to regulate the organization and its members.

This sort of thing is typical of all big business type unions. It is the inevitable result of centralization and business unionism. In effect, the union has become the property of its own officialdom. The function of the members is to pay dues and lend their strike-power to reinforce the leaders in disputes with management. They serve as loyal troops who are occasionally sent to battle under the orders of their union bosses.

The ILGWU has been recruiting labor fakers for the last nine years. It has opened a school for this purpose. The recruiting advertisement strikes a military note: "The International Ladies Garment Workers Union conducts its own West Point to prepare young men and women for careers in labor leadership. The one-year course combines classroom and field work. Those who complete the course are assigned to a full time job with the union."

We are not crying alone in the wilderness. Workers are beginning to resent the increasing power of the labor fakers. The following article was written by Charles D. Adams, President of Local 216, UAW-CIO [Auto Workers' Union], Los Angeles. It was printed in *The Assembler*, organ of Local 216 (March 19, 1959). . . . It pinpoints some basic evils of American unionism and provides some helpful suggestions. It is a welcome change from the usual claptrap of labor "journalism."

In a recent conversation with a Labor Relations Representative concerning what might be done to improve the lot of today's workers, I stated, "The first thing I would do would be to scrap the entire national agreement and abolish the grievance procedure."

. . . How could we possibly operate without the Agreement and a procedure for handling grievances? It's really quite simple; whenever a problem arises the plant closes until Management steps in and corrects the condition that has caused the problem. Sure, we all know that utter chaos would reign for a while, but Management would catch on quick and in no time at all they and their Supervisors would become downright reasonable in their attitude toward their employees' welfare.

As a kid in the coal fields of Southern Illinois, I watched such a procedure in action and it was remarkably successful. The miners gathered at the head of the pit and listened to the grievant's complaint. The Pit Committeeman said "OK, boys, throw out your water." This was the signal for all of them to empty the drinking water from their dinner pails and head for home. The mine whistle blew one long mournful blast as they departed and everyone stayed away until it tooted twice. This meant the grievances were satisfactorily settled and work would be resumed.

No one got up and attacked the Pit Committeeman for his lack of

judgment, integrity, or morals. There were no International Reps [representatives of the union] to warn the men they were violating the Agreement and they better go on to work and the problem would be handled when it came up to their step through the proper channels. There was no one going through the crowd attempting to distort the issue, create doubt and indecision and start a back-to-work movement. Come to think of it, the miners had a Plan B which they put into effect when these necessary shut downs became too frequent. The mine manager or an unreasonable Face Boss would be suspended head first down the mine shaft, which is some seven hundred feet deep, by his ankles. As the miners' demands were slowly repeated to him the grip on his ankles was gradually loosened. In a surprisingly short time all differences were usually resolved. However, management did object strenuously to this type of negotiations, complaining bitterly that it tended to create a shortage of trained Supervision.

Today the Agreements are so complicated that no one understands them. The polished Labor Statesman of today lives in a world far removed from the strife and grime of the shops. He is equally at home in the White House, the Senate Chambers or the drawing rooms of international Celebrities. He speaks to you with an eloquence comparable to a Roosevelt or a Churchill, justifying the necessity for you to endure your miserable existence for the duration of another long term contract, while he devotes his full time to the election of governors and congressmen whose avowed purpose is to enact *restrictive labor laws* as soon as they take office. I just don't get it.

[No. 35, May 1959]

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### IN MAO TSE-TUNG'S "CELESTIAL" HELL Commentary on an eyewitness who did not see

[Note: The following article, not strictly a reprint, utilizes material that first appeared in the noted articles.]

In the midst of the euphoria concerning the Chinese Revolution, when even the slightest reference doubting the revolutionary infallibility of Mao Tse-tung was tantamount to calling the Pope an atheist. I wrote two articles, "The Communes of Communist China" (No. 35, May 1959), and a critique of the anarchist Herbert Read's report on the Chinese Communist "Great Leap Forward" (No. 41, May-June 1961).

Read was among the noted cultural, artistic, scientific and other savants invited in 1959 (all expenses paid) to tour China on the tenth anniversary

of the Chinese Revolution to behold the miraculous "great leap forward" into genuine communism by the newly established "People's Communes," which Read enthusiastically hailed as the realization of anarchist-communism as envisioned by Peter Kropotkin in his classic work, *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, the title of Read's article (translated into Spanish and published in the Mexican anarchist paper *Tierra y Libertad* [Land and Freedom] . It did not, as far as I know, ever appear in English).

The catastrophic consequences of the "Great Leap Forward," already evident when Read was in China, are now, twenty-five years later, almost unanimously acknowledged by everyone, including the Chinese Communists themselves. But I do savor the satisfaction of anticipating them in the course of refuting Read's groundless assertions. There is not an iota of proof to substantiate Read's declaration that:

the social Revolution taking place in China is much closer to the ideal of Kropotkin than to those of Marx, Lenin or Stalin . . . the Revolution has struggled against the interference of a centralized and powerful bureaucracy, and has won out . . . it is true that there are many new immense buildings for government ministries in Peking, but their principal object is educational. . . .

Read's contention that the Commune Movement was a spontaneous People's revolution is refuted by no less an authority than Edgar Snow, a close friend of Mao Tse-tung:

China is a nation as disciplined and conformist as any on earth. In spite of the size of the country, discipline is rigidly enforced by the fifty million party members, youth leagues, soldiers, police, bureaucrats and hordes of psychopants. In addition, the Party absolutely controls the school and the mass media. . . . [*Look* magazine, January 1961]

How such a spontaneous movement could possibly originate and develop under such a set-up, Read does not explain. In this connection, H. P. Schumann, an acknowledged expert on China, remarked that "It is almost inconceivable that the Communes are a truly popular movement spontaneously created by the enthusiasm of the peasants." (*Le Contrat Sociale*, Paris, 18 November 1950) Schumann's argument is confirmed by the official Chinese Communist newspaper, *China Review* (12 November 1958):

Last winter 100 million peasants, thinking of nothing of pay, worked beyond the boundaries of their own cooperatives, townships, counties and even provinces . . . they don't limit themselves to the 8 hour day . . . if after day and night shifts as steel makers the workers participate in a little farm production, they will be refreshed. . . .

The vast masses of the people contribute their wisdom and strength with gleeful hearts because they realize that the Communist

Party is working for them. It is necessary to work in accordance with the directives given by the Communist Party Central Committee and Mao Tse-tung.

The general picture of regimentation is graphically described by Dr. Sripati Chandrasekhar, a prominent Indian social scientist:

Everywhere men and women of all ages are working day and night. They are dressed in blue trousers and padded coats and look like an endless army of blue ants scurrying to their appointed tasks. This dull uniformity numbs one's senses in the beginning. But one gets used to seeing a whole nation in blue uniforms.

Another thing that no one can escape is the ubiquitous wired radio loudspeaker. The radio blares away at you in the bus, in the train and in the trolley, in sleepers and dining cars, in villages, towns and cities—just about everywhere. . . . and what does this radio pour out day and night? It is the most important medium for approved news—news of the nation's progress, industrial output, how to make a smelter, how to defeat the American Imperialists, how to be a good communist, how to be neat, how to denounce the rightists, and a thousand other things, interspersed with Chinese opera and marching songs. The radio and relaying loudspeaker cannot be controlled and cannot even be turned off. . . .

Boarding schools are part of the commune system. The children are taken from their parents and live in barracks-like dormitories. They are trained by the Communist Party and taught not to think about their homes. When parents complained that their children are being deprived of mother love, the *China Youth Daily* of Peking (25 October 1958) declared:

Parents should understand that they are going to live in a communist state where the old and the young will be properly taken care of. It is for society to raise and educate the young, give them the kind of love that no maternal love can hope to compare with. . . .

Families are destroyed and women are mobilized to augment the labor force. Over 90 percent of peasant households have already been absorbed into the system. They eat in common dining rooms and are segregated by sex.

Unbiased historians of the "Great Leap Forward" Movement, eyewitness accounts of visitors and native Chinese who suffered during the whole period, have rightfully concluded that the "communes" and their "economic achievements" were colossal frauds camouflaging the regimentation and militarization of work and life. July 1958, the year before Read arrived in the "celestial heaven," peasants in communes were organized in battalions and marched off to labor in the fields in step with martial

music. To cap it all, Mao Tse-tung himself "had come to recognize the gravity of the economic situation and accept the inevitability of dismantling the 'Great Leap Forward.'" (Maurice Brinton, *Mao's China*, pp. 247, 239)

I was much gratified when a leftist professor of Chinese history in the University of Delaware, a former classmate of Mao, while addressing our forum, praised my articles for their accuracy and understanding of the situation.

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### AUTONOMY AND FEDERALISM

*The following is a somewhat revised version of an article of mine which appeared in Towards Anarchism (formerly Views and Comments) No. 50, Summer 1965—the final issue.*

The revival of interest in anarchism has recently produced works on the ideology and history of the libertarian movement. By far, most modern writers confirm popular misconceptions about how the anarchists view the relationships of society to the state, of individual freedom and local autonomy to social order and of organization to authority. It is hoped that these brief remarks will clarify some important aspects of these problems.

The critics believe that since modern society is becoming increasingly complex and interdependent, individual freedom and local autonomy on the scale envisioned by the anarchists would fracture society by breaking it down into small, isolated, loosely related groups. In the ensuing chaos, each group would be free to do anything it pleased without regards to the rights of neighbors or the general welfare. Since modern social life is impossible without large-scale organization and such organization involves authority which the anarchists reject, it follows that anarchism as a practical theory of social regeneration is a pipe dream.

While anarchism might have worked in a relatively primitive society, they contend, its only useful role today is the negative one of curtailing the excessive encroachments of the state on individual and social freedom. While recognizing that some of the anarchist criticisms of the state are correct, the fact remains, they assert, that supreme authority, intelligently exercised, must continue to be vested in the state. They consider that the state is indissolubly linked to society and that society cannot function without the state. It is at best a blessing, and at worst a necessary evil.

To the anarchist, society is the association of all the people cooperating in an infinite variety of organizations for the performance and satisfaction of all mankind's myriad individual and social needs. The political scientist E. Barker declares:

. . . the area of society is voluntary cooperation. Its energy is that of good will. Its method that of elasticity; while the other, the state, is rather mechanical action, its energy force, its method rigidity. . . . [Political Thought from Spencer to the Present Day, p. 67]

These ideas are in general accord with the anarchist conception of society. Kropotkin envisioned the anarchist society as:

the fullest development of free association in all its aspects, in all possible degrees, and for all conceivable purposes, an ever-changing association bearing in itself the elements of its own duration and taking on the forms which at any moment best correspond to the manifold endeavors of all . . . we conceive the structure of society to be something which is never finally constituted. . . . (article, *Encyclopedia Britannica*)

From these basic libertarian concepts it follows that there is no basic conflict between individual freedom and society. On the contrary, it is in this social environment that the personality and the freedom of the individual expands, thereby enriching social life.

The conservative political scientist James Garner illustrates the difference between voluntary association and the state. A member of a voluntary association is:

free to withdraw whenever he elects to do so, whereas membership in the state is compulsory and the citizen can throw off his membership only by expatriation [in which case he will still fall under the jurisdiction of another state—S.D.] . . . voluntary associations lack the legal power of coercion—the supreme power to command and enforce obedience. Voluntary associations cannot command and enforce obedience, at best they can only employ the pressure of public disapprobation or expulsion . . . they cannot arrest, fine, or imprison, whereas the state can do all this and more in case its commands are disobeyed and its authority defied. [*Political Science and Government*, pp. 63, 64]

The difference between the state and society is the difference between freedom and slavery. This is why anarchists advocate the abolition of the state and the eradication of the statist principle which permeates voluntary organizations that accept the state as their model.

The greatest threat to the freedom and happiness of man is the growing concentration of power in the state and its satellite institutions. Although this fact is generally acknowledged by more and more thoughtful people, it is maintained that the state is necessary to assure order in society. We anarchists maintain that while society is incomprehensible without order, the organization of order is not the exclusive right of the state.

The great anarchist thinker Proudhon considered that absolute liberty cannot exist in an organized society but held that society must organize

itself in such a manner that the limits of liberty are broad enough to include the maximum amount of liberty commensurate with social order. Proudhon anticipated over a century ago what many sociologists, jurists and philosophers, faced by the growing power of the state, now advocate: the dispersion of power to the decentralized, functional units of society to insure the direct participation of everyone in matters affecting their lives.

Libertarian organization must reflect the infinite variety and complexity of social relationships and promote solidarity on the widest possible scale. This cannot be achieved through artificial unity imposed from above. It must be attained through the practice of federalism, by which we mean coordination through free agreement, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally: a vast coordinated network of voluntary alliances embracing the totality of social life, in which groups and associations reap the benefits of unity while still exercising autonomy within their own spheres, thus expanding the range of their own freedom. Federalism has been aptly defined as "the organization of freedom."

We do not claim that the millennium is around the corner. But if human society is to survive it must be headed in this general direction. Nor do we claim that all will be sweetness and light, that there will not be inevitable friction, violation of agreements and even serious rifts. No form of organization is immune to these things and there is no guarantee that everything will work out as anticipated. But the greatest attribute of the free society is that it is self-correcting and self-regulating. Victor Hugo realized that:

LIBERTY HAS ITS INCONVENIENCES AND EVEN ITS DANGERS: BUT TRYING TO REALIZE LIBERTY WITHOUT HER WOULD BE EQUIVALENT TO CULTIVATING THE EARTH WITHOUT THE SUN.

## LEADERS AND LED IN THE NEGRO REVOLT

Few of the participants in the August 28th March on Washington had even an insignificant part in planning the demonstration. The organizational structure of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), for example, has remained undemocratic and hierarchical. As long as interorganizational tendencies toward control from above are not persistently counter-blanced by libertarian tendencies, there is great danger of the bureaucratic ossification and the sell-outs this implies.

An article in *Views and Comments*, Spring 1965 (No. 49), commenting on the futility of voter registration to elect negroes, citing the example of a negro Senator's election in Sunflower County, Mississippi, warns:

Power . . . corrupts, and the Negro political machine which would soon replace the white one would not be any better. As the case of Adam Clayton Powell [a notorious black politician elected to the House of Representatives] illustrates.

## GHANA—BIRTH OF A STATE

*There was a good deal of controversy between the Libertarian League, the "new left" groups and "neo-anarchists" in particular, on what our attitude toward "independent third world states" should be. Views and Comments took a most unorthodox position on the whole question. An article on this subject (No. 26, February 1958) reads:*

Dr. David Apter, of the University of Chicago, is a specialist in African affairs. He has closely studied the political life of Ghana and Uganda. He revisited Ghana this summer and has written an article, "What's Happening in Ghana," which appears in the Nov. 1957 issue of *Africa—Special Report*.

The article is important not only because it shows what happens when a dependent colony becomes an independent State, but also because in the process of erecting the new regime we actually see the State being built, and we get a better insight into its true nature and function.

There are two opposing conceptions of "independence." The people support the independence movement because they do not want to be exploited. They want freedom to lead their own lives. They demand autonomy, the right to form their own organizations, follow their own customs, create their own culture, freely federate and make their own arrangements with other people for their mutual benefit. They hate colonial government because it prohibited or curtailed their rights and liberties. The people thought that National independence meant local and individual autonomy. In this they were mistaken. They found themselves being ordered around by a new boss, who, to a greater or less degree, behaved like the old one.

Behold! A new State is being built! The power of foreign colonial rulers is now wielded by the new native government. The new government makes and enforces the law of the land. It creates the machinery of domination. It organizes the army, police, jails, judges, courts, schools, radio stations. It appoints swarms of officials who poke their long noses into everybody's business, regulate everything, and exact the tribute (taxes) which supports the parasitic State apparatus.

To the native governing class, independence meant the right to abolish the natural social, cultural and communal institutions that were developed by the people, and impose from above, by force, an artificial scheme of

life, which nullifies or distorts their natural development and paralyzes their creative capacities. The new rulers secretly admired the colonial governors and administrators. They envied the easy, luxurious life of their masters, their power, their prestige. They were educated in their schools, and served their apprenticeships as assistants to the foreign rulers. They soaked up the teachings of their masters like a sponge absorbs water. They were indoctrinated and thoroughly corrupted before they took office. Those who were honest and idealistic and had no previous connection with the old rulers could do one of two things: if they participate in the new government, they will be corrupted by the exercise of that power. If they are able to withstand the temptations of power, if they refuse to prostitute their integrity, they will resign and rejoin the ranks of the revolutionary opposition. . . .

# Appendix B

## MISCONCEPTIONS OF ANARCHISM

*(This talk discussed the main principles of constructive anarchism.)*

### **Anarchism Is Not Absolute Anti-social Individualism**

Anarchism does not connote absolute, irresponsible, anti-social individual freedom which violates the rights of others and rejects every form of organization and self-discipline. Absolute individual freedom can be attained only in isolation—if at all: "What really takes away liberty and makes initiative impossible is the isolation which renders one powerless." (*Errico Malatesta, Life and Ideas*, Freedom Press, p. 87)

Anarchism is synonymous with the term "free socialism" or "social anarchism." As the term "social" itself implies, anarchism is the free association of people living together and cooperating in free communities. The abolition of capitalism and the state; workers' self-management of industry; distribution according to needs; free association; are principles which, for all socialist tendencies, constitute the essence of socialism. To distinguish themselves from fundamental differences about how and when these aims will be realized, as well as from the anti-social individualists, Peter Kropotkin and the other anarchist thinkers designated anarchism as the "left wing of the socialist movement." The Russian anarchist Alexei Borovoy declared that the proper basis for anarchism in a free society is the equality of all members in a free organization. Social anarchism could be defined as the equal right to be different.

### **Anarchism Is Not Unlimited Liberty Nor the Negation of Responsibility**

In social relations between people certain voluntary social norms will have to be accepted, namely, the obligation to fulfill a freely accepted agreement. Anarchism is not no government. Anarchism is *self-government* (or its equivalent, *self-administration*). Self-government means *self-discipline*. The alternative to self-discipline is enforced obedience imposed by rulers over their subjects. To avoid this, the members of every association freely make the rules of their association and agree to abide by the rules they themselves make. Those who refuse to live up to their responsibility to honor a voluntary agreement shall be deprived of its benefits.

### **The Right to Secede**

Punishment for violation of agreements is balanced by the inalienable right to secede. The right of groups and individuals to choose their own

forms of association is, according to Bakunin, the most important of all political rights. The abrogation of this right leads to the reintroduction of tyranny. You cannot secede from a jail. Secession will not paralyze the association. People with strong, overriding common interests will cooperate. Those who stand more to lose by seceding will compose their differences. Those who have little or nothing in common with the collectivity will not hurt the association by seceding, but will, on the contrary, eliminate a source of friction, thereby promoting general harmony.

### Essential Difference Between Anarchism and the State

The vast difference between the anarchist concept of freely accepted authority in the exchange of services which is the *administration of things*, differs fundamentally from the authority of the state, which is the rule *over its subjects, the people*. For example, repairing my television: the authority of the expert mechanic ends when the repairs are made. The same applies when I agree to paint the mechanic's room. The reciprocal exchange of goods and services is a limited, not a personal, cooperative relationship which automatically excludes dictatorship. But the state, on the contrary, is an all-pervading apparatus governing every aspect of my life from conception to death, whose every decree I am compelled to obey or suffer harassment, abrogation of rights, imprisonment and even death.

People can freely secede from a group or an association, even organize one of their own. But they cannot escape the jurisdiction of the state. If they finally do succeed in escaping from one state to another they are immediately subjected to the jurisdiction of the new state.

### Replacing the State

Anarchist concepts are not artificially concocted by anarchists. They are derived from tendencies already at work. Kropotkin, who formulated the sociology of anarchism, insisted that the anarchist conception of the free society is based on "those data which are already supplied by the observation of life at the present time." The anarchist theoreticians limited themselves to suggest the utilization of all the useful organisms in the old society in order to construct the new one. 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. The anarchist writer, Colin Ward, sums up this point admirably: "If you want to build the new society, all the materials are already at hand."

Anarchists seek to replace the state, not with chaos, but with the natural, spontaneous forms of organization that emerged wherever mutual aid and common interests through coordination and self-government became necessary. It springs from the ineluctable interdependence of man-

kind and the will to harmony. This form of organization is federalism. Society without order (as the term "society" implies) is inconceivable. But the organization of order is not the exclusive monopoly of the state. Federalism is a form of order which preceeded the usurpation of society by the state and will survive it.

There is barely a single form of organization which, before it was usurped by the state, was not originally federalist in character. To this day, only the listing of the vast network of local, provincial, national and international federations and confederations embracing the totality of social life would easily fill volumes. The federated form of organization makes it practical for all groups and federations to reap the benefits of unity and coordination while exercising autonomy within their own spheres, thus expanding the range of their own freedom. Federalism—synonym for free agreement—is the organization of freedom. As Proudhon put it, "He who says freedom without saying federalism, says nothing."

### After the Revolution

Society is a vast interlocking network of cooperative labor, and all the deeply rooted institutions now usefully 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 capacity of the people. Kropotkin, in working out the sociology of anarchism, has opened an area of fruitful research which had been largely neglected by social scientists busily mapping out new areas for state control.

The anarchists were primarily concerned with the immediate problems of social transformation that will have to be faced in any country after a revolution. It was for this reason that the anarchists tried to work out measures to meet the pressing problems most likely to emerge during what the anarchist writer-revolutionary Errico Malatesta called "the period of reorganization and transition." A summary of Malatesta's discussion of some of the more important questions follows.

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 anarcho-communists. We anarchists must have our own solution if we are not to play 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 anyone to disrupt these services unless and until they are reorganized in a better way, and this cannot be achieved in a day.

The organization of the anarchist-communist society on a wide scale can only be achieved gradually as material conditions permit, and 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 condition that there will be no exploitation of others. Malatesta was confident that the convincing example of successful libertarian 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. [*Errico Malatesta, Life and Ideas*, edited by Vernon Richards, Freedom Press, London, pp. 36, 100, 99, 103-4, 101, 151, 159]

### "Pure" Anarchism Is a Utopia

"Pure" anarchism is defined by the anarchist writer George Woodcock as "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 partially governed by anarchist ideals . . . and make compromises with day-to-day situations . . . [anarcho-syndicalism] has to maintain the allegiance of masses of [workers] who are only remotely conscious of the final aim of anarchism. [*Anarchism*, pp. 273-4]

If these statements are true, anarchism is a Utopia, because there will never be a time when everybody will be a "pure" anarchist and because humanity will forever have to make "compromises with the day-to-day situation." This is not to say that anarchism excludes "affinity groups." Indeed, it is precisely because the infinite variety of voluntary organizations which are formed, dissolved and reconstructed according to the fluctuating whims and fancies of individual adherents reflect *individual preferences* that they constitute the indispensable condition for the free society.

But the anarchists insist that production, distribution, communication, exchange and the other indispensable services which must be coordinated on a world-wide scale in our modern interdependent world must be supplied without fail by "stable" organizations and cannot be left to the fluctuating whims of individuals. They are *social obligations* which every able-bodied individual must fulfill if he or she expects to enjoy the benefits of collective labor. It should be axiomatic that such indispensable "stable" associations, anarchistically organized, are not a deviation. They constitute the essence of anarchism as a viable social order.

### Charting the Road to Freedom

Anarchists are not so naive as to expect the installation of the perfect society composed of perfect individuals who would miraculously shed their ingrown prejudices and outworn habits on the "day after the revolution." We are not concerned with guessing how society will look in the remote future when heaven on earth will at last be attained. But we are, above everything else, concerned with the *direction of human development*. There is no "pure" anarchism. There is only the application of anarchist principles to the realities of social living. The one and only aim of anarchism is to *propel society in an anarchist direction*.

Thus viewed, anarchism is a believable, practical guide to social organization. It is otherwise doomed to Utopian dreams, not a living force.

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