Is Black and Red Dead?

Anarchist Studies Network

2009

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Call for Papers

> "Crowned heads, wealth and privilege may well tremble should ever again the Black and Red unite!"
>
> —Otto Von Bismark, upon hearing of the split in the First International

What is the political relevance of the ideological labels "anarchist" and "Marxist" in the contemporary geo-political climate? Despite recurrent crisis, the costs typically borne by the people, neoliberal capitalism continues to colonize the globe in a never ending quest for profit and new enclosures. Meanwhile, an effective political response from the left to the wars, ecological destruction, financial collapse and social problems created by capital and state has so far failed to garner the widespread support and influence it needs. Indeed, the sectarianism of the left may well have contributed to this failure. Still, despite fracture, there have always been borrowings across the left. Most recently, post-'68 radicalisms have contributed to a blurring of the divisions between the anarchist and Marxist traditions. Traditionally regarded as hostile and irreconcilable, many of these ideas find expression in the "newest social movements," taking inspiration from the Situationists, left communists, and social anarchist traditions. The anti-statist, libertarian currents within the socialist movement have repeatedly emerged during periods of acute political and economic crisis, from the council communists to revolutionary anarchism. Is this one such historical juncture in which dynamic reconciliation is not only welcomed but vital? To rephrase the question, what can we learn from 150 years of anti-statist, anti-capitalist social movements, and how might this history inform the formulation of a new social and political current, consciously combining the insights of plural currents of anarchism and Marxism in novel historical junctures? Indeed, to what extent have these traditional fault lines been constitutive of the political imagination? The modern feminist, queer, ecological, anti-racist and postcolonial struggles have all been inspired by and developed out of critiques of the traditional parameters of the old debates, and many preceded them. So, to what extent do capital and the state remain the key sites of struggle?

We welcome papers that engage critically with both the anarchist and the Marxist traditions in a spirit of reconciliation. We welcome historical papers that deal with themes and concepts, movements or individuals. We also welcome theoretical papers with demonstrable historical or political importance. Our criteria for the acceptance of papers will be mutual respect, the usual critical scholarly standards and demonstrable engagement with both traditions of thought. Please send 350 word abstracts (as word documents), including full contact details, to: Dr Alex Prichard (ESML, University of Bath): a.prichard@bath.ac.uk

Conference Report

Compiled by Alex Prichard

17/09/09

Since its foundation the ASN has had as its primary aim to foster institutional and interpersonal links between those working in the broad area of anarchist studies. The success of our first conference at Loughborough University in September 2008 was the product of three years of hard work to build this area of research. At the meeting that followed this first conference, it was suggested that a conference be held on the intersections between Marxism and anarchism. One year later, this conference is the idea made real. Our primary aim as a research network was to reach out to Marxist scholars and begin a new dialogue between the two traditions of thought. The secondary aim was to provide a space for people who felt they crossed the boundaries between Marxism and anarchism to present their work and discuss their ideas in a supportive and convivial environment.

The result was the first conference in living memory on the intersections between Marxism and anarchism. It was hosted by the Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice at the University of Nottingham. The conference convenor was Dr Alex Prichard, co-founder of the Anarchist Studies Network. Saku Pinta drafted the initial call for papers and Dr Dave Berry worked to ensure the radical book stalls were part of the conference. The conference was convened in conjunction with the PSA Marxism Specialist Group. Special thanks to Professor Marc Cowling for his support with our bid to the PSA for funding. The event was also supported by four academic journals: *Anarchist Studies, Capital and Class, Critique-Journal of Socialist Theory, Historical Materialism* and *Studies in Marxism.* Special thanks also go to Sue Simpson at Nottingham University for her extensive administrative work, to Dr Tony Burns, co-director of the CSSGJ, for his coordination and for the financial assistance provided through the Centre, and to the Political Studies Association for a generous grant of £2000 to support the event.

The conference attracted 42 papers and a further 20 participants. It was a truly international conference with participants from the US, Canada, Australia, France, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Finland, and the UK. The range of topics reflected the geographic spread of the presenters and the spread of the case studies and movements analysed. The experiences of key individuals, such as Antonio Gramsci, Cornelius Castoriadis, C. L R. James and a number of others encapsulated the controversies, trade-offs and developments in socialist thinking by refusing doctrinaire positions on ideology. The historical papers each in their own way illustrated that there are multiple anarchisms and multiple Marxisms; their form changing according to the heritage of the traditions crossed, fused or transcended and the demands of the contexts in which these ideologies morphed and met. Each paper also illustrated how different contexts have created different forms of political agency over the past 150 years.

More theoretical papers discussed the analytical and conceptual problems involved in either explaining the traditional schism on the left or ways of overcoming it. Some called for clarity in method while investigating the schism, while others saw insurmountable philosophical problems

in overcoming it. Papers on psychology, moral philosophy, liberation theology and Christian anarchism, the reconfiguring of the notion of 'the excluded' and others, all pushed their audience to think more clearly about the terms of the debate and the ontology and epistemology of political agency. Papers on publishing for the cause of revolutionary socialism and others on organising for social change all captured something of the experience of the past 150 years of socialist debate.

The discussions generated by the conference papers were always engaged and heated as well as respectful and generous; debate at the bar, post-conference, no less so! It is testament to the paper-givers and participants that such a difficult topic could be engaged with with such erudition and integrity. It is our ambition that an edited collection of the best essays from the conference be published as soon as possible.

The conference was also attended by AK Press, Sparrow's Nest (a Nottingham-based anarchist collective), Stair Books, while a number of University and other academic publishers sent in promotional material and books for sale. The conference did not host a plenary speaker, mainly because no one could think of an appropriate speaker to talk to both traditions. Indeed, if such a speaker could be found, someone who would be un-contentiously accepted by all, then there would have been far less purpose behind such a conference in the first place. It was also perhaps quite telling of the history of the left over the past 150 years that so few papers engaged with feminism and so few women presented (5/42). Childcare issues arose. Efforts were made prior to the conference to cater for these, but the University did not have the appropriate facilities. Also, disabled access was a problem which will not be overlooked by this organiser again. While we did our best to arrange the schedule in appropriate buildings, our choice of venue could have been better. The conference did not have a closing open plenary meeting where people could share their experiences of the event. This will be scheduled into any future conferences. Audio recordings were planned but those plans fell apart at the last minute. Some of the conference papers are available on line at `http://www.anarchist-studies-network.org.uk/IsBlackAndRedDead`.

Convergence Through Practice 1: The New Left

(New) New Left?: radical considerations in Canada and Quebec from the post-1968 moment to today

Mike Mowbray

Introduction

This paper begins with so-called 'New Left' in the particular context of Canada and of Quebec — as seen through the lens of some radical publications. I will begin with a note on the notions of the 'New Left' itself, and with a thumbnail sketch of the local socio-political developments and prominent aspects of radical contention relevant to the Quebec-Canada context. Subsequently, I examine some ideas and expressions of the New Left, as emerged in the pages of the twin Montreal publications *Our Generation* and *Noir et Rouge* in the explosive climate of the later 1960s, a period referred to in French as "les annees 1968." Discussing the notion of the "revolutionary youth movement" (and its early theorization by Quebec sociologist Marcel Rioux in particular) in relation some of the broader currents and debates in Quebec left radicalism at the time, I hope to indicate some of contours of this particular case. In so doing, I will point to some aspects of convergence, and of friction, between Marxist and anarchist-influenced interpreters of what many saw as a potentially revolutionary historical moment — particularly over questions of nationalism, organization and counter-culture, considerations which I hope to show have molded some of the problematics exemplified in the radical press today. In concluding, I will try to touch on a contemporary counterpoint, flipping the calendar forward 35 years from the end point of this extended historical moment, and note recent efforts to conceptualize a 'New New Left' in the pan-Canadian journal *Upping the Anti.* Finally, I bring the discussion back to Quebec. In this particular context, I suggest (drawing on the anarchist publications *Ruptures* and *La Mauvaise Herbe)* that although the contemporary anarchist contributions have predominantly rejected Quebecois nationalism (at least explicitly), many current tensions — particularly over organization and the debates pitting 'social' or class-struggle against 'lifestyle' or radical-pluralist (and often 'counter-cultural') anarchism — remain as vestiges of the New Left problematic exemplified by recourse to the "revolutionary youth movement."

New Left: 'les annees 1968' in Quebec & 'the revolutionary youth movement'

'New Left' is a term broadly applied to those movements and political ideas which emerged in opposition to both "an 'obsolete communism' and a 'sold-out social democracy'(McKay 2005:183)"

during the 1960s and 70s. Highlighted internationally by such paroxysmal moments as May 1968 and the Chicago Democratic National Convention, a typical New Left politics rejected Western industrial capitalism (associated with American imperialism, conformity and crass exploitation) as well as the 'real-existing' socialism of the USSR (in light of the 1956 revelations and an analysis of Soviet bureaucratic statism). Very generally, elements of the New Left sought to transcend the alienation of the individual in economic, cultural and psychological terms through creative action and the progressive elimination of both structural constraints and institutional authority, and tended also to prioritize decolonization and an end to military aggression.

In Canada, as elsewhere, the New Left moved away from previous political formations' emphasis on the industrial proletariat as revolutionary agent, and from the state-planning socialism of the traditional CCF/NDP (Canada's leftmost parliamentary party). Many New Left expressions tended to be marked by a spontanaeist tendency, and an anticipatory orientation — outlining a prefigurative politics supplemented by 'direct action' or protest that sought to confront the repressive authority of prevailing 'bourgeois' institutions and evade the hollow homogenaeity of cookie-cutter consumerism (McKay 2005).

In Quebec, the influence of May 1968 — which one might expect to be great given shared language and national history — was largely secondary to American influences, counter-cultural and political and to endemic tendencies tied to a newly awakened Marxist and anti-colonial consciousness. The province has a large francophone majority which has always been conscious of its subordinate position in both pre-and post-Confederation Canada, and young radicals increasingly came to view this as analogous both to Third World colonization and, famously, to the situation of American blacks — a position propounded by Pierre Vallieres in his book 'Les Negres Blancs d'Amerique.' By the mid-1960s, a concerted 'independantiste' movement, itself highly divided, had taken hold, and life in Montreal was marked by the simmering low-level terrorist activities of the Front de Liberation de Quebec (FLQ).

The so-called 'Quiet Revolution' of the 1960s saw secular soft-nationalist elements in the provincial Liberal party pull the province of out of its decidedly conservative Catholic past in favour of a technocratic planning-state which quickly built up a Keynesian base for the social and economic betterment of the Quebecois and ushered in an intense cultural liberalization. The period was also marked by significant radicalization and consolidation of peace, students,' workers,' and feminist groups in Quebec, simultaneously and sometimes in conjunction with Quebec national-liberation movements linked to a logic of decolonialization and which saw the progress of the Quiet Revolution as decidedly insufficient. The case of the New Left in Quebec is complicated by the national movements' sparring ideological stances, drawing on anti-colonial discourse and a hard-wrought sense of national (collective) identity forged in the crucible of the relative cultural and economic marginalization of the province's French-speaking majority — and by tensions between these movements and a broader pan-Canadian 'New Left.'

Periodization is, of course, a problematic exploit, particularly with respect to the New Left, so often lumped under the banner of a decade — the 1960s — or focused on a single year, 1968. For the sake of expediency, I frame my discussion in terms of the rough periodization of 'les annees 1968,' (the 1968 years) comprising roughly 1968–1970. This is a period marked by an intense demographic spike — the 'baby — boom' generation — and the extension of educational opportunities to portions of the population previously excluded, which concentrated much of the action in the student milieu. Commentators on 'les annees 1968' in Quebec point to radicals' emphasis on 'direct action' and the refusal of cooperation or 'participation' (in rupture

with prior left student union lobbying) which invoked spontaneism, utopian idealism and intense collective frustration. The very concept of representative organization was put in question, as the main student union, UGEQ, dissolved itself as "unrepresentative," and failed to reconstitute. Here we see a portion of the student or 'youth' constituency engaging a loosely 'anarchist' (more properly radical libertarian) current common to the less politically astute Cohn-Bendit and Jerry Rubin-inspired protesters — though often with a minimum of conceptual articulation. As one 'contestataire' put it "L'anarchie, c'est faire ce que tu es, et rien d'autre (Paiement 1969, cf. Warren 2008a: 117). In this context, tensions emerged not only among Quebec left-nationalist movements and between such movements and a broader 'New Left,' but also between different Marxist and anarchist-influenced interpreters of revolutionary prospects for 'les annees 1968,' and between the less articulated politics of an explosive counter-culture and those who sought a well-considered path to social revolution.

Actions at post-secondary institutions (and many high schools) were prominent, including a widespread student strike in Quebec junior colleges (or CEGEPS) in 1968, numerous occupations and confrontations with institutional administrations, government, and sometimes police, capped by the so-called "Operation McGill francais," in which 12,000 people demanded official unilingualism and that the prestigious university (McGill) be put in service of the francophone majority. A high point of radical popular contestation, 'les annees 1968' brought together a host of immediate demands (for free schooling, unilingualism, better terms of collective bargaining) and wider political objectives (national liberation and independence, an end to capitalist exploitation, cultural liberalization). The October 1968 student strikes and occupations in Quebec (mainly centered in Montreal), while often invoking the name and organizing frame of anarchism, seem to mark an invocation of the optimistic belief that spontaneous radicalization and mass social solidarity with activist struggles would bring the state and corporate powers to their knees (Warren 2008a); this is not dissimilar to some accounts of the relationship between May 1968 and anarchism in France (e.g. Baillargeon 2004) — though such accounts fail to acknowledge the political commitments of even the most famously irreverent, such as the Situationists. For some radical publications, this ethos stayed on as an animating theme; for others, it stood out as a hopeful sign, though one associated with a perceived lack of a firm theoretical base, which prompted 'New Left' publications such as *Our Generation* and *Noir et Rouge* to theorize and seek to mold a "revolutionary youth movement."

Radical & 'New Left' publications

The emergence of the New Left internationally was marked by "a massive outpouring of publications (McKay 2005: 183)"; by the late 1960s, the desire of opposition groups, often contending amongst themselves, for effective communications gave rise to a number of independent publications in Quebec (Raboy 1983). As it happens, one of the most prominent 'New Left' publications with a pan-Canadian orientation was based in Montreal — which entailed taking a stab at the Gordian knot of complications affecting radical-left analysis in Quebec. *Our Generation* emerged from the student/anti-war movement, self-identified with the 'New Left,' espoused an admixture of marxist, left-libertarian, and anarchist arguments under the rubric of a non-violent extra-parliamentary opposition movement with revolutionary aspirations. The September 1966 edition begins with an "editorial statement on Quebec" avowing a commitment to make "social

developments in Quebec [...] a permanent feature," and content during 'les annees 1968' reflects this commitment — though the emphasis on 'youth' as revolutionary agent seems to represent an attempt to bridge class, ethnic and national tensions. As such, it brings in a strong universalism in tension with particular group claims.

The short-lived *Noir et Rouge* ("la revue trimestrielle de la nouvelle gauche quebecoise")emerged as a kind of French-language sister publication in the aftermath of the student revolt and advanced similar positions, with several articles cross-published in translation. The latter publication, although it does not include the kinds of explicit repudiation of national-liberation as a path to social revolution which sometimes made the pages of *Our Generation* (though notably alongside more positive evaluations acknowledging the reality represented by the composition of Quebec radical constituencies), does relegate such considerations to secondary status in its insistence on the student movement as a key actor which required a move back to the organizational drawing board (reconstituting and revitalizing a dissolved provincial student union). Its primary concern lay with the Quebec student movement — with two of three issues devoted entirely to the topic — and with disseminating a vision of non-violent direct action and a synthesis of Marxist and anarchist theoretical perspectives (often adapted to include critiques of bureaucracy and homogenization in consumer society) including work by Daniel Guerin, Thoreau and Ramus.

Both publications exhibited a sometimes tense interplay between Marxist and anarchist currents in the thought of radical movements, foregrounding both...

While my work focuses on these two journals, there are of course many others. For example, any discussion of Quebec radical publications in the 1960s cannot fail to acknowledge the importance of the review *Parti Pris.* Whether as a source of inspiration or as the foil against which others were forced to define their positions, the journal espoused a revolutionary *etapisme* (stage-ism), an approach which privileged Quebec independence as a pre-condition for an equitable socialism. Some, such as the journal *Mobilisation* (linked to the Mouvement pour une Liberation Populaire, or MLP and to the dissident McGill University professor and avowed Marxist Stanley Gray), by contrast, took a stand against the *Parti Pris* position and argued that the 'neo-nationalism' and technocratic management ascendant in the Quiet Revolution would simply see to the formation of an endemic bourgeoisie and leave the economic bases of exploitation untouched (a position advanced by some authors in *Our Generation* and implicit in the quest for a more universal construction of revolutionary agency throughout both Our Generation and Noir et Rouge). Serious-minded Marxist theory and national liberation strategy, however, were not always the main focus of publishing efforts on the left. The *Quartier Latin,* to provide just one other example, thrived on irreverent political commentary, arts coverage, poetry, humour and cartooning: despite criticism for it's "spontaneity and lack of ideological precision," it printed 30,000 copies semimonthly at the end of the 60s — far more than the 'serious' journals.

The 'revolutionary youth movement' in *Our Generation* and *Noir et Rouge*

As an ensemble, the radical publications of this historical moment (like the student struggles) represented a convergence of ideas and interests concerned with revolutionary struggle — though by no means one in which consistent positions on relative priorities or tactics. Both *Our Gen-*

eration and *Noir et Rouge* took their distance from the sex-drugs-and-rock'n'roll aspects of the emergent American-inspired counter-culture (unlike the *Quartier Latin)*;, and (nominally) from the loose radical libertarian spontaneism noted with regard to elements of the student movement; while incorporating the general ethos of a 'peace and love' revolution and a marked concern for issues of personal autonomy, its contributors generally maintained a focus on what might be called the 'serious business' of politics. The counter-culture in the student movement was seen as a resource, a pool of antiauthoritarian energy and feeling. As Our Generation editor-in-chief Dimitrious Roussopoulos (later publisher of Black Rose books, and long-time activist) put it in his 1970 article 'Towards a Revolutionary Youth Movement,' which shares a title with Mike Klonsky's resolution to the December 1968 SDS council and claims that "although put together by one person, [it] reflects the *general* thrust as well as potential directions of the new left's thinking [in Canada]":

> The most important process going on in our society today is the sweeping de-institutionalization of the bourgeois social structure. [...] This molecular movement creates an atmosphere of general lawlessness; a growing personal, day-to-day disobedience, a tendency not to "go along" with the existing system, a seemingly "petty" but nevertheless critical attempt to circumvent restriction in every facet of daily life.

The locus of this process, and the main constituency ascribed to the New Left — the collective actor on whom hopes are pinned — is described in the category of 'youth.' The 'revolutionary youth movement' is seen as a potential — conceptual and practical — extension of the 'student movement,' drawing on what one author terms the "third combat" against "depersonalization in a hyper-rational and overorganized society" and upon the structural position of youth in a drawn-out period of pre-employment. Roussopolous, however, outlines a rejection of the vision of the working class as revolutionary agent stronger than anything in Klosky's essay of the same title, retrospectively echoing Wallerstein's (1989) claim that 1968 was "the ideological tomb of the industrial proletariat" in writing that "the young worker becomes radical not by becoming more a worker but by undoing his 'workerness.'" Being a worker, then, is an imposed and constraining particularity, but 'youth' holds a valorized cachet (explicable, in ambivalent fashion, through the work of Marcel Rioux, discussed in the next section).

Against sterile bureaucratic modernity, but also against tradition, including religion and elements of secular morality, the family structure, and sexual mores, an idealist thrust pervades this point of view (even if Roussopolous suggests in the same article that the counter-culture has "reactionary" tendencies), as well as post-orthodox Marxist view of capitalism in which the middle classes and youth joined the working class and oppressed groups in a loose assemblage of potentially 'revolutionary' agents). As Francois Ricard (1992) has argued of the baby-boom generation in general, and in Quebec in particular, there was a manifest desire to dissolve the world and create anew, articulated in generational terms — a kind of messianism, a self-valorizing group identification (particularly in the student milieu), and an idealist inclination to view 'ideas' as the terrain of struggle. A valorized aesthetic of the 'new,' of the unconstrained and authentically creative, was seen as key to differentiating the 'New Left' in this context, and to the hopeful effervescence that so many authors in *Our Generation* and *Noir et Rouge* sought to channel and refine into organized and sustained political action.

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This notion that 'ideas' are a primary field of struggle, and that the fresh ideas of a youthful movement constituency can somehow solve intractable problems is emphasized in both publications.[1]

(note concern with reproduction through education, as well as counter-cultural conceptions of resistance in de Lucy 1970, OG editorial of 1968,)

Invoking the events of May 1968 in France, a kind of 'organic' or spontaneous revolutionary process is described:

> Magnificently apposite and poetic slogans emerged from the anonymous crowd. Children explained to their elders what the function of education should be. The educators were educated. Within a few days, young people of 20 attained a level of understanding and a political and tactical sense which many who had been in the revolutionary movement for 30 years or more were still sadly lacking (PAGE).

Noir et Rouge marked out a similar ideology in that it chose to focus so intensely on student issues (the CEGEP strike, the state of the provincial student union, etc.) and explicitly called for the student movement to take a leading role in a movement of unions which would bring its forces together with those of labour and…("La revolte des etudiants" 1969: PAGE). In "Paix, Liberte, Amour,

Fraternite," (1970), Noir et Rouge editor Francois de Lucy describes the same fundamental questioning of values, notes their violent manifestations in the context of terrorist 'independantiste' movements,

The vision of the "revolutionary youth movement" forwarded in these publications, I should note, does not seem to fit with either of the major factions by the same name which emerged out of the split in the SDS in the United States' SDS; Our Generation and Noir et Rouge solidly rejected both the clandestine activities advocated by the RYN 1 (later Weatherman) and the vanguardist party-building of the Maoist RYN 2 — likely in no small part due to the prevailing analysis of the FLQ strain of the Quebec national-liberation movement, which had presaged the Weatherman strategy of exemplary action in a terrorist vein, intended to spark the population to action, and to an anarchist commitment to decentralization and autonomy which precluded a Marxist-Leninist party strategy. Ultimately putting their faith in a loose coalition of movements, stirred in their radicalism by movement intellectuals such as the contributors to these very journals and swelled by the ranks of the baby-boom generation, the New Left in Canada suffered significantly from a failure to solve organizational and coalition-building problems. Resolved not to take state power (nor to overthrow it by violent means), they took the social movement model of non-violent direct action, independent organization, agitation and the building of parallel structures (including municipalist movements) as far as they could. Sights were set high, consonant with the vision of a world completely dissolved and made anew. As Roussopoulos puts it:

> Revolution cannot end with […] the "seizure of power"; it must culminate in the here and now with the dissolution of power as such.

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[1] Sydney, c. late 1970s, original emphasis.

Spontaneity, the counter-culture & the Sociology of Marcel Rioux

Drawing on modified Marxist precepts, Universite de Montreal sociologist Marcel Rioux penned an article for *Our Generation* in 1966, predicting — in concert with the later positions of the editors — that 'youth' were in the process of effectively supplanting the working class as the motor of social change in industrialized societies. 'Youth' is, for Rioux, characterized by "lag, plasticity, availability, pliability." These are the characteristics which suit a context requiring flexible actors, a context in which technological change requires constant adaptation, in which permanent education was just emerging as a mainstream idea. The difference Rioux ascribes to the youth of the late 1960s (relative to previous generations of the working class) is that they reject and rally against the bourgeois culture and society "after knowing it and belonging to it."

Rioux holds that "change is welcome" in (then-) contemporary societies focused ever-more on knowledge production and the provision of services. Drawing a parallel between the 'social class' and the 'social generation,' he indicates that both are "actual groupings which can either constitute real collective units or contain only the potential for unification, [.which] do not necessarily embody group consciousness." 1960s protest movements, according to him, was less interested in 'catching up' to the economic status of their predecessors or oppressors than in living differently, in making of society something *completely* new. Of course, in Quebec, this situation was complicated at the time by the question of whether the province (or nation) is primarily an 'underdeveloped nation' (for which there were good economic arguments) or 'an advanced industrial society.' Rioux concludes that Quebec is both, and that one of its unique aspects is that economically well-placed sectors of its youth (college and university students) perceive the colonial character of their predicament (and are profoundly affected by it) at the same time that they are immersed in a wider North American youth culture tied to the 'affluent society.'

After 'les annees 1968': co-optation and marginalization

The relationship between the self-identified New Left in Quebec, associated with the journals Our Generation and Noir et Rouge, always existed in tension with the more radical Quebec nationalists, not because of ambivalent attitudes towards nationalism as such but because of tactical differences concerning non-violence, the efficacy of clandestine and violent exemplary actions. The "sweeping deinstitutionalization of the bourgeois social structure" described hopefully in *Our Generation* was particularly sweeping in Quebec. Two hundred years of conservative clericalist rule under an essentially colonial economic and cultural oppression combined with a dose of liberalization under the Quiet Revolution to unleash a broad restructuring of legal and normative standards; however, the economic structures remained rigidly capitalist, albeit under a veneer of 'social consultation' which pretends at a neo-corporatist consensus. The aversion to centralized organization typical of the New Left organized around Our Generation and Noir et Rouge turned out to be a dead end after a brief spike in radicalized labour actions in the early 1970s, as decentralized organizations foundered amid a polarization on the left between an increasingly liberal-centrist sovereigntist party, the PArti Quebecois, and Marxist-Leninist factions En Lutte and the PCO. Marxist-Leninist parties drew the most radical students, but soon foundered amidst their failure to incorporate other struggles, their support for authoritarian regimes, and rigidly austere and often dogmatic tendencies — not to mention their lack of impact — which fostered both dis-

integration into rival factions and burnout, dissolving the two organizations around 1980. After the October crisis of 1970 in which the Canadian state imposed martial law and jailed hundreds of nationalist and radical activists and conducted thousands of intrusive warrantless searches, public opinion shifted in an ever more nationalist direction, but one in which the option of political revolution was off the table. Many of the previous student radicals, cowed by the show of force or shifting out of periods of biographical availability, moved on from radical political activity — especially those associated with the counter-cultural movements, as evidenced by the quick disappearance of the Quartier Latin.

As it happens, the anti-nationalist analysis of the writers in *Mobilisation* and *Our Generation* who predicted the formation of an endemic bourgeoisie were not far off. The Parti Quebecois, having incorporated radical labour and a wide swathe of the nationalist movement,t won the elections of 1976 (though failing to achieve sovereignty). Ultimately, they continued the Liberal strategy of building up what is referred to as 'Quebec Inc' by supporting the development of an ethnic-French capitalist elite, and dashed the hopes of its more radical supporters by invoking the economic crisis of the late 1970s as justification to reign in the unions (who had already lost much of their bargaining power). By the mid-1990s, the PQ came to positions largely indiscernible from their Liberal Party rivals with whom they now alternate power — with the exception of the national question.

Towards a New New Left?

The offshoot of all of this is that the radical left in Quebec (especially among anarchists of various stripes) have tended to take a strong anti-nationalist stance, particularly around the 1995 referendum on sovereignty — in contrast to that of 1980 which tended to split opinion. The anarchist press in the intervening years had often displayed its ambivalence, for example in the 1980 referendum issue of *La Q-Lotte* (a public-sector union-associated paper which emerged in the mid 70s) where contributors resolved simply to allow each to present arguments (some serious, other humourous) for and against. Yet by the next time around, a number of anarchist publications which had popped up in the mid-1990s displayed what continues to be a contemptuous attitude towards a project which had been thoroughly co-opted. Instead, the focus is again on the "here and now" — though common debates rage, as elsewhere, between class-struggle and radical pluralist anarchists, over questions of organization and the question of revolutionary agency. Nonetheless, there have been some recent successes, particularly around a revitalized student movement and work with marginalized communities over police brutality. However, the problem of organization, and how to gain a wide impact through implication in a diverse array of social movements, remains on the table.

THIS IS THE POINT WHERE THE PAPER NEEDS TO BE EXTENDED TO INCLUDE THE DISCUSSIONS I INDICATE IN THE INTRO, BUT I HAVEN't THE TIME TO INTEGRATE THIS NOW. SPECIFICALLY, I INTEND TO ADDRESS:

- Upping the Anti has explicitly framed its mission (in an early editorial in 2006) as constituting a 'New New Left"; I will discuss how they assess the Canadian New Left, particularly in

terms of its failures to overcome problems of organization, and how this pan-Canadian radical journal brings together important insights of both anarchist and Marxist perspectives along with insights from anti-oppression politics which emphasize the need to incorporate specific struggles without incorporating them into a universal — but all the while ensuring that the capitalist dynamics deeply implicated in so many forms of oppression and domination are explicitly foregrounded and theorized (I am suggesting that this is a fine and promising project, and will articulate why in some more detail...but not too much)

- It seems to me that the social vs. lifestyle anarchist debate (a la Bookchin/Black, but more generally located in debates between platformists and others and radical pluralists/synthesists in another of its important dimensions, between those who insist on a limited — usually 'working class' — revolutionary agent and those who conceptualize a plurality of agents, between anarchists insisting on 'here and now' projects which are more attuned to a renewed micro-communalism and sub- or counter-cultural focus vs. those who often eschew such projects in favor of 'serious' politics) derives in many ways from the tensions described in the New Left around counterculture...and I will briefly summarize how this debate remains central in Quebec, and easily summarized through polemic (and more subtle cues) on the pages of Ruptures (NEFAC-Quebec magazine) and Mauvaise Herbe (a radical pluralist/primitivist-sympathetic anarchist magazine)

- I will conclude by suggesting that the problematic is a sticky one, as small, rigid organizations (such as some platformist ones) often seem exclusive and thus fail expand their reach (vs., say some of the coalitions around the 2001 FTAA protests in Quebec City), but that loose — radical pluralist — forms easily suffer attrition an co-optation

- I finally suggest that some aspects of this can actually be brought back to Rioux's 1966 explanation of how the functional social requirement for "plasticity" is implicated in patterns of social reproduction that make 'youth' look like a good candidate for 'revolutionary agent' in the 1960s, and that given this, and Ricard's points about the baby-boom generation, we get a glimpse of a key contemporary difficulty — the fact that the social dynamics that foster particular kinds of movement participation are tied to cultural practices which often hinge on patterns of work and consumption

- This is something which Upping the Anti is actively engaging with, and which recent developments with NEFAC-Quebec reforming as the Union Communiste Libertaire seem to indicate a better acknowledgment of...so hope for the best!

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(I need to double-check and add references to this text)

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Councilist anarchism and carnival anarchism during the 1970s: a case study

Toby Boraman

Abstract

After 1968, many groupings emerged across the world who were influenced by a melange of anarchism, left communism and council communism (including the Situationist International). Few have endeavoured to document or analyse this attempted crossover between anarchism and Marxism. I attempt to do this through a case study of the anarchist and libertarian Marxist milieu primarily in New Zealand, but also Australia, in the 1970s. Based upon interviews and other primary research, I found that the councilist ideas of Solidarity (UK) and the Situationists were highly influential in the anarchist milieu. However, there was also much tension between anarchists and councilists. Anarchist activists generally had a superficial theoretical understanding of the Marxism that they playfully, and uncritically, borrowed. While the carnival anarchists extolled the revolutionary potential of the Tumpenproletariat,' their radicalism was on the whole limited to the cultural and psychological spheres. Non-Leninist revolutionary Marxists tended to remain theoretical and aloof from working class struggles. Their practice was often limited to commenting on events from afar. Their theoretical work shifted to a more anarchistic viewpoint that saw the major contradiction in society as that of the conflict between order-givers and order-takers. If global bureaucracy was the problem, universal self-management was the solution. Yet this approach has many weaknesses, especially its assumption traditional exploitation is somehow less important, and it was often oblivious to the problem of selfmanaged capitalism.

Introduction

The Free Association of Australasian Shoplifters and the Disturbed Citizens for the Redistribution of Punishment published a 'vandal's license' in the late 1970s. It read:

> IS THIS REALLY LIVING?
> How many times have you asked yourself that question?
> Are you tired of work, consume, be silent, die?
> WE ARE!
> The DISTURBED CITIZENS for the REDISTRIBUTION of PUNISHMENT is combating the futility of everyday life; by mounting a campaign to promote VANDAL-ISM...

Break up the barriers that separate your desires from reality To learn how to build; first we must learn how to *destroy* Even noticed how your good intentions seemed to be *smashed* on the reef of workaday routine?

Why not start the day off by *hurling* your clock through your TV set Then begin a festival of *looting, burning* and *busting up* the boredom!

Imagine your local shopping centre, workplace, home.in *ruins!*

Can you think of a better way to spend the day?[1]

The leaflet encapsulated many of the strengths and weaknesses of the 'pro-situ' carnival anarchist milieu in Australasia in the 1970s. On the one hand, it captured their absurdist humour, imaginative if not inflammatory ludic sensibility, and opposition to lifeless routine. It highlighted how they borrowed some of the basic views of the councilist group, the Situationist International (SI) — namely, taking your desires for reality, refusing work, rejecting boredom and emphasising the festival-like nature of riots, insurrections and revolutions.

Yet on the other hand, the leaflet highlighted how their politics could be crude and simplistic. In practice, they generally fetishised *ineffective 'illegal' activity* — in this case a fictitious vandalism campaign — carried out by those at the margins of society. Like their more well-known carnivalesque counterparts elsewhere in the world, such as the Dutch Provos, Kabouters and the Motherfuckers, they based their hopes on the 'provotariat' of *disaffected sub-cultural youth.* As a result, they often overlooked the workplace-based self-activity of the time, and this was a major reason why the provotariat's challenge was easily repressed, isolated, recuperated or simply ignored. The carnival anarchists desired a *total* revolution, and when this did not occur, they turned inward and became self-destructive.

Besides the interaction between carnival anarchism and the Situationists, I also examine the crossover between 'class struggle anarchism' and councilism in Australasia. This was also an international trend. Walter has suggested that, during the 1960s and 1970s, "many groups...have developed from non-anarchist Marxism towards near-anarchist socialism — such as Solidarity in Britain or Socialisme ou Barbarie and ICO [Informations et Correspondances Ouvrieres] in France."[2] These councilists, for the most part, took a distinct anti-bureaucratic turn in the 1960s and 1970s. Likewise many class struggle anarchist organisations, such as Noir et Rouge in France,

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[1] Nicolas Walter, "Has Anarchism Changed? Part Two Concluded," *Freedom,* 10 July 1976, p.13.

[2] Both 'carnival anarchism' and 'anarchist councilism' were not original discoveries of the 1960s. As David Berry notes, many French anarchist communists in the late 1910s and early 1920s adhered to a "council anarchism" or "sovietism" David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement 1917—1945,* Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002, pp.47–72. Similarly, it is often claimed that classical council communists adopted anarchist views — for example, Philippe Bourrinet argues that in the 1930s and 1940s Dutch council communists, such as the Communistenbond, adopted a kind of 'anarcho-councilism.' Philippe Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left (1900—68),* N.p.: Philippe Bourrinet, 2008, p.315. And much of the praxis of the carnival anarchists resembled the bohemian individualist anarchist milieu in France from the 1890s to WWI, including the illegalist groups like the Bonnot Gang (such as a focus on everyday life, being based around affinity groups, and emphasising living life to the fullest in the here and now, spontaneity and a rejecting regimentation, and fetishising illegal activities). See Richard Parry, *The Bonnot Gang,* London: Rebel Press, 1987; James Joll, *The Anarchists,* 2nd edn., London: Methuen, 1979, pp.146–57; Richard Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siecle France,* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989; and Alexander Varias, *Paris and the Anarchists: Aesthetes and Subversives During the Fin de Siecle,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. However, these bohemian individualists rejected Marxism completely, unlike many of the carnival anarchists of the 1970s.

took a distinct councilist turn. However, as this paper outlines, this did not mean there was a perfect synthesis between the two traditions (nor that this synthesis was new).[3]

I am interested in how anarchism and councilism interacted on the ground, rather the more common top-down approach of focussing on one or two personalities, thinkers or groups. Hence I examine the broader milieu that was influenced by anarchist and councilist / Situationist praxis, rather than limiting my study to the Australasian equivalent of a Daniel Cohn-Bendit or a Guy Debord (if there were equivalents, that is). This work is based on substantial research, including many interviews, into this milieu in New Zealand.[4] As that milieu had close links with Australia, I also include a few brief and no doubt very incomplete notes on the corresponding Australian 'scene.' Yet my primary focus is on New Zealand. In this paper, I address briefly how this milieu related to the broader class struggle of the time; due to lack of space, I have not examined how it related to other movements, such as the women's liberation movement and the tino rangati-ratanga movement (which can be roughly translated as Maori self-determination).

The small size and peripheral nature of New Zealand means that, for the most part, it reflects international trends. Anarchism and councilism in New Zealand in the 1970s often closely mir-rored movements in the UK and Australia. Developments in the US, France and the Netherlands also had considerable, but lesser, influence. Therefore what occurred in New Zealand cannot be dismissed as a unique case, though some peculiarities might be acknowledged. Hence, to some extent, my research perhaps offers a picture, in microcosm, of what was happening elsewhere in "advanced" capitalist countries. While the New Zealand anarchist and councilist milieu was too small, fragmented and short-lived to develop a sophisticated theory or practice, nonetheless the size of this 'movement' was advantageous because it enabled a comprehensive degree of research that would be very difficult to achieve in a study of a large movement.

International Context: The Rise of 'Councilism,' Modern Class Struggle Anarchism, And Carnival Anarchism

Given a lack of space, I can only note in extreme brevity the economic, social and cultural context of the time. From 1968 until about the mid-1970s, there was an upturn in class struggle in West-ern countries across the globe. Broadly speaking, workers took direct action, sometimes (but not always) outside official organisational forms (union or party), to press their demands of more pay for less work. Their creative revolt generally rejected bureaucracy and the authority of the boss and manager, and especially the boredom and repetition of work.[5] This revolt was mutually interlinked with a wider community-based struggle against other forms of social control in soci-ety (such as patriarchy, racism and sex roles, for instance) and in particular, mass opposition to

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[3] See my 'The New Left and Anarchism in New Zealand from 1956 to the early 1980s: An Anarchist Communist Interpretation,' PhD thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, 2006, and *Rabble Rousers and Merry Pranksters: A History of Anarchism in Aotearoa/New Zealand from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s,* Wellington and Christchurch: Irrecuperable Press and Katipo Books, 2007.

[4] See Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno eds., *The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe Since 1968,* 2 vols, London: Macmillan, 1978, and Beverly Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[5] However, it would be mistaken to claim this revolt was inherently anarchistic. More often than not, workers and protesters mixed authoritarian views with anti-authoritarian ones.

the Vietnam War.[6] Many youths revolted against authority, and attempted to create a subculture or counter-culture to the dominant culture.

As a result, a renewal of interest in anarchism and Marxism occurred, especially in the New Left. Many non-Leninist groupings emerged which were influenced loosely by a melange of left communism, situationism, council communism and anarchism.[7] As New Leftists sought an anti-bureaucratic alternative to Stalinism and social democracy, many became interested in council communism after the inspiring re-appearance of workers' councils during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the French 'events' of May-June 1968, as well as the resurgence in strike activity (including wildcats and occupations) following 1968.

Van der Linden neatly defines council communism, which arose during the working class uprising in Germany and the Netherlands following WWI, as having five starting points:

> Firstly, capitalism is in decline and should be abolished immediately. Secondly, the only alternative to capitalism is a democracy of workers' councils, based on an economy controlled by the working class. Thirdly, the bourgeoisie and its social-democratic allies are trying to save capitalism from its fate by means of 'democratic' manipulation of the working class. Fourthly, in order to hasten the establishment of a democracy of councils, this manipulation must be consistently resisted. This means, on the one hand, boycotting all parliamentary elections and, on the other hand, systematically fighting against the old trade unions (which are organs for joint management of capitalism). Finally, Soviet-type societies are not an alternative to capitalism but, rather, a new form of capitalism.[8]

Bourrinet adds that council communists opposed nationalism and cross-class popular fronts, and rejected 'substitutionism, which sees the communist party as the general staff and the proletariat as a passive mass blindly submitting to the orders of this general staff.'[9]

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[6] See Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left*, pp.319–22.

[7] Marcel van der Linden, 'On Council Communism,' *Historical Materialism,* vol. 12, no. 4 (2004), http://www.kurasje.org/arkiv/15800f.htm, accessed 8 June 2009.

[8] Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left*, p. 324. For studies of council communism other than Bourrinet's book and van der Linden's article, see Serge Bricanier, *Pannekoek and the Workers' Councils,* St Louis: Telos Press, 1978; D. A. Smart ed. *Pannekoek and Garter's Marxism,* London: Pluto Press; Peter Rachleff, *Marxism and Council Communism: The Foundation for Revolutionary Theory for Modern Society,* New York: Revisionist Press, 1976; Mark Shipway, "Council Communism" in *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* eds. Maximilien Rubel and John Crump, London: MacMillan, 1987, pp.104–26; Richard Gombin, *The Radical Tradition: A Study in Modern Revolutionary Thought,* London: Methuen, 1978; and John Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek and the Socialism of Workers' Self-Emancipation 1873—1960,* Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1989.

[9] For a few works which analyse SouB, see Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically,* 2nd edn., Leeds, San Francisco and Edinburgh: Anti/Theses and AK Press, 2000, pp. 63–4; Richard Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975, esp. pp.32–9 and pp.97–104; and Marcel van der Linden, "Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group (1949–65)," *Left History*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (1997), Accessed 11 June 2003, http://struggle.ws/disband/solidarity/sol_bar.html. For the SI, see, for instance, Jean Barrot [Gilles Dauve], *What is Situationism?* Fort Bragg, California: Flatland, 1991; "Decadence: The Theory of Decline or the Decline of Theory? Part Two," *Aufheben,* 3 (Summer 1994), Accessed 22 June 2002, http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/auf 3 dec2.html; Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism*; Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999; Mark Shipway, "Situationism," in *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* eds. Rubel and Crump, pp.151–72; and Peter Wollen, "The Situationist International," *New Left Review,* 174 (March/April 1989), pp.67–95.

There is a dearth of histories about the revival of council communism and 'councilism' in the 1960s and 1970s, at least in English. Of the studies that have been made, most focus on one or two councilist groups, or individual thinkers, especially Socialisme ou Barbarie (SouB), the SI, Cornelius Castoriadis and Guy Debord.[10] Consequently, comparatively little is known about groups such as Solidarity in the UK, Root and Branch in the US, Forbundet Arbetarmakt (United Workers' Power) in Sweden, Daad en Gedachte in the Netherlands, ICO, Echanges et Mouvement, Mouvement Communiste and Negation in France, and Die Soziale Revolution ist keine Parteisache! (Social revolution is not a party affair!) in Germany.[11] In addition, few studies have been published about the numerous 'situ' or 'pro-situ' groups of the period, such as Point Blank!, *Diversion*, For Ourselves, Contradiction and the Council for the Eruption of the Marvellous in the US, *Heatwave*, King Mob and the Infantile Disorders in the UK.[12] All of these can be considered as being part of the broad councilist milieu. Further, Detroit's Red and Black (whose main figure was Fredy Perlman) could perhaps be included as part of the 'situ' current.[13]

Two main schools can be discerned about this revival. The first claims that this renewal was largely distinct from the historic council communist movement, and therefore represented a 'councilist' tendency.[14] The second school maintains that it represented the emergence of an updated form of council communism, which differed from the historic Dutch and German current, but was still recognisably council communist.[15]

Bourrinet, from a left communist viewpoint, considers that the historic council communists were Marxists, were much clearer on their key positions, and accepted the need for a revolutionary party. While the councilist milieu of the post-68 era rejected many core Marxist concepts and principles.[16] In terms of theory, they were loose and eclectic, often borrowing from anarchism. Organisationally, they were unstructured, ephemeral and informal: he likens them to a

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[10] Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left*, pp.320–2. For Solidarity, see Maurice Brinton, *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton,* ed. David Goodway, Edinburgh and Oakland: AK Press, 2004, and for Root & Branch, see, *Root & Branch: The Rise of the Workers' Movements*, Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1975.

[11] Most accounts of the 'situ' milieu are autobiographical in nature — see, for example, Ken Knabb, *Public Secrets*, Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1997 for the San Francisco situationist milieu, for King Mob in the UK see 'Jumbled Notes: A Critical Hidden History of King Mob,' http://www.revoltagainstplenty.com/index.php/recent/34-archivelocal/93-a-hidden-history-of-king-mob, accessed 26 June 2009 and for *Heatwave* see the recollections of Charles Radcliffe in *Dancin' in the Streets!,* pp.325–80. See also for the UK and US 'situ' milieu, Simon Ford, *The Realization and Suppression of the Situationist International: An Annotated Bibliography 1972 — 1992,* Edinburgh and San Francisco, AK Press, 1995, pp.64–115.

[12] They translated and published Situationist material, although they also eclectically published left communist and anarchist writings. See Lorraine Perlman, *Having Little, Being Much: A Chronicle of Fredy Perlman's Fifty Years,* Detroit: Black & Red, 1989.

[13] Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left*, and Steve Wright, "Revolutionary Traditions — Council Communism," *Discussion Bulletin*, 110 (Nov./Dec. 2001), pp.20–24, http://libertariansocialism.4t.com/db/db011107.htm, accessed 6 August 2002. Wright argues that when council communism was rediscovered, it was often through groups and thinkers *outside* the council communist movement such as Socialisme ou Barbarie and the Johnson Forest Tendency.

[14] See in particular Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, esp. pp.77–117. But see also Chamsy El-Ojeili, *From Left Communism to Post-Modernism*, Lanham: University Press of America, 2003, p.36.

[15] Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left*, p.12, asserts that the councilist current had been in existence well before the 1960s: he claims it originated in the 1920s and 1930s when the tendencies that followed Otto Ruhle and the GIC (Group of Internationalist Communists) rejected the concept of a revolutionary party within the working class.

[16] Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left,* p.322.

'nebulous cloud.'[17] Crucially, the councilists rejected the need for a revolutionary organisation; for them, the workers' councils were 'the one and only crucible of revolutionary consciousness within the working class.'[18] As such, he argues that the councilists rejected Marxism in favour of 'anarchism,' which Bourrinet simplistically views as rejecting revolutionary organisation in favour of spontaneity.[19]

In contrast, Gombin argues that French groups such as SouB (and its offshoots) and the SI were an innovative attempt to renew the council communist tradition for the changed conditions of the period, such as rising living standards and mass consumption/production. They expanded the narrow focus of the council communists on the workplace to include everyday life, and the struggle against modern bureaucratic welfare-state capitalism. While Gombin recognises these groups differed from the historic council communist movement in many areas, he still believes that they were the French inheritors of that tradition.[20]

In this paper, I use the term 'councilist' to distinguish the new current (who were a product of post-WWII Keynesian class compromise and its dissolution from the late 1960s onwards), from that of the Dutch and German council communists (who were a product of the revolutionary upsurge following WWI). Hence, unlike Bourrinet, I do not use the term to imply an 'anarchist' degeneration of that tradition, nor do I use it in the same way as the SI, that is, to denote a frozen and dogmatic *ideology* 'which restrains and reifies their [workers' councils] total theory and practice.'[21]

Like councilism, there is a distinct lack of rigorous histories of the anarchist movement in 'advanced' capitalist countries during the l960s and 1970s. While there are many works published about the revival of anarchism during these years,[22] very few of them are based upon substantial primary research.[23] As with councilism, many authors focus on a few groups or journals, such as *Anarchy* (1961–70), the spectacular activities of armed struggle groups such as the Angry Brigade,

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[17] Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left,* p.209.

[18] Cf. Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968,* Edinburgh, San Francisco, and London: AK Press and Kate Sharpley Library, 2002, and Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism,* Edinburgh and Oakland: AK Press, 2009, pp.247–63.

[19] Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism.*

[20] Rene Riesel, 'Preliminaries on the Councils and Councilist Organization,' in *Situationist International Anthology,* ed. Ken Knabb, Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981, p.274.

[21] For some sweeping histories, or collections of material from the time, see Howard Ehrlich, Carol Ehrlich, David de Leon and Glenda Morris eds., *Reinventing Anarchy: What Are Anarchists Thinking These Days ?* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979; Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy,* pp. 174–82; Gerald Runkle, *Anarchism, Old and New,* New York: Delacorte Press, 1972; George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements,* 2nd revised edn., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986, pp.410–22; Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism,* London: Fontana Press, 1993, pp.539–58; David Apter and James Joll eds., *Anarchism Today,* New York: Doubleday, 1971; and Benjamin Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The means and ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms,* Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press, 2006, pp.54–75; and Colin Ward ed., *A Decade of Anarchy 1961—70, Selections From the Monthly Journal "Anarchy,"* London: Freedom Press, 1987.

[22] This makes many of their assertions problematic. For example, it is generally assumed that anarchism during the 1970s was a student "middle class" phenomenon. Yet in New Zealand this was not the case. Most 1970s anarchists were male, young (under twenty-five), white, unemployed and from working class backgrounds. Students were very much in a minority, and the vast majority of groups were not campus-based. See Boraman, *Rabble Rousers,* pp.135–6.

[23] For accounts of *Anarchy,* the Angry Brigade and Bookchin's involvement in the 1960s and 70s anarchist movement, see Colin Ward ed., *A Decade of Anarchy 1961—70,* Tom Vague, *Anarchy in the UK: The Angry Brigade,* Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press, 1997, and Murray Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism, and the Future of the Left: Interviews and Essays, 1993–1998,* Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press, 1999.

or personalities and thinkers such as Murray Bookchin in the US.[24] Subsequently, few bottom-up perspectives have been published that examine the broader anarchist milieu.

Some assert that new forms of anarchism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s that made a fundamental break with the past.[25] Others claim there was a fundamental continuity between classical anarchism and the 'new' anarchism of the 1960s and 1970s.[26] I adopt an intermediary view.[27] While 'new' forms of anarchism became prominent, such as anarcha-feminism, ecoanarchism, liberal anarchism and what I call carnival anarchism, there was also an often overlooked renewal of traditional 'class struggle anarchism.'[28]

This revival in anarchist communism and anarcho-syndicalism was hardly surprising given the upsurge in class struggle that occurred from the late 1960s onwards. To take Britain as an example, "Most of the new anarchist organisations formed during and after the revival of the 1960s have been of a traditional kind."[29] Both Berman and Guerin see the revival as a reemergence of classical anarcho-syndicalism, namely the idea of workers' self-management.[30] It is generally accepted that workers' self-management was a key demand of the French general strike of May 1968,[31] and also a popular demand among New Leftists and several unorthodox trade unions of the late 1960s and 1970s, such as the Confederation Fran^aise Democratique du Travail (CFDT), DRUM (Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement) in Detroit and the New South Wales Builders'

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[24] Examples include Woodcock, *Anarchism,* Runkle, *Anarchism, Old and New,* and David Goodway in his introduction to Alex Comfort, *Against Power and Death: The Anarchist Articles and Pamphlets of Alex Comfort,* ed. David Goodway, London: Freedom Press, 1994.

[25] See especially a series of articles by Nicolas Walter: "Has Anarchism Changed? Part One," *Freedom,* 17 April 1976, pp.9–10, "Has Anarchism Changed? Part One Continued," *Freedom,* 1 May 1976, pp.11–2, "Has Anarchism Changed? Part Two," *Freedom,* 26 June 1976, pp.9–10, and "Has Anarchism Changed? Part Two Concluded," pp.12–3.

[26] Boraman, 'The New Left and Anarchism in New Zealand,' pp.559–67.

[27] For a definition of class struggle anarchism, see Franks, *Rebel Alliances,* pp.12–3, although Franks does not seemingly include the centrality of class struggle, and the working class as the major revolutionary agent, as defining characteristics of class struggle anarchism. 'Class-struggle anarchism' came into use as a term in the 1960s to denote revolutionary, class-based anarchism (either anarchist communism or anarcho-syndicalism) that was opposed to the more liberal, individualist and reformist varieties of anarchism.

[28] Walter, "Has Anarchism Changed? Part Two," p.9. New anarcho-syndicalist groups were represented by the Syndicalist Workers Federation, the Anarchist Syndicalist Alliance, the Anarchist Black Cross and the magazine *Black Flag.* New anarchist communist organisations were represented by the platformist influenced Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists, which changed its name to the Anarchist Workers Association in 1975 and later to the Libertarian Communist Group, and the Anarchist Communist Association. For a few overviews of the British anarchist movement in the 1960s and 1970s, see Peter Shipley, *Revolutionaries in Modern Britain*, London: The Bodley Head, 1976, pp.172–207, Franks, *Rebel Alliances,* pp.54–71 and "Anarchist Communism in Britain," *Organise! For Class Struggle Anarchism*, 42 (Spring 1996), pp.15–8.

[29] See Daniel Guerin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice,* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970, pp.155–9 and Paul Berman ed., *Quotations from the Anarchists,* New York: Praeger, 1972, p.23.

[30] Cf. Michael Seidman, "Workers in a Repressive Society of Seduction: Parisian Metallurgists in May-June 1968," *French Historical Studies,* Vol. 18, no. 1 (Spring 1993), pp.255–78 and *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.

[31] For example, the British Anarchist Communist Association declared it was for workplace and community councils, as well as 'a Revolution of Everyday Life. Relationships now are based on domination and submission: bosses over workers, men over women, adults over children. We seek to change all of this. We seek not just an economic revolution but one that also frees us in our social and personal relationships.' Of course, this statement also reflected the influence of new social movements, and in particular the women's liberation movement. 'Introduction to the Anarchist Communist Association,' 1979, `http://struggle.ws/disband/aca/aca_what.html`, accessed Feb. 22 2001.

Labourers Federation in Australia. Furthermore, many of these new class struggle anarchist groups were influenced somewhat by councilist/ situationist ideas.[32]

While there were continuities between the old and the new anarchists, undoubtedly much tension existed between them. Many of the younger anarchists saw "Old Left" anarchists as puritanical, dogmatic, sectarian, out of date, and lacking energy. While Old Left anarchists like Sam Dolgoff of New York saw 1960s 'neo-anarchism' as a revival of bourgeois influences on anarchism.[33] To cap it off, the neo-anarchists associated with Leninists, who Dolgoff considered to be anarchism's mortal enemy.

Some of this tension centred on the newcomers' eclectic borrowing from councilism, which the traditionalists saw as unnecessary. Traditionalists generally remained hostile and distrustful of all types of Marxism, which they tended to equate simplistically with Stalinism. Essentially, two types of anarchists who drew upon councilism can be discerned. The first were those seeking to rejuvenate traditional forms of class struggle anarchism by combining it with aspects of councilism. The second were carnival anarchists, who generally drew more upon the artistic, Situationist wing of councilism rather than its SouB/Solidarity strain.

A good example of the first tendency was the French group that produced the magazine *Noir et Rouge* (1956–70), which included the brothers Cohn-Bendit.[34] In 1968, the editorial of *Noir et Rouge* stated:

> The real cleavage is not between 'Marxism' or what is described as such, and anarchism, but rather between the libertarian spirit and idea, and the Leninist, Bolshevik, bureaucratic conception of organization.We are not afraid to say.that we feel closer to 'Marxists' in the Council Communist movement of the past or to.many friends in the March 22 movement than we do to official 'anarchists' who have a semi-Leninist conception of party organization.[35]

Noir et Rouge drew upon the ideas of SouB in particular.[36] Daniel Cohn-Bendit declared he was an "anarchist.along the lines of 'council socialism'" and claimed he was a Marxist in the same

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[32] See Sam Dolgoff, *Fragments: A Memoir*, Cambridge: Refract Publications, 1986, and *The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society*, 3rd edn., Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1989. He was critical of what he saw as the new anarchists' impracticality, bohemian lifestylism, escapism, utopianism, individualism, anti-organisationalism, spontaneism, and their lack of thought. In short, neo-anarchism was based upon non-working-class aspects of anarchism. Dolgoff, *The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society*, pp.1–3.

[33] See Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1968. It appears other French anarchist groups also drew upon councilism. Skirda notes that following 1968 the UTCL (Union of Libertarian Communist Workers) was tinged with 'councilism and Marxism.' Skirda, *Facing the Enemy*, p.181.

[34] November 1968 editorial quoted in Woodcock, *Anarchism*, p.271. The last comment applied particularly to the platformist Federation Communiste Libertaire. 'In the Tradition: Part Two. The Second World War and After,' *Organise!*, 53 (Summer 2000), p.25.

[35] Gombin notes that Noir et Rouge accepted "the notion of workers' councils, as then expressed by *Socialism ou Barbarie* (1958)." Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, p.86n. The influence of Socialisme ou Barbarie can be clearly seen in the brothers' Cohn-Bendit's book *Obsolete Communism*, wherein they noted their debt to the ideas of Pierre Chaulieu [Cornelius Castoriadis]. D. Cohn-Bendit and G. Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism*, p.133. Indeed, they wanted Socialisme ou Barbarie to be co-signatories of their book. Margaret Atack, *May 68 in French Fiction and Film: Rethinking Society, Rethinking Representation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.82. However, Maurice Brinton notes that *Obsolete Communism* was influenced not only by SouB, but also Solidarity, the SI, ICO, Noir et Rouge and Recherches Libertaires. Brinton, *For Workers' Power*, p.103.

[36] Interview of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Anarchy*, 99 (May 1969), p.153.

sense as Bakunin.[37] This 'anarcho-councilism' was possibly the most important explicit anarchist influence in the events of 1968.[38] In contrast, Gombin claims that the traditional French anarchist groups had lost influence, and had become inward-looking and dogmatic defenders of an "inviolable [anarchist] ideology" that they presented as an ultimate truth, "a finished system to be rejected or accepted as a whole."[39]

The other type of anarchism that drew upon councilism — or certain aspects of it — was carnival anarchism.[40] I define carnival anarchism as both a distinctive style and type of anarchism. Its major characteristic was its blend of the New Left's protest politics with the anarchic elements of the counter-culture. Carnival anarchism was neither a purely counter-cultural type of anarchism, nor a purely traditional type of anarchism, but an invigorating mixture of the two. Carnival anarchists rejected not only the apolitical elements of the counterculture, but also the puritanical, self-sacrificial element within the New Left. Hence further defining characteristics of carnival anarchism were its mixture of absurdist, mocking humour with direct action, and its aim of combining the cultural revolution with a socio-economic one. Another important feature was its aggressive, disruptive and provocative style. In short, carnival anarchists wanted revolution and fun too.

The most well-known carnival anarchist groups or groupuscules were the Provos and the Kabouters in the Netherlands, and in the US, Black Mask, Up against the Wall Motherfucker! and *The Rebel Worker*.[41] These groups represented the explicitly anarchist wing of the playful, theatrical politics of the time that mixed radical art (dada, surrealism and so on) with revolutionary politics. This broader anti-authoritarian tendency has been variously called 'antidisciplinarian,'

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[37] See Boraman, 'The New Left and Anarchism in New Zealand,' pp.142–64. For example, many of the key members of the March 22 Movement were members of Noir et Rouge, such as Jean-Pierre Dutheuil and the brothers Cohn-Bendit.

[38] Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism,* p. 83.

[39] I borrow the term 'carnival anarchism' from John Englart, but use it differently. Englart defines it as a disruptive, 'chaoticist,' anti-organisational scene. See John Englart, "Anarchism in Sydney 1975–1981 Part I," *Freedom,* Vol. 43, no. 11 (12 June 1982), pp.12–5, http:/ /www.takver.com/history/sydney/syd7581.htm, accessed 24 October 2001. In this paper, 'carnival anarchism' is not used as a derogatory term to suggest that they were not serious, and thus ought not to be taken seriously. Nor is it meant to infer that they were interested *only* in having fun. In addition, many Australasian carnival anarchists were activists as well. In this regard, Graeme Minchin of the Sydney and Auckland carnival anarchists said that they called themselves 'anti-authoritarians.' He believes the term 'carnival anarchism' was used by the Sydney 'libertarian workers' to dismiss the 'anti-authoritarians' as a joke, and to deny 'that we had any other activities than those which can be described as countercultural.' Minchin, Letter to the author, 16 March 2006.

[40] See Richard Kempton, *Provo: Amsterdam's Anarchist Revolt,* Autonomedia: New York, 2007, Rudolf de Jong, "Provos and Kabouters," in *Anarchism Today,* eds. David Apter and James Joll, New York: Doubleday, 1971, pp.164–80; Roel van Duyn, *Message of a Wise Kabouter,* London: Duckworth, 1972 [1969]; *Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker: The Incomplete Works of Ron Hahne, Ben Morea and the Black Mask Group*, London: Unpopular Books and Sabotage Editions, 1993; and Franklin Rosemont and Charles Radcliffe, *Dancin' in the Streets! Anarchists, IWWs, Surrealists, Situationists & Provos in the 1960s as recorded in the pages of The Rebel Worker and Heatwave,* Chicago: Charles H Kerr, 2005. Undoubtedly there were many other carnival anarchist groups than the ones listed above, for example, the Resurgence Youth Movement in the US, but they are lesser known.

[41] For a few overviews of this tendency, see Joseph Berke ed., *Counter Culture: The Creation of an Alternative Society*, London: Peter Owen, 1969; Peter Stansill and David Mairowitz eds., *BAMN: Outlaw Manifestos and Ephemera 1965—70,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971; Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents From Lettrisme to Class War,* Stirling, Scotland: AK Press, 1991; Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture,* London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968; Richard Neville, *Play Power,* London: Paladin, 1971; and Julie Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

'cultural revolutionary,' 'playpower' or 'political freaks.'[42] It includes a number of groups that did not identify with anarchism, including the San Francisco Diggers, Kommune 1, King Mob and the Yippies, but nevertheless they were often called anarchists or anarchistic.[43]

Often the carnival anarchists had poor relations with traditional anarchists, who treated them with bemusement or bewilderment. Older Dutch anarchists, for instance, were sceptical of the Provos because they were unsure if they were serious, and because of their hostility towards the proletariat, their lack of intellectual content and their theoretical incoherence.[44]

Most importantly, the carnival anarchists attempted to put certain Situationist ideas into *everyday practice.* As Franklin Rosemont of *The Rebel Worker,* the official organ of the Chicago local of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) that was influenced by anarchism, syndicalism, Marxism, Situationist praxis, 'working class counter culture' and surrealism, noted:

> At the time [in the 1960s] it always seemed to me that the Situationists *wrote* and *talked* and *theorized* about playing and having fun, while *we [Rebel Worker* and *Heatwave]* — still just kids, in a sense — were actually *playing* and *having the fun,* and trying to articulate it in a new revolutionary poetic /political language…That some of what we did and said was foolish doesn't alter the fact that most of what we did and said was what was really to be said and done.[45]

Phase 1: The Era of 'Great Radicalisation' (Late 1960s, Early 1970s)

I shall look at two phases of anarchism and councilism in Australasia. The first phase occurred during an era of 'affluence' for most working class people (although indigenous people often were still trapped in poverty), as well as a period of 'great radicalisation' through the rise of extra-parliamentary protest — especially demonstrations against the Vietnam War (both the New Zealand and Australian governments sent troops to Vietnam), apartheid, and US military installations. The protest movement peaked in New Zealand during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Also, this period also saw the beginnings of a major upturn in class struggle following the successful strikes against the Arbitration Court's 'nil wage order' of 1968. During this phase, the carnival anarchists were an optimistic, ebullient and energetic current that gleefully anticipated that 'revolution was just around the corner.'

The second phase occurred once these extra-parliamentary movements had died down during the mid-1970s and a major economic recession had set in, as well as the election of an authoritarian government. Yet, at the same time, workplace based class struggle peaked. The carnival anarchists during this period tended to be more inward-looking, less optimistic and more focussed

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[42] For example, Nigel Young maintains that "the Beats, Situationists, Provos, Kabouters, Diggers, Yippees — in fact, all the most active groups in the counter-culture — were continually labelled 'anarchist.'" Young, *An Infantile Disorder? The Crisis and Decline of the New Left,* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, p.135. And Paul Avrich claims that Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin were anarchists. Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p.527n.

[43] Ger Harmsen, "Provo and Anarchist," *Delta,* 10 (Autumn 1967), pp.31–2 and Rudolf de Jong, "Anarchism Post-1945," *Delta,* 10 (Autumn 1967), pp.35–6. De Jong also notes "many anarchists — and I do not exclude myself — have been excited by the actions of the Provo movement and, at the same time, puzzled about its anarchism." De Jong, "Provos and Kabouters," p.171.

[44] Rosemont and Radcliffe, *Dancin' in the Streets!,* p.378, original emphasis.

[45] Although this is difficult to surmise given the lack of information about the subject.

on changing interpersonal relationships than in the earlier phase. In Australasia, it appears that carnival anarchism flourished the most in this phase, while it seems that it peaked in the US and the UK during the late 1960s.[46]

The legendary Bill Dwyer was perhaps the first carnival anarchist in New Zealand. Dwyer, a flamboyant Irishmen, was particularly renowned for harassing student and union bureaucrats, and carrying out 'illegalist' activity such as running a sly-grog business and shoplifting in the early to mid-1960s. His 'illegalist' streak took a new twist when he moved to Sydney and sold LSD to finance anarchist activity, as well as becoming an exponent of the alleged revolutionary potential of the drug. After being deported from Australia, he ended up in London, and became involved in the editorial collective of *Anarchy* (second series), which was more open to class struggle and councilism than it was under the editorship of Ward.[47] He was a major organiser of the Windsor Free Festivals, held in Windsor Park as an attempt to 'reclaim the commons' from royal enclosure, from 1972 to 1974.[48]

Carnival anarchism as a distinct tendency, rather than the practice of a few individuals, arose in New Zealand in the early 1970s. Specifically, it originated from the carnivalesque wing of the New Left. The cultural revolutionaries, such as the Friends of Brutus, were often at the centre of direct action in the protests of the time. New forms of protest emerged that were more creative and theatrical. Many of these fun revolutionist groupings were influenced by their overseas counterparts. For example, Love Shops, based on the Free Shops of the San Francisco Diggers, were established in three New Zealand cities, and 'Freestores' were also established by carnival anarchists in two Australian cities. In New Zealand, the Dunedin Anarchist Army attempted to levitate the Dunedin Town Hall in 1972 after a dispute with the local mayor over permits for protests (in imitation of the Yippies attempted levitation of the Pentagon). The Christchurch Progressive Youth Movement (PYM), whose members were at that stage mainly anarchists, copied the white bikes scheme of the Provos in 1969.

Roger Cruickshank of the Wellington PYM and Anarchist Congress, a carnival anarchist grouping whose main activity seemed to be holding 'feasts,' was fond of quoting Yippie Abbie Hoffman that "ideology is a brain disease."[49] This anti-theoretical streak ran deeply throughout the New Left. The New Left was based on an urgent moral outrage against issues such as the Vietnam War. What mattered was what you were *doing,* not thinking. Thus they often refused to clearly define their politics, because to Cruickshank 'doctrinal bitching' had bogged the left down and prevented them from taking direct action in the here and now.[50] Instead, they had a playful atti-

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[46] For example, it reprinted two articles on workers' councils from the SI in *Anarchy* 7, n.d., c. 1971.

[47] See Ken Maddock, "Bill Dwyer: An Anarchist Illegalist," *Tharunka*, 21 April 1970, p.15, Boraman, *Rabble Rousers*, pp.8–12, 18–25 and for his role in the Windsor free festivals, see George McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties,* London and New York: Verso, 1996, p.16.

[48] Advertisement for Anarchist Congress, *PYM Rabble,* 2 (June 1970), p.9. The original quote is from Abbie Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell of It*, New York: The Dial Press, 1968, p.56.

[49] Cruickshank, "Editorial," *Salient,* 2 (1971), p.2.

[50] Kraus interviewed in the documentary *Rebels in Retrospect: The Political Memoirs of Some Members of the Progressive Youth Movement,* Director Russell Campbell, Wellington: Vanguard Films, 1991. Kraus returned to the US, and became an author and filmmaker, publishing many books through Semiotext(e) and Native Agents, such as *Hatred of Capitalism: A Semiotext(e) Reader*, which she edited with Sylvere Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001).

tude towards theory. Author Chris Kraus of the Wellington PYM said that they thought 'ideology was like a costume you could try on and parade around in.'[51]

As a result, the carnivalesque New Leftists often borrowed eclectically from many different sources, including Marxism. For example, Farrell Cleary, an anarchist and member of Auckland's Living Theatre street theatre group and the Resistance bookshop, wrote that:

> Resistance seemed to incarnate New Left Zeitgeist, owing as much to the American yippies as it did to Cohn-Bendit. We hoped to bypass the kind of doctrinal splits between Marxism and Anarchism which had riven the revolutionary left for a century.[52]

Consequently, this convergence between anarchism and Marxism was based upon struggling together against a common enemy. Yet their theory was often crude and incoherent. Some did not see a contradiction in mixing Trotskyism, Maoism and anarchism together. For example, the Christchurch PYM called for workers' councils, the abolition of private property and money, as well as "worker control of industry, student-teacher control of schools and universities," and yet claimed that "all land will be taken by the State." It proclaimed it was internationalist while 'fully supporting' the nationalist, cross-class Vietnamese National Liberation Front. One or two returned from visits to China praising it as a libertarian socialist paradise. Given this confusion, it is thus unsurprising that some anarchists became Maoists or fellow travellers.[53] However, Kraus cautions that the 'yahoo ideology' of the Wellington PYM radicalised people in a much more permanent way than 'orderly living Marxist-Leninists.'[54]

Little is known about the carnival anarchist wing of the Australian New Left and their relationship with Marxism.[55] However, at least three Melbourne-based groupings that have been described as carnival anarchist did draw upon councilism. They were TREASON (The Revolutionary Emancipists Against State Oppression and Nationalism) and the groupings that published the magazines *Outlaw* and *Solidarity: For Workers' Power.* TREASON, a campus-based group, stated

> Humour, of a surrealistic, bohemian or romantic strain, is the most valuable weapon in the struggle to reeducate the university...T.R.E.A.S.O.N. was close to the overseas developments of Situationism (France), Provoism (Holland) and neo-Wobblyism (U.S.A. and U.K.).[56]

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[51] Farrell Cleary, e-mail to the author, 21 Sep. 2006. Auckland Resistance was often the focal point for the independent non-party carnivalesque wing of the Auckland New Left.

[52] For a discussion of this trend, see Boraman, 'The New Left and Anarchism in New Zealand,' pp.313–6, and 332–6.

[53] Kraus interviewed in *Rebels in Retrospect.*

[54] There were many carnival anarchists in Australia other than these three groupings. For example, the Anarcho-Surrealist Insurrectionary Feminists (AS IF), the grouping around the Collingwood Freestore and free legal aid service, and the Kensington Libertarians in Sydney who put out the underground magazines *Tharunka, Thorunka* and *Thor* (for which Wendy Bacon was imprisoned briefly in an obscenity trial). See Anne Coombs, *Sex and Anarchy: The Life and Death of the Sydney Push,* Melbourne: Penguin, 1996, pp.243–6.

[55] 'The Growth of the Australian Anarchist Movement,' 1970, http://www.takver.com/history/aia/aia00031.htm, accessed 2 Aug 09.

[56] Joe Toscano, 'Carnival Anarchism in Melbourne 1970—75,' [[http://www.takver.com/history/melb/carnival1970_75.htm], accessed 2 Aug 09.

Outlaw has been described as 'a combination of poetry, colour artwork and short texts on surrealism, anarchism, and situationism.'[57]

In the early 1970s some Sydney Libertarians, who were not carnival anarchists but instead were 'anarcho-cynicalists' who shared the humorous approach of the carnivalists, formed an Anarcho-Marxist Group based on integrating Marx and Bakunin.[58] The Sydney Libertarians were influenced by some Marxists, including Wilhelm Reich and Max Nomad. The latter cynically commented that the Anarcho-Marxist Group's synthesis of Marx and Bakunin was quite appropriate because 'they both wanted control over the First International and they both wanted to preside over a non-capitalist "classless" and hence "stateless" society.'[59]

In terms of their relationship to class struggle, it seems obvious that it was not the main focus of the carnival anarchists. Most of their exuberant energy went into the multi-class protest movement, and attempts to push that movement in a more radical direction by carrying out direct action against specific targets rather than just 'counting arses' in street protests. Specifically, they focussed on anti-Vietnam War and anti-apartheid protest.

However, two attitudes to class struggle can be discerned amongst the carnivalesque New Leftists. The first was that class was something that the doctrinal Old Left held up as a sacred shibboleth, and thus it should be discarded as a dogmatic ideology from the past. Workers were seen as passive, while protesters, students, youth, hippies and the 'lumpenproletariat' were considered the new rebellious 'classes.' For example Tim Shadbolt, New Zealand's anarchistic equivalent of Abbie Hoffman, exclaimed, "Stuff the workers! They will never do anything!"[60] This was the New Zealand equivalent of the Provo's extolling of the 'provotariat,' and their subsequent dismissal of the proletariat. "The provotariat is the only rebel group left in the welfare countries. The proletariat has sold itself out to its leaders and its television. It has gone over to the old foe, the bourgeoisie, and together they form one great grey blob."[61] As a result, the Provo leadership condemned workers' self-activity such as an Amsterdam construction workers' riot in 1966 which began as a demonstration against the workers' union.[62]

The second attitude did see class struggle as important. Most carnival anarchists and carnivalesque New Leftists espoused workers' self-management as a core aim. Many attempted to make links with other workers during a period of increasing class struggle. Consequently, they joined workers' demonstrations and supported workers' disputes. For example, the Christchurch PYM, which was an off-campus group largely comprising of young workers, had an alliance with the Lyttelton branch of the Seamen's Union, then probably the most militant union in New Zealand. Some carnival anarchist groupuscules abroad like *The Rebel Worker* had a similar praxis towards workplace-based struggle.

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[57] See A. J. Baker, 'What is Anarcho-Marxism?,' *Broadsheet,* 64 (May 1971), pp.1–4.

[58] Max Nomad, 'Comments on Anarcho-Marxism,' *Broadsheet*, 66 (Sep. 1971), p.1. Nomad and the Sydney Libertarians were sceptical about the prospect for a classless, stateless society, and believed that there would always be an authoritarian elite. Therefore, the only thing left to do was to 'permanently protest' against any authority.

[59] Shadbolt in 1970 as reported in Ron Smith, *Working Class Son*, Wellington: Ron Smith, 1994, p.148. He said he tried working with workers, but found it too difficult. See also Shadbolt, *Bullshit and Jellybeans*, Wellington: Alister Taylor, 1971, p.66–7.

[60] A. L. Constandse and Harry Mulisch, "Interview with Roel van Duyn," *Delta,* 10 (Autumn 1967), p.28.

[61] Kempton, *Provo*, pp.91–104.

[62] *Anarchy Newsletter,* Aug. 1977, p.1. However, in *Compass,* they published an article by John Milne, a 'hippy anarchist' who produced the underground magazine *Earwig.*

It appears that councilism in Australasia during the late 1960s and early 1970s was highly influenced by Solidarity (UK) rather than by the SI, presumably because it was difficult to find translations of Situationist material at that time. Often councilism, with its strongly anti-bureaucratic bent, appealed to those who had left, or had been expelled from, the minibureaucracies of the Leninist parties. For example, in New Zealand, the only councilist group formed during this period was the awkwardly named "Revolutionary Committee of the CPNZ (Expelled)." It was a tiny Auckland-based group that had been expelled from the Maoist Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ) in 1968 for questioning the lack of freedom and debate within the CPNZ, as well as the CPNZ's participation in elections.

Originally, the Committee's outlook was Maoist, and their criticism of the CPNZ was limited to a few issues. For the most part, they soon broke with Maoism, and adopted most aspects of councilism after they were introduced to the ideas of Solidarity, the ideas of council communist Herman Gorter and the anarchist communist/councilist Guy Aldred (through much correspondence with Aldred's long-time associate, John Taylor Caldwell). In their magazine *Compass* they reprinted excerpts from Solidarity pamphlets. They also corresponded with a similar group in Brisbane called the Self-Management Group (SMG). Yet the Committee distanced themselves from the anarchist movement. Indeed, Steve Taylor of the Committee wrote to the Christchurch Anarchy Group that he had 'no affiliation express or implicit' with anarchism.[63]

The Committee was a discussion group, although they did take part in the 'liberation of Albert Park,' a festive-like and successful movement against the suppression of free assembly and free speech in that park. Taylor also went on a lengthy hunger strike in Albert Park against the Vietnam War in 1970.

While the Committee was highly critical of Leninism, and viewed the USSR and China as bourgeois class societies, it did not fully break with Maoism. Thus the Committee expressed conventional councilist views in its rejection of all political parties, parliament, and unions. Instead of unions, it called for independent shop committees to be formed. Instead of parliament, it called for soviets or workers' councils.[64] Yet residues of Maoism remained in its espousal of 'dialectical materialism' and in its support for a "workers' state" — although they believed that such a state would be composed of workers' councils.

In contrast to the Revolutionary Committee, the Brisbane SMG, the most important councilist group in Australia, seemingly co-operated with the anarchist milieu. For example, they briefly took a formal part in the synthesist Federation of Australian Anarchists, but left it after they found it too contradictory and anti-organisational. According to Englart, the SMG was formed in 1971, and he describes them as 'libertarian socialists' and 'councilists' like Solidarity.[65] The SMG was highly influenced by Solidarity and SouB, and in turn it appears they had considerable influence within the Australian anarchist milieu. Indeed, a West Australian SMG was formed. The Brisbane SMG also operated a bookshop called Red and Black,[66] and a printshop. It has been claimed that the SMG 'led Brisbane's marches' against the Vietnam War, apartheid, and the

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[63] *Compass*, Sep./Oct. 1974, p.22.

[64] Englart, 'Anarchism in Sydney.'

[65] Although Connie Healy claims that it founded in 1968 as the bookshop of the New Left group The Students for Democratic Action, a group in which Brian Laver was a prominent member. Healy, 'Radical Bookshops' in *Radical Brisbane, an Unruly History,* eds. Raymond Evans and Carole Ferrier, Melbourne: The Vulgar Press, 2004, p. 204.

[66] Hamish Alcorn, 'No Organised Anarchists in Brisbane?,' http: / /www.ainfos.ca/99/apr/ainfos00118.html, accessed 19 Aug 2009.

authoritarian Queensland state government headed by Joh Bjelke-Petersen.[67] The Brisbane SMG involved prominent activist Brian Laver, who has been described as a 'fiery student radical.'[68]

Phase 2: The Mid-1970s

During this phase, a more fully-formed convergence between councilism and anarchism occurred in New Zealand. Overall, the councilist ideas of Solidarity and of the Situationist International were highly influential in the Australasian anarchist milieu. Australasian councilists tended to become allies with class struggle anarchists. Both the councilists and class struggle anarchists clashed with the carnival anarchists, particularly in Australia, where bitter schisms occurred over fundamental questions of organisation and orientation. Nonetheless, carnival anarchists during this phase were not adverse to councilism (of the Situationist version in particular). Perhaps this was because the works of the SI did not become readily available in English until the early-mid 1970s. Or perhaps it was also because Australia, and New Zealand in particular, tended to be a few years behind international trends.

Carnival Anarchism

Many carnival anarchist groups were formed and reformed during this phase. In New Zealand, the Auckland Anarchist Activists (AAA), the *Lumpen* grouping in Auckland, and the Perth Street group in Christchurch were the major carnival anarchist groups. In Australia, the carnivalist groupuscules are too many to mention. In Sydney alone, they formed the Sydney Anarchist Group (which published *Rising Free*), Sydney Sewer Rats, Fruity Together, *The Plague* grouping, Bondi Vandals, and Panic Merchants. Frequently, the name of their group would change with each new action or stunt they took.

The characteristics of these groupuscules were manifold. They were affinity or friendship groups. They were ephemeral in nature. They revolved around a large house or flat, normally situated in an inner-city working class suburb that had a high proportion of bohemians and students;[69] often these houses were squatted, particularly in Sydney. They considered themselves activists, and sporadically took part in the protest movements of the time (in New Zealand this included pro-abortion rallies, anti-apartheid demonstrations, anti-secret police rallies, Maori land occupations and activity against the deportation of Pacific Island migrant workers). Yet at the same time there was a strong counter-cultural, druggist and artistic focus, and an emphasis on spontaneity, collective living, having fun in the here and now and on the political as the personal. Individual transformation and personal relationships were viewed as crucial.

One of their main activities was carrying out satirical and provocative stunts. In New Zealand, these included males dressing up as the Queen (complete with grotesque dark purple masks and dresses) to mock her during a 'royal' visit, and various anti-election stunts (such as creating a

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[67] 'The Radical Books of Queensland,' http://bushtelegraph.wordpress.com/2008/07/18/radical-books-in-brisbane/, accessed 19 Aug. 2009. See also 'Honeymoon over: The decline and fall of the left coalition,' *The Old Mole*, no. 3 (June 29, 1970), http://members.optushome.com.au/spainter/Honeymoon.html, accessed 19 Aug. 2009.

[68] For example, both the Napier Street and Crummer Road affinity groups of the AAA were in Ponsonby in Auckland. In the 1970s, Ponsonby was populated by a mix of working-class Polynesians, students and bohemians. These anarchist *groupuscules* represented the political wing of the Ponsonby counter-culture.

[69] See Boraman, *Rabble Rousers*, pp.103, 114–5 and 127–8.

huge paper mache penis dubbed the 'general erection,' and the attempted stealing of a ballot box during the 1981 cliff-hanger election, with the aim of demanding a 100% increase in wages for all workers during a wage freeze).[70] In Sydney and Melbourne, carnivalists formed the 'Dairy Liberation Front' which stole milk from rich suburbs and redistributed it to community organisations in working class suburbs. Sydney carnivalists penned a letter purported to be the Leichardt Town Council Mayor's resignation letter. The letter advocated an anarchist revolution and encouraged the formation of workers' and residents' councils. At the time, corruption allegations had been made against Council officers about rezoning areas for high rise development. Both Australian stunts caused a furore in the press.[71]

The carnival anarchists were eclectic, and drew upon councilist ideas. Peter McGregor, a key figure in the Sydney carnival anarchist scene, writes 'by the mid 70s I'd evolved to an anarchist position, under the influence of Socialisme ou Barbarie, Solidarity (UK) and the Self Management Group (Brisbane).'[72] McGregor helped found the Sydney Anarchist Group in about 1974 along the lines of Brisbane SMG's manifestos 'As We See It' and 'As We Don't See It' as they 'seemed to have the most coherent political position and McGregor wanted to set up a similar group in Sydney.'[73] As a result, the SAG reprinted articles by Situationist Rene Riesel and Carl Boggs on workers' councils.[74] Likewise, the AAA, the major carnival anarchist group in New Zealand, was formed from the break-up of Auckland Solidarity, a class struggle anarchist group influenced by Solidarity (UK). The AAA declared it was for 'a free socialist society' and they stated:

> Anarchism is a call to revolution...a revolution that will not only transform the means of production but will also radically change human relationships and build a society based on real equality and freedom. A real socialist society built from below. Built by working people who are directly involved, through workers councils, in making the decisions which affect their lives.[75]

They were very drawn to Situationist ideas, including carrying out provocative stunts and scandals. Often their publications employed Situationist style slogans, such as the 'Win a cop competition' leaflet, which was distributed at an anti-police march. It suggested a cop 'is one who would gladly lay down his "life" to protect the power of things and their price,' and then encouraged people to attach their answers to a brick, and throw it through the nearest police station window.[76] Incidentally, Auckland carnival anarchists firebombed the local police station. Grant McDonagh has commented that the Perth Street groupuscule was 'in a very isolated headspace

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[70] Englart, 'Anarchism in Sydney.'

[71] Peter McGregor, *Cultural Battles: The Meaning of the Viet Nam — USA war,* Melbourne: Scam Publications, 1998, p.16. The Wikipedia entry for McGregor notes that he 'discerned considerable similarities between the Situationist International (SI) & Socialism or Barbarism (SoB), let alone more general parallels between the SI (including its Libertarian Marxism) and Anarchism, especially in its council communist form.' `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_McGregor`, accessed 30 June 2009. This article was probably written by someone close to McGregor.

[72] Peter McGregor wikipedia entry, `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_McGregor`, accessed 30 June 2009.

[73] *Workers' Councils,* Sydney: Rising Free Reprint, n.d.

[74] *Anarchy and the State,* Auckland: Auckland Anarchist Activists, n.d., c.1976.

[75] Auckland Anarchist Activists, 'Win a Cop Competition,' c.1976.

[76] Grant McDonagh, Interview, Christchurch 24 July 1996.

from society. It was all sort of *fight the bastards*!, you know, a real violent militant thing, everything that you did had to be really criminal.'[77] For example, they ran an organised shoplifting collective.

Yet their borrowing from the SI was haphaZard, and generally lacked depth and coherence. Overall, they were more attracted to the poetical 'radical subjectivity' of Raoul Vaneigem of the SI, rather than the SI's 'objectivist' wing represented by Guy Debord. For example, Terry Leahy, an Australian carnival anarchist, stressed Vaneigem's idea that revolution begins from everyday life by people fulfilling their own desires, rejecting rigid roles and playing games. Leahy wrote 'spontaneous creativity and the sense of festivity are the keys to revolutionary practice.'[78] Drawing upon Reich, Vaneigem and Castoriadis, he asserted that the Spanish anarchist revolution largely failed because the anarchist rank and file were possessed by a self-sacrificing spirit of obedience to their leaders. In short, he argued that people's acceptance of hierarchy and obedience is the main barrier to a successful revolution, rather than the say the traditional notion of focussing on how revolutionaries are organised.[79] The carnivalists attempted to live a creative life free from self-sacrifice by refusing to reproduce capital in everyday life. This perspective is captured in this article about McGregor:

> McGregor embraced a purist position, of refusing to reproduce capitalist daily life — commodity, exchange relationships — by abolishing the limits imposed upon people by wage-labor & private property...In the purist spirit of Charles Fourier's *Some Advice Concerning the Next Social Metamorphosis:* "Never sacrifice a present good to a future good. Enjoy the moment; don't get into anything which doesn't satisfy your passions right away..."So, since property was theft, why not squat; and since work was wage-slavery, then don't.[80]

McGregor saw interpersonal relations as the primary site of politics, rather than self-sacrifcing activism for an *external* cause.[81] For Graeme Minchin, a key figure in both the Auckland and Sydney carnival anarchist scenes, an essential part of anarchism was 'to become complete or whole human beings,' and these anarchists with an 'integral personality' he considers are the people capable of making revolution. Consequently, in the mid-1970s, he said the Australasian carnival anarchists went inward and attempted to change themselves, while at the same time attempting getting a message across.[82]

While these views appear to be individualistic, Minchin stressed that they sought to synthesise individual and collective interests. They were aware of class, aimed for selfmanagement, and formed activist groups that had class-based content. For example, they formed unemployed groups in Auckland in 1976 and Christchurch in 1978. According to Prebble, the Auckland City Unemployed Group was an outward looking (involving about 30 people, including many Poly-

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[77] Terry Leahy, 'Pre-War Anarchists and the Post-War Ultra-Left,' unpublished manuscript, c.1981, p.32.

[78] Leahy, 'Pre-War Anarchists,' pp.8–10.

[79] Peter McGregor wikipedia entry, http: / / en.wikipedia.org/ wiki / Peter McGregor

[80] Peter McGregor wikipedia entry, http: / / en.wikipedia.org/ wiki / Peter McGregor

[81] Minchin, Interview.

[82] Frank Prebble, Interview, Christchurch 14 May 1996.

nesians) and very active group. It went out to industrial working class South Auckland, and picketed racist capitalists. It had a strong anti-racist focus.[83]

For carnival anarchists, becoming involved in the unemployed movement was a response to the economic downturn of the mid-1970s, which caused mass unemployment to arrive after a long era of full employment. But it was also a product of the carnival anarchists' rejection of the puritanical work ethic. Oliver Robb, of the Auckland anarchists and Auckland City Unemployed Group, wrote, *"Why should a person work? Why should a person be forced to work at a dull, humiliating* job.?"[84] As *Aufheben* notes, this represented a marginalisation in the refusal of work:

The 'refusal of work,' a militant tendency which had developed in the workplaces in the 1960s and 70s, now became displaced onto the dole. With such displacement came a certain degree of marginalization, however. While the earlier 'refusal of work' threatened to spread across workplaces and thus form links between different workers and to those outside of the workplace, the new 'dole autonomy' too often entails forms of individualism and lifestylism.[85]

Their refusal of work did not just take the form of 'dole autonomy.' It also took the form of what Wildcat (Germany) later called 'jobbing,'[86] that is, working sporadically for a few months at a time at various poorly paid menial jobs in order to save money, and then quitting to live off the proceeds. Then they would find another job once they had spent their savings.[87] Such a strategy worked during a time of near full employment, as people could find employment when they liked.

As with much of the New Left, carnival anarchists were hostile to *formal* organisation. Instead, they championed the role of *informal* organisation, especially in the form of small groups of friends or affinity groups.[88] As affinity groups were built upon mutual trust, they were highly dynamic and able to act quickly without being impeded by formal procedures. Yet they tended to be unstable. Friendship circles split up, and friends moved on to other pursuits. By late 1977, for instance, Auckland's Napier Street groupuscule became inward-looking and self-destructive, and thus began to disband.[89] By the early 1980s, many anarchists had departed for Australia or London.

Affinity groups, because they were based upon close-knit friendships, could be clique-like in behaviour and dominated by informal elites. In the absence of clear, transparent and democratic

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[83] Oliver Robb, *Anarchy in Albert Park: An Attack on the 'Work Ethic,'* Christchurch: Christchurch Anarchy Group, 1976, p.2 (original emphasis). Robb claimed that questioning the work ethic "presents a real threat to the foundations of our industrial society" (p.2).

[84] Aufheben, "Unemployed Recalcitrance and Welfare Restructuring in the UK Today," in *Stop the Clock! Critiques of the New Social Workhouse,* Brighton: Aufheben, 2000, Accessed 22 July 2003, [http://geocities.com/aufheben2/stc_auf]

[85] As Wildcat (Germany) write, 'for many young people it was inconceivable to adjust to wage labour and to work away at a job until reaching pension age. Additionally, we ourselves refused to strive individually through a professional career for a better place in the capitalist hierarchy. Out of this grew the practice of jobbing: to do any old shitty job for a short time, in order then to have time for ourselves, for political struggle and for pleasure.' Wildcat, 'Open Letter to John Holloway,' *Wildcat-Zirkular,* No. 39 (Sep. 1997), http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/zirkular/39/z39e_hol.htm, accessed 14 Aug 09.

[86] Prebble, Interview.

[87] Some anarchist communists, especially platformists, tend to assume that carnival anarchists are "individualistic" and "anti-organisational" because they reject the formal organisational schemes that platformists propound. Yet more correctly, carnival anarchists reject *formal organisation* and are in favour of loose, informal organisation.

[88] Prebble, Interview.

[89] Minchin, Interview.

decision-making procedures, one or two personalities in the group were likely to dominate. For the more (formal) organisationally minded anarchists and councilists, the short-lived nature of affinity groups highlighted the need for such formal "on-going" or continuous organisations.

This difference of opinion led to bitter conflict in Australia. In New Zealand, while divisions over the value of activism, theory, workplace organising and formal organisation divided 'anarcho-councilists' like the Christchurch Anarchy Group from the carnival anarchists, these divisions did not produce splits. In Australia, an acrimonious split occurred between the carnival anarchists on the one hand, and the anarcho-syndicalists together with their libertarian socialist allies (such as the councilist SMG), on the other. The carnival anarchists lambasted formal organisation and clearly defined aims and principles, which they saw as being sect-like and reminiscent of Leninism and Christianity. Furthermore, they accused the 'serious anarchists' as being 'middle class university students,' in contrast with the carnival anarchists, who were working class in composition.[90] The councilists and anarcho-syndicalists thought the 'chaoticists' were anti-organisational, disruptive, aimless and most importantly, opposed to workplace struggle:[91]

> Those people who were arguing for the Anarchist movement to become involved in trade union and industrial work were accused of neglecting other forms of struggle. Wherever this position was advanced the people doing so were denounced [by carnival anarchists] for idolizing the working class, ignoring its conservatism, 'laying heavy moral views,' and pressurizing others to become factory workers.[92]

The SMG defended the need for formal organisation, planning, internal democracy and a coherent political programme.[93]

The anarcho-situationist milieu

In New Zealand, no situationist groups were formed.[94] Grant McDonagh was the sole person who explicitly identified with the SI in the mid to late 1970s. He aimed to set up a small, closely-knit, "critically armed" situationist group which would undertake acts of subversion, playful deconditioning and "act in a series of increasingly radical interventions whereby the individuals involved will reverse back their own misery point-blank on the social organisation that is destroying us."[95] These subversions, McDonagh optimistically believed, would spark wider and deeper class confrontations until ultimately "generalised self-management" was realised. He attempted this in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, but had little success: "Nobody ever understood what the hell I was talking about, really."[96] A "quasi-situationist" group was formed in Auckland, but it soon broke up.

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[90] See Englart, 'Anarchism in Sydney.'

[91] A 1976 statement by the Libertarian Socialist Federation, an anarcho-syndicalist grouping, quoted in Englart, 'Anarchism in Sydney.'

[92] They even quoted the French platformist group the ORA with approval. SMG, 'Editorial,' *Federation of Australian Anarchists Bulletin,* Sep./Oct 1975, http: / /www.takver.com/history/aia/aia00038.htm, Accessed 27 June 2009.

[93] I do not know if any situationist groups were formed in Australia during this period, hence this section focuses exclusively on New Zealand.

[94] McDonagh, *151,* Auckland: n.p., 1978, §12.

[95] McDonagh, Interview.

[96] Grant McDonagh, 'My Involvement in an Ultra-Leftist Tendency,' unpublished manuscript, 1981, p.1.

Hence he operated as an individual on the periphery of the anarchist milieu. His main activity was publishing numerous publications. He believed that the situationist current in New Zealand was "only a minority current in the broader Anarchist milieu between 1975 and 1979, but potent in that context and beyond."[97] The Situationist influence was significant, as there was often a loose crossover between anarchism and the ideas of the Situationists, as exemplified by *Anarchy* (1975) and *KAT* (1978) magazines. Yet the influence of the Situationists could be found more in the playful and aggressive adoption of Situationist slogans by many anarchist groupings (especially the carnival anarchists and later the anarchist punks), rather than in a coherent adherence to Situationist theory. Further, as McDonagh notes, anarchists often attempted to emulate the graphic style of *King Mob Echo,* the magazine produced by British 'situ' group King Mob.[98]

However, the Situationist influence was not potent, especially as many anarchists found situationist writing extremely difficult to comprehend. Indeed, Sue Lee, Cathy Quinn, Margaret Flaws and Frank Prebble all commented that, to them, situationist writing was at best obscure and at worst full of mystifying jargon.[99]

As with 'situs' like Charles Radcliffe and Ken Knabb, McDonagh was originally an anarchist.[100] He became involved in the Christchurch Anarchy Collective after it advertised that it was going to begin publishing a Solidarity type councilist magazine called *Anarchy*. After McDonagh became involved, *Anarchy* described itself as anarchist "with a leaning towards situationism."[101] As such, it republished articles from the SI as well as voicing traditional anarchist criticisms of elections and social democracy.

He was attracted to anarchism initially because it 'seemed to offer a cohesive worldview with a history and practise, [sic] that whatever its shortcomings, seemed more promising for the future than the incoherent remnants of Hippieism that were floating around.'[102] Yet he soon became a situationist after producing *Anarchy*. One of the reasons he was attracted to the SI was its fusion of art and politics, a combination which strongly resonated with him. Yet he still considered the Situationists to be part of the broad anti-authoritarian left, and hence spasmodically worked with anarchists.[103] Also, he believed that the

> Situationists attempted more successfully than anyone else to supersede the split first occurring in the 1st International between the Marxists and the Bakuninists, by reinventing revolution itself, with results well-known in the occupation movement of May and June '68.[104]

Indeed, he saw the SI as being more anti-authoritarian than the vast majority of anarchists, and thought they had criticised authoritarian forms of Marxism far more effectively and coherently than anarchists had.[105]

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[97] McDonagh, letter to the author, 18 Dec. 1997.

[98] Sue Lee, Interview with author, Wellington, 31 July 1996; Cathie Quinn, Interview with author, Wellington, 1 Aug. 1996; Margaret Flaws, Interview with author, 24 Feb. 1997; and Frank Prebble, Interview.

[99] See Knabb, *Public Secrets* and Radcliffe, *Dancin' in the Streets!*

[100] *Anarchy* (Christchurch), 1 (1975), p.2.

[101] McDonagh, Letter to the author, 17 June 1996.

[102] McDonagh, Interview.

[103] McDonagh, 'My Involvement in an Ultra-Leftist Tendency,' p.4.

[104] McDonagh, letter to the author, 18 Dec. 1997.

[105] About ten to fifteen people contributed material to *KAT*, of which about six were anarchists.

McDonagh co-operated with anarchists in several projects. For example, with about half a dozen anarchists, he formed Wellington's *KAT* magazine — standing for Kensington and Aro Street times, then a counter-cultural inner city suburb. *KAT* called itself an anti-authoritarian spasmodical of the "libertarian ultraleft (situationists, anarchists and libertarian socialists)."[106] *KAT* was irreverent and confrontational, full of attacks on bureaucrats and calls for an ecstatic and passionate praxis: "We want *pleasure, joy, celebration* **not** sacrifice. General contestation makes the limited opposition of purely *economic* struggle a farce…Each of us *owes* him/herself a little *life* and merely needs to act decisively to obtain it."[107] Anarchists also co-operated with McDonagh to run a free shop in Christchurch which he believes was in accord with the Situationist concept of the potlatch or a communist gift economy.[108]

This alliance was often uneasy, however. McDonagh was at times scathing towards the anarchist movement. For example, in true Situationist style, he declared the anarchist movement "dead":

> The farcical Easter unconvention [an anarchist conference in 1978]…resembled more closely a tableau in a morgue than a political gathering, for the good reason that so many attended were *already dead.* Twenty odd walking corpses, hacks, closet authoritarians, masochists, intellectual midgets & retarded reformists with no conception that the moment of revolution is *now* and that the dream must be *constructed*! Gathering together like moths at some sacrificial candle they provided excuses for their own and each other's futility, immobility and stupidity. Supreme among the deadheads was the self-appointed pope of New Zealand anarchism, Parsons of Palmerston North, surrounded by his adoring retinue of cretins.In a word it was funereal.[109]

He continued:

> The piecemeal and scattered practise [sic] of anarchists in the period 1975–77 was never historical, always reformist and often authoritarian. As such it was immediately recuperable, challenging and achieving nothing.The anarchist is a futile stupid little inverse authoritarian capable *only* of reacting. His/her ideology causes him/her to deal with power by choosing to believe that he/she is somehow immune to it. Perhaps by the magical talismanic qualities of the mere word anarchy. Neither individuality nor collectivity were either recognised or achieved anywhere. Similarly anarchists were neither spontaneous nor organised.[110]

McDonagh comments that his article "was just shit-stirring I guess really.the intention was to shock/shake people up so that they might try doing some more radical, effective and authentic things themselves. The effect, if any, seems to have been to stop them in their tracks."[111] He also spraypainted 'all anarchists are wankers' in the Auckland suburbs in which anarchists resided.[112]

[106] McDonagh, 'The Year of the Goat,' *KAT,* 7 (1978), p.3, original emphasis.

[107] The free store was serious in communist intent, but also a satire of the local community around the shop, which tended to be wealthy and materialist "yuppies." McDonagh, Interview.

[108] McDonagh, 'Tableau in a Morgue: A Critique of the NZ Anarchist Movement,' *KAT*, 5 (1978), p.5.

[109] McDonagh, 'Tableau in a Morgue,' pp.5–6.

[110] McDonagh, Letter to the author, 18 Dec. 1997.

[111] McDonagh, 'Tableau in a Morgue,' p.5.

[112] Andrew Dodsworth, Letter to the author, 17 Feb. 1997.

Unsurprisingly, bitter clashes with anarchists in both Auckland and Wellington resulted. Andrew Dodsworth, then an anarchist involved in *KAT,* writes: "Grant's idea of dialectical writing, that you take something written by 'the enemy' and invert it.was mechanistic...And that spraypainting Situationist slogans on walls was not, in fact, going to lead to changes in society."[113] Overseas, anarchists commonly viewed the SI, and its followers, as hopelessly sectarian, dogmatic, and hierarchical. What is more, situ groups were castigated for having 'full time non-involvement in real struggle.'[114] Indeed, it often appeared that their main activities were indulging in petty splits, vicious internal squabbles, and lengthy self-critiques.[115]

Dodsworth thought the major weakness of the *KAT* groupuscule was its almost complete isolation from the working class. He writes:

> We were living in a world of our own. Hardly any of us had jobs, and those that did certainly didn't see them as anything but peripheral to our lives. Our contact with, and understanding of, the workers who we were urging to seize power (Grant [McDonagh] was particularly fond of spraypainting the slogan 'AH power to the workers' councils,' overlooking the trivial objection that there *were* no workers' councils to seize power, even if any other of the preconditions for this had been met) was practically non-existent. Like the thirties poets, we wrote as if we were addressing an audience of thousands, when in fact we were speaking to each other.[116]

He continues that he thought that their activity was ineffective and incomprehensible:

> We didn't actually *do* anything except produce Kat...except put up a few posters and spraypaint a few walls, generally with slogans which would have been utterly incomprehensible, not merely to anyone without a good grasp of anarchist theory, but to anyone without detailed knowledge of the squabbles going on in the Wellington Left. As a programme for building the New Jerusalem, or even clearing a bit of space prior to doing so, it wasn't really a starter.[117]

While McDonagh importantly called for the construction of a coherent, complex, open and fluid proletarian theory and practice, he seemed to veer between extremes of pessimism and optimism in his writings. On the one hand, he despaired that the working-class was held in thrall by the spectacle. For example, he thought that television was sending 'consumable banality' into every home, 'dulling, placating, controlling more efficiently than any regime of the past.'[118]

Yet on the other hand, he took signs of proletarian dissent to signify the possibility of the *immediate* establishment of the 'total democracy' of workers' councils.[119] This was hardly a practical suggestion during a non-revolutionary period, and indeed, in a country without a revolutionary tradition where workers' councils have never appeared. McDonagh remembers his writing of

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[113] Franklin Rosemont, *Dancin' in the Streets!,* pp.61–2 and p. 68.
[114] See Ken Knabb, 'Confessions of a Mild-Mannered Enemy of the State,' in his *Public Secrets,* pp.89–156 for good examples of this.
[115] Dodsworth, Letter to the author, 17 Feb. 1997.
[116] Dodsworth, Letter to the author, 17 Feb. 1997.
[117] McDonagh, *151,* §1.
[118] McDonagh, 'The Year of the Goat.'
[119] McDonagh, Interview.

the period to be quite "apocalyptic...This has happened, therefore dah-de-dah-de-dah workers' councils, viva the revolution kind of stuff."[120] For instance, in a 1979 leaflet criticising a 'cover-up' by the Prime Minister, McDonagh exuberantly thought that in response the proletariat would 'unleash' a 'fury' only hinted at in previous struggles and 'storm the winter palace.'[121] Further,

> None, except the imbeciles who write the leaders for the Post and the Dominion, can stomach Bosses or cops anymore. The fragmentary radicalism and the moments of poetry it stumbled hesitantly towards in 1978 must in 79 fuse into an insatiable lust for the totality if we are to gain everything.[122]

Of course, this 'lust for the totality' never materialised (although a one-day union-run general strike did occur in that year). This thinking showed just how marginalized the anarcho-councilist current was: the workers' dissent of the time was confined to a minority of the workforce. Even in 1976, when the highest proportion of the workforce went on strike in New Zealand's history, only 19% of the workforce participated in strikes.

The Christchurch Anarchy Group and Councilism

In New Zealand, Solidarity exerted a significant influence upon the mid-1970s anarchist milieu. Anarchist groups influenced explicitly by Solidarity included the People's Revolutionary Movement (Wellington c.1973–4; it included Iris Mills and Graham Rua, who later became involved in the Persons Unknown trial in the UK in the late 1970s); Solidarity (Auckland, 1973-c.4);[123] *Anarchy* (Christchurch, 1975) magazine; and the Christchurch Anarchy Group (1975–8). Unlike Australia, no specifically councilist group existed during this period (after the Revolutionary Committee folded in c.1974). Englart claims that the Brisbane SMG split into two groups in 1977, the Libertarian Socialist Organisation and the Self-Management Organisation, over 'essentially internal organization and allegations of cliques in the group.'[124] Other Australian groups were also influenced by Solidarity, such as the SAG (as previously noted).

Solidarity was influential for many reasons. Many anarchists were looking for a more indepth and relevant theory that addressed such developments as the rise of 'affluence,' leisure time (and its associated alienation), and bureaucratic management and planning (in both the state and private capitalism). Solidarity was heavily influenced by the theories of SouB and in particular by SouB's major theoretician, Cornelius Castoriadis. For Solidarity, as with SouB, rising living standards had not fundamentally altered "the status of worker as worker," nor given the "bulk of mankind [sic] much freedom outside of production."[125]

Solidarity's anti-bureaucratic views were compatible with class struggle anarchism. Their anti-capitalist and anti-hierarchical bent, as well as the central importance they placed on workers

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[120] McDonagh, 'Irresponsibility vs Poverty: The Valkay Affair,' 1979.

[121] McDonagh, 'The Year of the Goat.'

[122] Auckland Solidarity was formed from the anarchist faction of the Auckland Resistance bookshop. According to one of its founders Graeme Minchin, Auckland Solidarity was not named after, nor organisationally linked with, Solidarity in Britain. He commented that they liked Solidarity material, but were not in contact with the British group. Minchin, Interview.

[123] Englart, 'Anarchism in Sydney.'

[124] Solidarity, 'As We See If, in Brinton, *For Workers' Power,* p.153.

[125] L.W., "'Solidarity' and Anarchism," *Freedom*, 17 April 1971, p. 2.

self-emancipation, were likewise highly compatible. Further, they rejected the Leninist concept of a vanguard party. Consequently, in *Freedom* it was claimed that "it is possible to move from the 'class-struggle' type of anarchism to Solidarity with no drastic change of principle."[126]

Indeed, the Christchurch Anarchy Group (CAG) identified with Solidarity material to such an extent that they believed Solidarity was, for all intents and purposes, anarchist. CAG defined anarchism in councilist terms:

> Anarchists propose a society based upon local and industrial peoples assemblies, federating with elected and revocable delegates in workers councils. History shows that such workers councils are developed by everyday people whenever they seek to take control of their life.[126]

Anarchism, to them, meant a dual 'struggle against the state and for self-management.'[127] They claimed that Solidarity referred to themselves as "libertarian socialists" rather than "anarchists" only because

> they do not wish to become identified with the more 'individualistic' faction of the anarchist movement. Solidarity do work closely with anarchist groups in Britain with whom they share a common theory and basis for action. Solidarity have had a considerable influence on the anarchist movement in Britain.[128]

Yet this overly rosy picture overlooks that Solidarity was often highly critical of anarchism, including the praxis of class struggle anarchists like Kropotkin and Bakunin. Maurice Brinton of Solidarity was dismissive of what he saw as the utopian, anti-intellectual, and moralistic trends within neo-anarchism, and their preoccupation with 'personal salvation' rather than class struggle.[129]

Another reason why Solidarity appealed was that class struggle anarchism seemed stuck in the past. In particular, it often focussed the Spanish revolution of 1936–7. After the defeat of the Russian, Mexican and Spanish revolutions in the early part of the twentieth century, anarchist communism had declined as a movement and theory, and the texts that were produced "amounted to little more than a formal defence of principles, without any critical depth."[130] Subsequently, Solidarity material, like that of the SI, seemed fresh and innovative.

Importantly, Solidarity offered an impressive series of up-to-date, well-produced pamphlets and analysis, as well as a series of valuable histories which uncovered little known episodes of workers' self-organisation against capitalism and bureaucracy.[131] Particularly attractive was

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[126] *Peoples Rights — Self Management is the Only Answer*, leaflet produced by Christchurch Anarchy Group, c.1977.

[127] *Peoples Rights — Self Management is the Only Answer*.

[128] *Anarchy Information Sheet*, 2, n.d. (c.1976), p.2. The *Anarchy Information Sheet* was later renamed the *Christchurch Anarchists' Newsletter*.

[129] Brinton, *For Workers' Power*, p.81. See also pp.85–9 and p. 215.

[130] Alain Pengam, "Anarcho-Communism," in *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. Maximilien Rubel and John Crump, London: MacMillan, 1987, p.77. For the decline and stagnation of anarchist communism, see also John Crump, *Hatta Shuzo and Pure Anarchism in Interwar Japan*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993, pp.xvi-xvii and p.20.

[131] Louis Robertson has divided the publications of Solidarity into three main categories. The first published the works of Cornelius Castoriadis. The second attempted to rediscover 'important moments of revolutionary working-class history.' The third documented current working-class struggles, both in Britain and overseas. The lat-

their first-hand accounts of how proletarians were organising against capitalism on the shop floor during strikes and occupations in the 1960s and 1970s.[132] They also published a pamphlet on the miners' strike at Mount Isa in Australia in 1964–5.[133] Their focus upon workers' self-organisation, rather than the activities of party or union bureaucrats, seemed validated by events of the time, such as Hungary (1956), France (1968) and Portugal (1974). Richard Bolstad of the CAG also liked their well-thought out proposals for a future society:

> I was kind of looking for something that was thought out enough to offer an explanation of what does a revolutionary group do?...What kind of society would succeed, and it seemed to me that Solidarity.could fit in really well...They had a huge scheme of setting up a country...[with a] central assembly of delegates that would run an area of a country.[134]

Bolstad compared his involvement in the carnivalesque Christchurch PYM in the early 1970s with the CAG of the mid-1970s. The latter group was "more thought out, more planned and focused upon how to build up support and links."[135] He elaborated:

> In 1970 if you had asked me I would have said that the point of being an anarchist is that revolution is around the corner kind of thing. By 1975 I would have said the point of being an anarchist is to offer support, for instance a sort of Solidarity model.and linking, and what they call the generalisation of learning within people struggling for social change.A revolutionary organisation.links people together and shares their experiences around so that they learn from each other, and trusting that, that will inevitably build a libertarian society rather than a dictatorship.[136]

Solidarity's views were also attractive because they seemed less obscure than those of the Situationists. Andrew Dodsworth of the Wellington Resistance bookshop and KAT anarcho-situationist grouping noted, "On the whole Solidarity stuff seemed more connected with the 'real world,' insofar as I knew anything about it.The Situationist stuff was more exciting, though often incomprehensible."[137] As a result, he distributed Solidarity publications nationwide, as did the Christchurch Anarchy Group.

Solidarity saw socialism as a many-sided struggle to change not only work but also everyday life. To them, socialism meant 'a radical transformation in all human relations.'[138] They thus rejected authoritarianism, sexual repression, and supported the anti-nuclear movement and women's liberation. Bolstad took this further, and suggested that primal therapy, a controversial

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ter was largely achieved through the magazine *Solidarity* and various special "motor supplements" (about struggles in the automotive industry). Louis Robertson, "Reflections of My Time in Solidarity," Accessed 11 June 2003, `http://struggle.ws/disband/solidarity/recollections.html`.

    [132] For example, Solidarity printed some special "motor supplements" that gave accounts of struggles within the British motor industry. Robertson, "Reflections of My Time in Solidarity."

    [133] Bretta Carthey and Bob Potter, *Mount Isa: The Great Queensland Strike,* London: Solidarity, 1966, `http://libcom.org/library/mount-isa-great-queensland-strike-solidarity`, Accessed 16 Aug. 2009.

    [134] Bolstad, Interview.

    [135] Bolstad, Interview.

    [136] Richard Bolstad, Interview with author, Christchurch 16 May 1996.

    [137] Andrew Dodsworth, Letter to the author, 17 Feb. 1997.

    [138] Solidarity, 'As We See If, in Brinton, *For Workers' Power,* p.153.

form of psychotherapy, was pivotal for revolutionary struggle. In Arthur Janov's words, changing the 'inner state provides the basis for change in social outlook.'[139] Perhaps this hope placed on unconventional if not New Age psychology in part reflected the influence the commune movement had on the CAG (the group was based at an urban commune).

Yet, as with most councilist influenced Australasian anarchist groups, CAG was content to echo Solidarity's views rather than to develop their own theory for somewhat unique Australasian conditions. Most of the group's pamphlets bore the mark of Solidarity's and SouB's theories, including Bolstad's *The Industrial Front* and his *An Anarchist Analysis of the Chinese Revolution*.[140] Indeed, part of *The Industrial Front* summarised Castoriadis' pamphlet *Workers' Councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society*. However, Bolstad did make some preliminary attempts to address New Zealand conditions.[141]

Solidarity importantly formed a network of militant workers, and had many contacts in the shop stewards movement, as well as some influence in important disputes. Yet in New Zealand, anarcho-councilists organised no such network. While the CAG aimed to build a nationwide anarchist network, and produced the *Christchurch Anarchy/Anarchists Newsletter* to that end, their newsletter contained mainly news items of interest to anarchists rather than to workers.[142] For example, it did not contain any news or analysis of workplace disputes. The CAG, as far as I am aware, did not actually partake in workplace resistance. This represented a fundamental oversight.

Of all the Solidarity influenced groupings in New Zealand, only Auckland Solidarity became involved in workplace-based struggles. Auckland Solidarity members took employment in a glass factory to (unsuccessfully) encourage resistance.[143] Auckland Solidarity was involved in the "Auckland ferry dispute" of 1974, one of the more important workplace conflicts of the 1970s in New Zealand, which nearly resulted in a nationwide wildcat general strike. Sympathy stoppages and demonstrations throughout the country attracted 40,000 to 50,000 workers.[144]

Many criticisms have been made of Solidarity/SouB. Some anarchists criticised their proposed central council of delegates as too closely resembling a state. According to Adam Buick, under anarchist influence Solidarity revised its earlier support for a 'workers' council government' to the 'rule of workers' councils.'[145] Some claim that Solidarity/SouB (and the SI, for that matter) went 'beyond Marxism' and rejected the class struggle in favour of the opposition between order-givers and order-takers, which they believed was the fundamental contradiction in society.[146] Solidarity seemed to focus more upon *alienation,* and the lack of control people had over

[139] Janov quoted in Bolstad, *The Industrial Front*, Christchurch: Christchurch Anarchy Group, c. 1978, p.33. See also Bolstad, 'Primal Therapy,' *Christchurch Anarchists Newsletter,* April 1978, pp.5–8.

[140] Bolstad, *The Industrial Front*, and *An Anarchist Analysis of the Chinese Revolution*, Christchurch: Christchurch Anarchy Group, 1976.

[141] He wrote a manuscript of an updated version of a Solidarity pamphlet for New Zealand conditions, but unfortunately it was never printed and no copy has survived. Bolstad, Interview.

[142] "New Zealand Anarchist Contact List" in [Christchurch] *Anarchy Newsletter,* Nov. 1977, plus the correspondence of the Christchurch Anarchy Group, Frank Prebble MSS.

[143] Minchin, Interview.

[144] *Socialist Action,* 103 (12 July 1974), p.3 and Michael Bassett, *The Third Labour Government*, Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press, 1976, p.146.

[145] Adam Buick, 'Solidarity, the Market and Marx,' `https://bataillesocialiste.wordpress.com/english-pages/1973-04-s` accessed 17 Aug. 2009.

[146] 'The fundamental contradiction of contemporary society is the division into those who own, manage, decide and direct, and the majority who, because they are deprived access to the means of production, have to toil and are

their everyday lives in and outside the workplace, than material exploitation. They defined the proletariat in a-historical terms as those who do not possess power,[147] and assumed that the chief contradiction within capitalism is *bureaucracy rather than exploitation.* Yet while Solidarity overstated the importance of bureaucracy, they did recognise that an important part of class struggle is workers' resistance to capitalist and managerial control over work. At their best, they recognised that managerial control and class exploitation are inextricably intertwined. Capital needs hierarchical authority to overcome workers' resistance.[148]

For the CAG, self-management was "the only answer...*Only when working people collectively manage society through organs which they completely control will our rights be safe.*"[149] Against this viewpoint, Gilles Dauve and Francois Martin have argued, "Socialism is not the management, however 'democratic' it may be, of capital, but its complete destruction."[150] Workers could run 'their' workplaces themselves, and yet still compete with other worker-owned enterprises in the market, thus forcing these enterprises to lessen costs (such as wages) and make workers work harder in order to stay competitive. Further, as with Castoriadis, Bolstad recommended the retention of money and equal wages for all.[151] As anarchist communists like Kropotkin argued, the retention of the wage-system, exchange and the market, even if the means of production were collectively owned, would most likely bring about the reappearance of classes and the state.[152] This danger of self-managed capitalism was recognised by Solidarity in 1978 when it merged with the group Social Revolution.[153]

Conclusion

Anarchists drew upon councilist ideas because they lacked an in-depth analytical understanding of society. Anarchist pamphlets tended to be either tired reprints of classics, or re-statements of

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forced to comply with decisions they have not themselves taken.' Socialism Reaffirmed leaflet, in Brinton, *For Workers' Power,* p. 18.

[147] As Bookchin has written, "If we.describe any social stratum as 'proletarian' (as the French situationists do) simply because it has no control over the conditions of its life, we might just as well call slaves, serfs, peasants and large sections of the middle-class 'proletarians.' To create such a sweeping antithesis between 'proletarian' and bourgeois, however, eliminates all the determinations that characteriZe these classes as specific, historically limited strata." Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism,* 2nd edn., Montreal: Black Rose, 1986, p.171n.

[148] Meaning that those who own and control the means of production gain the ability to give orders, or delegate giving orders to managers, and proletarians are forced to take orders because they do not own and control the means of production. See n.147 above.

[149] Christchurch Anarchy Group, *Peoples Rights — Self Management is the Only Answer* leaflet, c.1977 (original emphasis).

[150] Gilles Dauve and Frangois Martin, *The Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement,* Revised edn., London: Antagonism Press, 1997, p.73.

[151] Bolstad, *The Industrial Front,* p.40.

[152] Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* London: Elephant Editions, pp.159–74.

[153] This merger led to an important revision of Solidarity's basic position statements, As *We See It* and As *We Don't See It* in 1978. The rewritten section of *As We See It* went as follows: "There can be no socialism without self-management. Yet a society made up of individual self-managed units is not, of itself, socialist. Such societies could remain oppressive, unequal and unjust. They could be sexist or racist, could restrict access to knowledge or adopt uncritical attitudes towards 'expertise.' We can imagine the individual units of such a society — of whatever size or complexity (from chicken farms to continents) — competing as 'collective capitalists.' Such competition could only perpetuate alienation and create new inequalities based on new divisions of labour," Accessed 1 May 1999, `http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195/blasts/awsi/awdsirevised.html#awsirevised`.

basic principles. Their publications were full of denunciation, and lacked analysis. Councilists offered a more comprehensive, well-thought out and up-to-date analysis of modern bureaucratic capitalism, the mass alienation produced by mass production and mass consumption, and workers' resistance (in various forms, including the 'the refusal of work' or urban rioting led by the 'provotariat') to the 'spectacular commodity society.' In Australasia, the councilists generally lacked a following and an audience. They were faced with the choice of either remaining in nearly complete obscurity, or gaining influence in the much larger anarchist milieu. In practice, the councilists tended to opt somewhat begrudgingly for the latter option, and thus operated on the fringes of the anarchist milieu, acting as critics of that milieu's 'mindless activism.'

Hence both councilism and anarchism loosely converged, but in New Zealand this convergence was too ephemeral and fleeting to offer a sophisticated synthesis between the two traditions. The basic form it took was the redevelopment of class struggle anarchism *and* councilism into a praxis that questioned not only the ownership of the means of production, but also capital's colonisation of everyday life. The concept of "generalised self-management" greatly deepened and broadened self-management to include every aspect of life, not just work.

Yet anarchists were content to merely republish the writings of councilists, and few attempts were made to develop their own theory. Councilists likewise grasped the essential views of the SI and Solidarity without really developing them further. The councilists tended to lack practice, while the anarchists lacked vigorous theory. As a result, the practice of anarchists lacked thought, and they jumped from activist single-issue to issue with little or no effect. Carnival anarchists uncritically supported *any* form of activism so long as it involved some degree of direct action, reminiscent of the later New Left. Looking back on Auckland carnival anarchism, Frank Prebble, a central figure in that group, said, "We were a fairly active sort of group. We never ran things like anarchist discussion groups or anything like that. We never really seriously looked at organisation. It was always activism, doing things, getting things done." Yet when asked what their strategy was, Prebble replied, "We didn't have one really, we didn't think much about what we were doing...You know, there was no thought put into it at all. That was the crazy thing about it."[154] The theories of the councilists were often detached from where workers were actually at on the ground. Overall, a major shortcoming of both anarchism and councilism during this period was their near complete isolation from the rest of the working class and their detachment from struggles in the workplace in particular.

The emphasis upon a series of playful one-off stunts and scandals — such as the Wellington anarchists who stole a US General's hat, filled it with assorted muck, and then returned it with an anti-Vietnam War message — can be seen as the product of frustration of tiny, largely ineffectual groups. The primary purpose of the stunts was inward looking: they were fun actions to boost the morale of the group and to give the impression that they were having some impact. Sometimes these acts could be bred of pure despair, such as when anarchist punk rocker Neil Roberts killed himself while trying to bomb the Wanganui police computer in 1982. He spraypainted 'we have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity' before he died.[155]

Yet the stunts of the mid to late 1970s had minimal, if any, impression on society. As Sean Sheehan has commented, capital can easily accommodate anarchic "pranks," no matter how comical

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[154] Prebble, Interview.

[155] For more on Neil Roberts, see Boraman, Rabble Rousers, pp. 129–31 and Russell Campbell, 'System Overload,' *Arena*, 1 (2009), pp. 129–38

they are.[156] To Sheehan, they amount to little more than "chic subversions."[157] Ken Knabb has noted that the Yippies entered "the spectacle as clowns to make it ridiculous," yet, "they created diversions which, far from promoting the subversion of the spectacle, merely made passivity more interesting by offering a spectacle of refusal."[158] Knabb's argument is applicable to carnival anarchists, not just the Yippies. Point Blank! made similar arguments that the disruptions of the fun revolutionists were merely a harmless sideshow to the 'movement.' The movement recuperated their theatrical style for its spectacle of fragmentary, reformist opposition.[159] However, this is not to dismiss all stunts as being harmless. The antics of the PYM were more shocking and successful precisely because they were closely associated with the mass extra-parliamentary protests and class struggles of the late 1960s and 1970s. Their stunts were more effective because they were associated with popular issues or campaigns, such as the anti-Vietnam War movement.

The almost complete marginalization of the councilist and anarchist milieu during a nonrevolutionary period highlighted a classical dilemma that revolutionaries face. Should they water down their views to seek popularity and influence, or do they stick to their principles and thus remain isolated and unpopular? Do they withdraw inward, and focus on changing themselves? Or should they look outward, and focus on changing society? The carnival anarchists of the mid-1970s adopted a purist self-marginalising approach whereby they attempted to live the most radical lifestyle possible in their everyday lives (by refusing to work, refusing to pay rent, living collectively, fusing art with politics and taking ultra-militant 'illegalist' direct action seemingly to make up for the lack of militancy in the rest of the population), but these loose experiments seemed to only last a few years before the affinity groups upon which they were based self-destructed. Gilles Dauve makes the pertinent point that the views expressed by Vaneigem in *The Revolution of Everyday Life*,[160] ideas which the carnival anarchists attempted to put into practice, *'cannot be* lived.either one huddles in the crevices of bourgeois society, or one ceaselessly opposes to it a different life which is impotent because only the revolution can make it a reality.'[161]

Like the SI, the carnival anarchists adopted a purist *total revolution or nothing* praxis. Situationists often dismissed dissent as lacking radical content, fragmentary and thus recuperable. Situationists tended to differentiate 'a pure, autonomous class from the "external" institutions of the workers' movement (unions, leftist parties), and in so doing, end up concluding that the class has been duped by the ideology of these external forces,'[162] or in the SI's case, the spectacle. 'Situs' froze the high points of class struggle, in particular the emergence of workers' councils, and used it as a principle to judge the present situation. Yet this position seems anachronistic in a situation, like that in Australasia, where workers' councils were not even remotely possible. Their critique did not relate to the daily *contradictory* relationship that exists between capital and workers, where 'both the acceptance and refusal of capitalist labour coexist, where workers' passive objectification and subjective (collective) resistance coexist within the subsumption of labour-power to the productive process.'[163] Carnival anarchists often dismissed the potential of

[156] Sean Sheehan, *Anarchism,* London: Reaktion Books, 2003, p.142.

[157] Sheehan, *Anarchism*, p. 141.

[158] Ken Knabb, "Critique of the New Left Movement," Accessed 17 April 2003, http: / / www.bopsecrets.org/ PH /newleft.htm

[159] Point Blank!, 'The Storms of Youth,' in *Re-Inventing Anarchy*, pp.130–1.

[160] Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life,* 2nd edn., Seattle and London: Left Bank and Rebel Press, 1994.

[161] Jean Barrot [Gilles Dauve], *What is Situationism?*, p.25, original emphasis.

[162] 'We Have Ways of Making You Talk!,' *Aufheben,* 12 (2004), p.59.

[163] Sandro Studer quoted in 'We Have Ways of Making You Talk!,' p.60.

working class people with apparently conservative lifestyles, and at their worst seemed to blame workers for reproducing capital everyday. Their voluntarism assumed that revolution began with the individual de-conditioning him or herself; they stressed the role of changing consciousness and culture in producing revolution, rather than transforming material conditions. Their view that only people who had psychologically deconditioned themselves could make a revolution has elitist and vanguardist implications, and overlooks how people can change rapidly through the process of struggle. The carnival anarchists wanted a wild, riotous revolution, and could scorn anything less than this. Their impatient insurrectionary immediatism was also more suited to a period of intense class struggle.

Today the anti-bureaucratic theories of the councilists — in the context of a major global recession, and the return of old-fashioned exploitation since the imposition of neo-liberalism -seem out of place, and definitely a product of the 'affluence' of the 1960s. Indeed, a common criticism of SouB, Solidarity and the SI was that they tended to assume that capitalism had overcome its contradictions during the 1960s, and believed that the working-class in the "first world" would remain relatively "affluent."[164] Likewise, the 'never work' politics of the situationists and carnival anarchists asserted that the major problem with everyday life under capital was boredom and routine, and not class exploitation.

Thus carnival anarchists overall had an ambiguous attitude towards class struggle. On the one hand, as exemplified by the Provos, carnival anarchists could see the struggle of the 'provotariat' as one against the rest of the population, who had been allegedly thoroughly brainwashed by the spectacle. This glorification of the radical wing of the 'lumpenproletariat' as harbingers of a libidinal, apocalyptic, total revolution, and subsequent elitism towards wage workers, has been taken up today by fashionable carnival anarchists CrimethInc.[165] Perhaps this shift in carnival anarchism towards a crude sub-cultural situation*ism* without any notion of class struggle, let alone generalised self-management, indeed a rudimentary celebration of lumpen 'dumpster-diving' parasitism, can be explained by the different context of the times. The 1970s and 1980s were periods of relatively high working class dissent, while the 2000s was a period of very low working class activity, and therefore it has been easier to dismiss the potential of the waged working class.

On the other hand, they were not simply individualist bohemians, as their activity did not lack class content. They refused work, went jobbing, formed unemployed groups,[166] organised or supported many pickets against capitalists, supported workers' self-management, and their stunts often were class-focused. However, as with their crude borrowing from councilism, their class war politics was often cartoon-like. This aspect of their politics, for good or worse, was a major influence on anarchist punk and especially on Class War in the UK, which also carried out class-based stunts, and also saw class as primarily a *cultural* construct.[167]

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[164] See Shipway, "Situationism" and "Decadence: The Theory of Decline," in *Aufheben* for a more detailed critique.

[165] See CrimethInc Workers' Collective, *Days of War, Nights of Love: Crimethink for Beginners,* Atlanta: CrimethInc Workers' Collective, 2001 and *Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook*, Olympia: CrimethInc Workers' Collective, 2004. However, some carnival anarchists have tied their carnivalesque activities to class struggle, such as when Reclaim the Streets supported the Liverpool dockers' strike and London tube workers' resistance to privatisation in the late 1990s.

[166] As the unemployed are a part of the unwaged wing of the working class, their struggles are part of the class struggle.

[167] This is particularly true of Class War in its early phase, as Stewart Home points out. See his *The Assault on Culture*, pp.95–101. A minor, indirect link can be made between the anarcho-councilism of the Christchurch Anarchy

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A great strength of the situationists and carnival anarchists of the 1960s and 1970s was their attempt to relate to new forms of working class resistance, namely that of young subcultural 'hoods,' delinquents, ethnic minorities, and the unwaged. The struggles of these groups were often riotous and explosive, and had much potential if they spread to, or linked with, other sectors of the working class. The carnival anarchists saw this potential, but they were unsuccessfully sought to extend this struggle by revelling in an *image* of being as radical, threatening and extreme as possible, thus hoping to 'freak out' and provoke authority. It is a pity that they did not attempt to link these new forms of resistance with the workplace based revolt of the 1970s.

Group and Class War. Jock Spence of the CAG returned to Britain in 1977 and became involved with a group of Swansea anarchists who produced a successful community-based paper, *Alarm*, which exposed council corruption. *Alarm* included Ian Bone, who became a prominent figure in Class War during the 1980s.

Post-Left Anarchism, Open Marxism and 'New' Autonomist Social Movements in Latin America: Convergence through the praxis of rebel subjects

Sara C. Motta

This paper addresses the question of the convergence between the anarchist and Marxist traditions arguing that the practices of Latin America's autonomist social movements demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of Post left autonomy and Open Marxism offering the possibility of a productive convergence through praxis. It argues that many autonomist Latin American social movements are overcoming this dualism and in the process practicing 'creative destruction'[1] of reified conceptual and political categories in order to create an emapncipatory epistemology as lived practice. The implications of this type of emapncipatory theory construction for academics committed to furthering social justice are immense as they suggest a paradigmatic shift[2] in our understanding of the nature of radical theory and of the subjectivity of the revolutionary academic. Crucially this moves 'us' beyond questions of the content of theory to questions of the process of theorising.

The significance of asking questions about how knowledge is made, whose knowledge is made visible and how this relates to processes of social and political transformation are of central importance at this political conjuncture. This is because for many in the Global South and increasingly Global North, 'the sphere of political representation has come to a close' (CI, 23). People are no longer content for things to be done for them, feelings to be felt for them, politics organised for them, life lived for them.

Much of the 20th century was a political and historical terrain in which a representational understanding of social and political transformation was hegemonic. This terrain is now unravelling as the failures of vanguardist revolutionary politics to bring about social transformation and of liberal democracy and liberal markets to bring about meaningful inclusion are ever more intensely experienced by the world's poor and excluded. As Neka of the MTD Solano expresses, 'I think there was a very important break with traditional politics and political issues, and it is

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[1] This concept was creatively used by Christos Memos in his paper 'Lessons Taken from the Greek Uprising: The Marxist-Anarchist Controversy Reconsidered In and Through Radical Praxis,' presented at the Is Red and Black Dead? ASN Conference, 7–8th September, 2009 CSSGJ to argue that convergence between the two traditions occurs in the praxis of rebel subjects as opposed to a discussion internal to theory.

[2] This idea was constructively and dialogically developed in the presentation given by Laura Corradi at the Is Red and Black Dead? ASN Conference, 7–8th September, 2009, CSSGJ as part of a presentation in which she argued for dialogic and participatory methodology in order to uncover and engage with the concepts of feminism, anarchism, marxism and environmentalism as lived by ordinary people. She pointed towards the need for academics to engage with questions of the content of knowledge but also the processes of knowledge creation, which as she argued would involve the' deconstruction of our identity as radical academics.'

precisely related to all this. We've been through a lot of different organisational practices, lots of experience and what we've finally learnt is that we can build up better projects without leaders. We don't need anyone speaking on our behalf; we all can be voices and express every single thing. They're our problems and it's our decisions to solve them. The fact that we have education, popular education, as a central axis of our project, allowed us to open space for discussion and thought, to start building up new social relations, to deeply know each other, so we could feel we are all part of everything we are building. Getting back our dignity depends only on ourselves and not on a boss or anyone else imposing on us a way to live' (Neka, Dissent 61)

This non-representational understanding of social transformation has implications for revolutionary academics of both the anarchist and Marxist orientation. This is because in general it was assumed that the theory of social change is produced by great thinkers who are able to orientate and guide the politics of the masses out of their concrete and often parochial world views. Theoretical abstraction was thought to occur away from the lived experience of political struggle, and radical academic or political theorisation the domain of the 'educated' (formal and informal). This paradigm of theoretical production is embedded within a representational understanding of the relationship between theory and political practice in which there is a division of labour between doers and thinkers, intellectual labour and practical labour. Such a framework of practice is both alienating and alienated, presenting knowledge as the product of isolated individuals, produced in textual form as an object to be consumed by the masses.

Post-left anarchism and open Marxism are strands of anarchist and Marxist thought which are concerned with the creation of a post-representational politics. They ask questions about what is to be done and what needs to be known in order to create such social transformation. The resolution to their questions and the place in which there is a convergence in their desires and analysis is to be found, I argue, in the autonomist social movements of Latin America, for this paper particularly the Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados de Solano (MTD Solano, Unemployed Workers Movements Solano) of Argentina and Comite de Tierra Urbana (CTUs, Urban Land Committees) of Venezuela.

As the Invisible Committee argue, 'What we mean by the party of insurgents is the sketching out of a completely other composition, an other side of reality, which from Greece to the French banlieues is seeking its consistency...What this way is being over is not various ways of managing society, but irreducible and irreconcilable ideas of happiness and their worlds.' And as Werner Bonefeld states in the most recent edition of Open Marxist analysis, 'We have to attain a conception of realism that knows how to dream and sing, and dance. Imaginative realism is not just an art-form — it is subversion in practice.This volume is dedicated to the communist individual, her imagination and subversive cunning and reason. It is about the beauty of human values — freedom and equality of individual human needs, human dignity and respect, solidarity and collectivity, affection and warmth, democracy and social autonomy. And it is about subversive knowledge, what do we have to know to prevent misery'

The methodology used in this piece will be one of dialogue. In attempting to open up a dialogue between post-left anarchism, open Marxism and the autonomist social movements in Latin America I hope that I can contribute to the systematisation of our understanding of the nature of emapncipatory theory of a post-representational political practice. I organise this dialogue in terms of an identification of the strengths and weaknesses of post left anarchy and Open Marxism to then suggest how movement theorising can move beyond their weaknesses whilst retaining their strengths

Post-left anarchy

Post-left anarchy (they usually avoid the "ism") is a grouping of perspectives within anarchist theory which in addition to rejecting the state, capitalism and social hierarchies (hence being "post-left" rather than simply "anti-left"), also reject a number of hierarchical aspects and dispositions alleged to exist in leftism (socialist and communist movements) and in leftist anarchism (e.g. anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism, platformism). Whilst theoretically anti-definition, liberation is usually treated in terms of the liberation of desire, difference and immediacy, rather than the liberation of a fixed essence or a particular group/entity.

Perhaps a 'foundational' text is "From Politics to Life" by Wolfi Landstreicher. Here the key elements that distinguish post left anarchy from in traditional leftism are: "revolutionary struggle is not a program" but a struggle for reappropriation of "the totality of life" — hence "anti-political" (in the sense of alienation of political from social) and against alienation of struggles from day-to-day life; rejection of representational organisation; emphasis on quality over quantity; radical rupture instead of politics of demand; rejection of historical teleology and related idea of progress; prefigurative (not teleological) model of change; rejection of "identity politics" (reduction of people to identities); rejection of "collectivism" defined as "subordination of the individual to the group" and a rejection of "ideology" (Stirnerian spooks)

The piece I have chosen is topical and recent and fits into the category of post-left anarchy. It is the 'Coming Insurrection' by the Invisible Committee (IV). They embody the anti-representational understanding of transformation which rejects party lines, fixed ideologies and revolutionary leaderships and they also focus on unmediated desire (individual and collective) as a form of constructing the type of alternative way of living and loving that they aim to construct. Thus for the IV old politics of left and right represents 'the same nothingness striking the pose of an emperor or a savoir, the same sales assistants adjusting their discourse according to the findings of the latest surveys.Nothing we've been shown is adequate to the situation.the breach between politics and the political has widened.'

However their understanding of social transformation as a process of liberating desire moves beyond the sometimes immediatist spontaneous focus of other post-left anarchy such as Bey's immediatism and instead argues for the organisation of communes in which the division between end and means, between the ideal society and the present is ruptured in collective doing and being. As they argue 'the past has given us far too many bad answers for us not to see that the mistakes were in the questions themselves. There is no need to choose between the fetishism of spontaneity and organisational control; between the 'come one, come all' of activist networks and discipline in hierarchy; between acting desperately now and waiting desperately for later; between bracketing that which is to be lived and experimented in the name of a paradise that seems more and more like the hell the longer it is put off, and repeating, with a corpse-filled mouth that planting carrots is enough to dispel this nightmare.'

The rejection of vangaurdism in social transformation and the division of labour between thinkers and doers that accompanies such an understanding is manifested in a clear rejection of organisation but not self-organising. As they argue, 'organisations are obstacles to organising themselves. In truth there is no gap between what we are, what we do, and what we are becoming. Organisations — political or labour, fascist or anarchist — always begin by separating, practically, these aspects of existence. It's then easy for them to present their idiotic formalism as the sole remedy to this separation.'

Separation of thought and action, of ourselves from our creative capacities is a constant theme. One which helps us understand how domination is understood as not something merely out there but inside, manifesting itself in alienation of ourselves from our selves. As they argue, 'I am what I am. My body belongs to me. I am me, you are you, and something's wrong. Mass personalisation. Individualisation of all conditions — life, work misery. Diffuse schizophrenics. Rampant depression...We treat ourselves like a boring box office. We've become our own representatives in a strange commerce, guarantor of a personalisation that feels, in the end, more like an amputation.'

The individual internalisation of processes of alienation and subjugation of our selves to the machine of capitalist reproduction results in, 'Sickness, fatigue, depression [which] can be seen as the individual symptoms of what needs to be cured. They contribute to the maintenance of the existing order, to my docile adjustment to idiotic norms, and to the modernisation of my crutches...But taken as facts, my failings can also lead to the dismantling of the self. They tend to become acts of resistance in the current war. They then become rebellion and a force against everything that conspires to normalise us, to amputate us.'

Problematic is that this passage sets up a dualism between the subjugated and the liberated with it remaining unclear how we get from one to the other. There is the implication that there is a non-subjugated essence that needs to be freed, '.we have been expropriated by our own language through education, from our own songs by reality TV contest, from our flesh by mass pornography, from the city by the police, and from our friends by wage labour.'

This dualism can result in an idealisation and romanticisation of the 'free' to be found in rioting banlieues or the organisation for survival of shanty towns dwellers. As they argue, 'Whoever knew of the penniless joy of these New Orleans neighbourhoods before the catastrophe (Hurricane Katrina) , their defiance towards the state and the widespread practice of making do with what's available wouldn't be at all surprised by what became possible there. On the other hand, anyone trapped in the anaemic and atomised everyday routine of our residential deserts might doubt that such determination can be found anywhere anymore.'

Conversely, it can result in a condemnation and exclusion of the duped subjugated lifeless pawns of the spectacle which can result in the formation of a moral critique of the subaltern 'other.' Both condemnation and romantisisation prevent a concrete engagement with the everyday forms of domination and resistance in the lived experiences of the excluded. Such an abstracted engagement with new forms of politics and popular organisation is also not strategically engaged, as it disenables reflection about the contradictions that arise in the construction of 'communes'

Such weakness in strategic thinking about how we go about building communes and transforming alienated practice into liberating practice is expressed in the ideas about knowledge and communal practice that are developed in the piece. The type of knowledge that is imagined 'we' would need in order to construct communes is conceived in traditional and instrumental terms, so 'Street kitchens require building up provisions beforehand; emergency medical aid requires the acquisition of necessary knowledge and materials, as does the setting up of pirate radios. The political richness of such experiences is assured by the joy they contain, the way they transcend individual stoicism, and their manifestation of a tangible reality that escapes the daily ambience of order and work.' There is almost a transcendental understanding of the nature of the non-alienated subject, as if the very act of doing together will enable the re-appearance of the (essentialised) silenced subject. This removes any notion of struggle and politics from

the construction of 'communes' and from the construction of the new popular subjectivities and practices that are the basis of such 'other' ways of doing and living politics. The building of non-alienated subjectivities and practices is a struggle, internal as well as external, and involves not merely the acquisition of certain skills and objects of knowledge but rather the making visible of 'other' subjugated knowledges and the making of knowledge differently.

When the subject of political knowing and knowledge is mentioned it is if by the very nature of these 'freed' people coming together they will spontaneously produce a new way of understanding themselves, their relations with others and with the world. As they state, 'As for deciding on actions, the principles could be as follows: each person should do their own reconnaissance, the information would then be put together, and the decision will occur to us rather than being made by us. The circulation of knowledge cancels hierarchy; it equalises by raising up. Proliferating horizontal communication is also the best form of coordination among different communes, the best way to put an end to hegemony.'

Post-left anarchy of the IV places non-alienated practices at the heart of social transformation, it rejects a separation between doers and thinkers, between means and ends, and between politics and life. It thus brings the human subject in her entirety into our understanding of resistance and social transformation. However, its conceptualisation of domination and resistance falls into a dualism that becomes a barrier to concrete political and strategic engagement with new forms of living and making politics in the North and South. There is no bridge from here to there, neither in empirical narrative or theoretical understanding and so we are left with a pure free 'us' and an alienated limbless 'other.' The essentialised subject of resistance removes any notion of political struggle from the creation of such other forms of living and making politics which again does not enable the strategic discussion necessary for us to share, reflect and move forward with the creation of this type of post-representational politics. And finally, the conception of knowledge falls back into a representational understanding in which there are those that have made knowledge that becomes an object that we learn as individuals and use to practically enable either the functioning of our communes and/or the creation of a place of absolute otherness. Post left anarchy's passionate poetry therefore misses a strategic and concrete fleshing out of the practice of post-representational politics and social transformation.

Open Marxism

In many ways Open Marxism can speak to some of these barriers to our strategic engagement with the questions 'what do we need to do' and 'what we need to know' in order to create a post-representational politics.

Open Marxism's ability to more concretely engage with post-representational politics comes from its more complex and systematic conceptualisation of the nature of domination in capitalist society. For Open Marxists structures of the state and market are perverted human forms; alienated human practices which veil the reality that political power and economic goods are actually the result of our energies used against us. Therefore domination is subjective (collective alienation). As Bonefeld explains 'What then needs to be explained is not the relation between capital and wage labour in its direct and immediate sense but rather the social constitution upon which this relationship is founded and through which it subsists... The class antagonism between capital and labour rests on and subsists through the separation of human social practice from its

means, a separation that appears to invest these means with independent power over the very human social practice from which its springs. Thus capital is a perverted form of social cooperation. Social cooperation subsists in and through the perverted form of commodity relations where human beings produce through their own social activity a reality that increasingly enslaves them to things.'

Therefore if capital is not a thing but a relation it is as the Leeds May Day Group argue, 'the way we live, the way we reproduce ourselves and our world — the entire organisation of the 'present state of things' as they are today.' Then resistance is not about resisting something out there but rather changing the way we live, reproduce and the entire present state of things today. This implies a non-dualistic understanding of the relationship between domination and resistance, one in which each is internal to the other, which implies that the unfree are not out there but in here and that any form of representational politics will reproduce alienated human practice and a division of labour with thinkers and doers. Thus as Bonefeld argues, 'The society of the free and equal or the mode of production of associated producers can not be achieved through a politics on behalf of the working class. Theory on behalf of the working class leads to the acceptance of programs and tickets whose common basis is the everyday religion of bourgeois society: commodity fetishism. A politics on behalf of the working class affirms what needs to be negated. The emancipation of the working class can only be achieved by the working class itself.

Thus the critique of traditional leftism or vangaurdism is based on its replication of forms of alienated human practice in which the capacity to think and theorise is delegated to a select few on behalf of the masses. It is then reified in the form of tome of abstract theorising and party doctrine in which the mass sacrifice in the name of truth as opposed to creating truth in collective praxis. Thus as Tischler continues, 'Here the issue of form is fundamental, for it involves a process of abstraction (real abstraction) where form finally dominates and stabilises the political on the basis of alienation. Predominance of the form entails reification. Class consciousness appears as a universal attribute of the party or the state; it is not the working class in struggle that forms the content of experience but the party as organisation or the (workers) state as the collective consciousness of the working class. In this sense, the theory of class struggle has undergone a period of stasis, a stasis of a specific historical experience, which was canonised and thus achieved hegemonic position. The institutionalisation of class struggle is precisely this. Institutionalism in the state form or in the party form replaces the self organisation and self determination of the working class. In short, canonisation entailed the constitution of a vertical subject'

Such a dialectical understanding of the dominated subject and their transformation through struggle into a free collective subject necessitates concrete historical engagement with working class politics in order to give meaning to concepts as tools of political development, develop theoretically engaged analysis and understand the contradictions of such struggle in order to engage in a strategically useful way. The new subjectivities and practices of communist woman are not there by the very fact of a coming together. They are forged in a struggle in, against and ultimately beyond such alienated forms of human practice. Thus Tischler continues 'If collectivity is not a mere sum of individuals, of groups, of movements, but a kind of illumination (Benjamin's) that gives rise to a new subjectivity and a new subject, then what is the element that gives meaning to it...collectivity is not an abstraction, but a real form of existence that is produced as an instance of negation/overcoming of the logic of separation upon which the rule of capital rests.'

This *theorises* a way to build upon the abstract idealisation and celebratory presentation of the liberated commune found in post-left anarchy of the IV. It suggests that only concrete engage-

ment between theory and political practice will result in the formation of adequate concepts and understanding to move such post-representational politics forward in our own lives and communities. It also suggests that engaging with the contradictions and politics at the heart of such a construction is more politically enabling as it allows the asking of strategic questions by movements. However, the theorisation of this necessity remains predominantly at the level of abstract critique. Thus whilst attempting to negate dominant understandings of the world, there is a lack of practical collective negation of the world. The producers of knowledge remain individual academics to a great extent abstracted from struggle. This paradoxically reproduces a division of labour between thinker and doer. It also perhaps points to one of the inherently paradoxical positions of university academics; they may be able to make visible subjugated knowledges and theorise the need for other ways of creating knowledge as living as opposed to reified but the very nature of their perfomativity as academics mean that they produce knowledge in a reified and alienating form.

Tischler's work is perhaps the most embedded in political struggle, which is evident in his movement towards not just theorising the dialectical interplay between movement practice and movement knowledge but also suggesting ways in which we might engage with these practices in a politically enabling way. Thus he argues,' ...one can argue that revolution is reinvented by the radical social movements of our time. To reinvent revolution under the current circumstances is to change the meaning of words, to create a new language for naming radical change...The rebel subject creates a language that tells us that the desired change will no longer be trapped in the form of a vertically constructed power, but that it will be one of the self-organisation and self-determination of the exploited and dominated.' This suggests that the best strategic way forward is dialogue with such movements' practices and theorisations.

Open Marxism helps us to theorise a more strategically relevant epistemological practice for the development of post-representational politics. It overcomes the dualism between the dominated and the free, conceptualises the contradictory nature therefore of the construction of the commons, and accepts that such a process is a process of construction. This suggests the necessity of concrete grounded engagement and participation in the commons. They indicate that it is important to make visible subjugated knowledges, they also indicate that concepts and revolution cannot be theorised outside of such concrete grounded experiences of social transformation. However, the production of knowledge abstractly, but not concretely, negates at the same time as it falls back into the construction of reified individualised products of knowledge that engage from the outside with movements.

Post left anarchy engages from the heart of the subjectivity of some of the agents of the commons in the North and captures its spirit, humanity and desire yet it neglects a strategic and theoretical engagement with how we construct such a rebel subjectivity and practice. Open Marxism abstracts from the outside at once negating subjugated human practice and offering ways to think about how we might concretely construct such subjectivity whilst falling back into a process of reification which re-inscribes subjugation.

It is therefore imperative to begin not only to make subjugated knowledges visible but to think through post-representational ways of making knowledge. This involves moving beyond abstract negation to concrete negation and the creation of a living epistemology that can be a basis of the construction in struggle of a post -representational politics. It is, I contend, in the praxis of such autonomous social movements that a politically enabling convergence between post left anarchy and open Marxism that creatively destroys the reified categories of each can

most fruitfully occur. Their praxis suggests what a creative convergence between an immanent and situated account of change which pays attention to complicity and subject-formation (Open Marxism's strength) with an orientation to autonomy and radical refusal at a movement level, avoiding purely academic theorising (post-left anarchy's strength) might look like.

Latin America's autonomist social movements: The pedagogy of practise

Many of the autonomous social movements in Latin America are developing in practice a living epistemology that presents the possibility of dialogue in order to build upon the strengths and avoid the strategic and theoretical political weaknesses of post-left anarchy and open Marxism. Their practice is post-representational in which what we are, what we are becoming and what we want to be are combined. Accordingly, knowledge is not created from the outside in an individualised manner, nor is it seen as in an external relationship with practice. This involves a negation not only of traditional leftism in its political form, but also in its academic form. As Neka of the MTD Solano explains, 'As we understand society, it is based on domination relationships, so anything coming from its institutions will be based on this same principle of domination. Education is education for domination. Same as the family. So when we propose social change we have to begin at the beginning and devise new relationships. I think this is the challenge. When we decided that we have to produce our own foods to struggle against the monopoly of food production, we understood that new relationships are born of this practice, through discussing all these issues. Also horizontality and autonomy, and all these things that are not abstract ideas or theories, but a practical issue and a process.'

This suggests the deconstruction of the subjectivity of the radical academic and the creative destruction of reified conceptual and theoretical deliberation and production. It points to a living conceptual apparatus and a theory that is part of everyday life, an overcoming of the separation between those who think and act, and a reuniting with our intellectual and political capabilities that are alienated from us in the form of specialised objects that we cannot reach.

However, the practice of these movements is not only a negation of all forms of representational politics but also the creation of new forms of living and being. The methodologies of practice developed help us think through how we construct a non-representational, horizontal knowledge that enables the construction of new rebel subjectivities and practices. As Neka continues to explain, 'In the production units we discuss the type of relationships we wish to develop, in this way a form of organisation develops from the collective.the way we move ahead is based on agreement, before doing anything we work out together what we want to produce, for where and how we wish to achieve this. Only after all of us are clear we begin to work. We then reflect, in weekly meetings, whether we are achieving our objectives.'

This suggests that knowledge for social transformation is collectively constructed through critical reflection in the moment of political struggle. It suggests that such a living epistemology is embedded at the heart of struggle as opposed to orientating and making sense from the outside of that struggle. However, this does not amount to the making of 'revolution in solely empirical or pragmatic terms' rather, as the MTD explain, 'We do have a project...but our project occurs at the neighbourhood level with the people. Our analysis is more comprehensive precisely because we work in this manner.our goal is the complete formation of the person, in every possible sense.'

There are attempts at systematisation of such forms of living epistemology, not as a guide and straight jacket of our practice but as a tool to stimulate 'critical reflection as part of the struggle as a true criticism in motion' (Tischler, 170). Perhaps paradigmatic of this is the work of the CTUs of Venezuela who based on the heritage of popular education and liberation theology are developing a methodology of democratic practice from which they are attempting to construct another way of producing the knowledge of rebel subjects. As Nora, a community educator of the CTUs explains, 'If we want to talk about projects coming from below, then we can't take the role of leaders who come in and tell communities what, how, and why they should do things. We have to create the conditions in which communities develop, in equality and together, their understanding of their situation, their analysis, their solutions. It is only in this way that we will break the old way of doing things.'

The CTUs were created in February 2002, as the result of a presidential decree (1,666). They now constitute one of most powerful and autonomous organisations of the popular sectors, with over 6,000 CTUs nationally. The original decree stated the need, in light of the illegal status of the majority of shanty-town dwellers, for the formation of Urban Land Committees based on local community assemblies that would coordinate and organise the struggle for the legalisation of their individual property rights. However as Irma,[3] commented, "This process began as a decree. It is us that have made it real, have given it its meaning and content, through our struggles, our mistakes and our successes." Thus, whilst initiated by the centralised government, it has created a context for the development of a praxis that escapes the boundaries of the decree's original intent.

The CTUs' immediate objectives were reached relatively quickly. By January 2003, over 1000 titles had been granted. Many of the CTUs' founding members of La Vega had worked from the 1980s in popular education projects around culture and literacy and had been involved in struggles over access to water and education. From these experiences, an uneven political culture emerged, in which politics was conceptualised as community self-actualisation based upon equal collective participation in the formation of identity and strategy. Therefore, some key individuals organised regular meetings to discuss problems in the community related to housing and environment.

However, during this period, problems of maintaining participation and overcoming traditional hierarchical relationships within the CTUs re-surfaced. Thus as Mariela discussed, 'I am so used to rallying the community and the community is so used to me speaking for them that when we get to the assembly if I am not there they wait for me. Then when I am there they look to me to structure the meeting.' In light of such experiences the CTU's, via the OTN, organised an 'equipo de formadores'; a group of individuals committed to using collective reflexive practice as a means of stimulating participation, the creation of emapncipatory subjectivities and the formation of identity and strategy from communities themselves. All the promoters are themselves from the communities of the CTUs and entered into a process in which they reflect upon their participation in said community together in order to develop a diagnosis and systemization of the causes of uneven participation and the reproduction of de-facto leadership.

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[3] She is employed at the Oficina Tecnica Nacional para la Regularizacion de la Tenencia de Tierra Urbana (National Technical Office for the Legalisation of Urban Land Ownership, OTN) and participant in the CTU of the First of May, La Vega.

The experiences of trying to create the conditions for community praxis have been contextualized in the gradual development of what the CTUs call a democratic methodology of practice. Such a methodology illustrates the epistemological form of knowledge production that is emapncipatory. The methodology works from the precept that communities are knowledge producers and that the role of the CTU facilitator is to create an environment for the creation and development of such knowledge. The ultimate objective is that all will be facilitators and able to generate the conditions for the production of emapncipatory subjectivities, knowledges and practices.

The steps in this process involve a facilitator, either from within or outside of a particular community linking with a CTU and organising a local meeting in which to begin a process of collective reflection about the community's political struggle. In the meeting a facilitator will begin with a number of questions which are discussed in groups; these involve talking about the achievements of the CTUs, the biggest barriers or problems that are faced locally and nationally, and ideas about how to overcome such problems. Points from each group are put up on sheets around the room and are then discussed so that a consensus is formed around the most important strengths and weaknesses and ideas about how to address particular problems etc. The process of facilitating this meeting is an example to community members interested in becoming facilitators themselves. The facilitators then work separately with these individuals in a process of critical reflection about the role of a facilitator, how the particular meeting progressed and how to conceptualise and understand why it is important to have facilitators. The meeting in the local community is ideally the first of many in which the particular CTU can develop a conceptualisation of its political struggles and strategic understanding of how they wish to proceed. This process ideally occurs within and between communities to try and develop a scaled up CTU project and practise. The aim is to create the conditions for a systematisation of experiences and the development of emapncipatory subjectivity within the participants so that they can understand the causes of the impoverishment they face, the problems and the successes that a CTU community has confronted and ways forward.

Conclusion

The CTUs are an example in practice of the type of conceptual thinking that creates emapncipatory critique upon the basis of a systematisation of experience. Despite the challenges and uneven nature of this process, their self-reflexivity is evidenced by their reactions to the successes and failures of organising CTUs. Developing dialogue with such movements is a way of learning about the methodologies of practice which are a concrete expression of the elements of an emapncipatory epistemology. Knowledge production is collective not individual, forged in the heart of struggle as opposed to the isolation of abstraction at a distance. Its validity is based upon its usefulness for movement struggles as opposed to its relationship to other theories. Localised political struggles have the capacity to combine the concrete and the abstract, the particular and the universal. This capacity is immanent in the lived experiences of such communities of resistance. The type of theory that is a result of such collective reflexive praxis forges projects of social transformation which attempt to avoid the alienated relations of power characteristic of twentieth century revolutionary politics and the practice of radical academics embedded within representational forms of knowledge construction.

Such a living epistemology creates new knowledges and suggests post-representational modes and processes of creating knowledge for such social transformation. It moves beyond the dualism between domination and resistance found in post-left anarchy via their grounded theorisation of the parallel existence of subjugated and liberated human practice amongst their communities and themselves. It does so via its processal view of subject formation and the development of methodologies of subject formation aimed in their practice and outcome to create rebel subject (s). Such praxis moves beyond the alienation of practice of Open Marxism as knowledge arises immanently from the struggle to construct the 'commons' in every day life and not externally in the form of reified theorisation. To post-left anarchy such movements offer a set of pedagogical practices which help think through strategically and political how to move from subjugation to liberation and in so doing construct rebel subjects and social relations. For Open Marxism they provide other forms of knowledge and other forms of learning and creating knowledge, suggesting similar practices to academics in and outside of the university space.

Such praxis also illustrates the need to deconstruct what was the 20th century's dominant practice and conceptualisation of emancipatory theory and subvert, in order to move beyond, the subjectivity of the radical academic. It suggests recognition of our inherently paradoxical situation as academics in higher education systems wedded to the reproduction of alienated human practice and the reification of intellectual capacities into individualised production and textual objectification. A deconstruction of our role as knowledge producers as a moment of praxis, dialogue and critical reflection, a de-linking of ourselves from truth as abstract theory and a move towards the construction of truth as part of our collective struggle as waged labourers in our institutions, as teachers in our classrooms, and as researchers within communities. We may throw a brick in the window of normalcy with our critique and in this way conceptually negate social reality but at the same time we practically are complicit in the production of alienated knowledge and the subjugation of the living epistemology of the rebel subject. Being in, against and finally beyond the straightjacket of the identity radical academic is one way in which the convergence of the traditions of post-left anarchy and open Marxism can push towards the development of a living epistemology as part of the creation of a post-representational politics in all the contradictory spheres that we inhabit.

Politics, Ideology Revolution

The (Anti-) Politics of Autonomy: Between Marxism and Anarchism

Christian Garland

Abstract

Marx famously said that the emancipation of the proletariat must be the work of the proletariat itself; almost ever since, there has been a persistent current of Marxism — that has, in common with anarchism and in antagonism toward its own dominant orthodox tradition, stressed the need for *autonomy*.

This emphasis on 'autonomy' can be seen two fold: both in terms of the action of the exploited and oppressed themselves as an anti-political, self-valorising agency for achieving revolutionary social change, and as prefiguring new non- hierarchical social relations beyond the world of the present. This paper will aim to critically examine the concept of 'autonomy,' specifically the similarities between unorthodox Marxisms and anarchism, rather than the all-too-frequently emphasised differences.

The Greek origin of the word, comes of course, from 'auto' (self) and 'nomos' (law), meaning self-determination, and it is this original meaning that we can see in the context of the theories of anarchism and certain forms of Marxism, namely that any social subject must create and define the terms of its own collective existence. The Greek origins of the word 'anarchy ' or 'anarchia' ('without ruler ') bare striking similarity to the notion of an autonomous political practise which resists hierarchical forms, and seeks to become a 'self-creating' agency both acting and existing 'for itself' whilst seeking to push beyond the present form of society in subverting and undermining it. In the course of the paper, we will seek to identify some substantive claims of critical and libertarian currents of Marxism as they exist in relation to some of those made by anarchism, and the overlap that these two traditions share.

A Theory of 'autonomy'

Marxism — at least in its unorthodox forms has in common with class-struggle anarchism, a self-defining emphasis on the need for anti-hierarchical and anti-state practice, and the need for 'autonomy.' This emphasis on 'autonomy' can be seen two fold: both in terms of the action of the exploited and oppressed themselves as an antipolitical, self-valorising agency for achieving revolutionary social change, and as prefiguring new non-hierarchical social relations beyond the world of the present.

A brief survey of the currents loosely and very broadly grouped under the tag 'autonomist' brings together an array of seemingly disparate lines of thought, whose links could be seen as

somewhat tenuous. There is also the frequent objection from purists in either Marxist or Anarchist camps that they remain utterly separate and irreconcilable philosophies whatever apparent surface similarities they seem to share. Without a long digression into Marx's own consistency in his belief in the autonomy of the revolutionary social subject, we find in his famous quote on the Paris Commune that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes"[1] no less than his admiration for the insurrection's far-reaching measures taken under extreme duress, the recognition that the state does not hold any neutrality in the field of class struggle. This quote taken from *The Civil War in France,* in which he also speaks of the Commune as carrying out the "destruction of state power," gives a suitably antagonistic, *anti-political* turn for any attempt to define a theory of Marxist autonomy, and one completely at odds with the orthodoxies of Marxist-Leninism.

Following Marx, we find in Rosa Luxemburg's belief in revolutionary spontaneity and mass action, a powerful counterforce to the Leninist obsession with a disciplined, hierarchically organised party following the dikats of a central committee. Luxemburg's belief that the proletariat remains "capable of self-direction in political activity"[2] anticipates later 'autonomist Marxism' and class struggle anarchism remarkably well, as do other Left Communists such as Anton Pannekoek, Otto Rhule, and Karl Korsch. Indeed, as Otto Rhule argued the notion of a *political party* seeking to institute *social* revolution, either by seizing power or via electoral mandate is nonsense; we might add however, one that nearly ninety years later, still lingers amongst many who consider themselves revolutionaries. This is not to argue against any form of organisation, or oppose efforts at collective social transformation with an ideological mode of identity-thinking that endlessly repeats the same single concept; but it remains important to explain the significance of 'anti-political' practice from the standpoint of a theory of 'autonomy.' In contrast to the Orthodox Marxist tradition, autonomist Marxism, i.e. non-Leninist Marxism, and revolutionary anarchism, i.e. class struggle anarchism demand at all times, as Benjamin Franks[3] shows, a *consistency* between means and ends, and this 'prefigurative' ethic can be seen in the anti-political practice of both. It is helpful to list some examples here:

- Autonomist Marxism and class struggle anarchism oppose both the standard route to achieving 'political power' *and* the traditional goal of political action embodied in the state-form. However, this is not to say they propose merely passive withdrawal, in the hope that the state will weaken and rather more hopefully 'wither away' as a result. Instead these tendencies can be said to constitute a forceful and dynamic counter-power or *'anti-power '* aimed at subverting and undermining the power of capital and the state in every form.

- Further specific examples of such 'anti-politics' could include the rejection of electoral campaigning — except, and not uncontroversially by some for propaganda purposes, rejection of bourgeois legality, and rejection of the demand for non-violence at all times and in all instances against the forces of capital and the state. Leninism is notable by contrast, for employing and advocating means which are almost without exception, overwhelmingly

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[1] Marx, K. (1871) Chapter 5 *The Third Address: The Paris Commune* in *The Civil War in France* online version http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/ch05.htm

[2] Luxemburg, R. (1904) *Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy* aka *Marxism or Leninism* http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1904/questions-rsd/ch01.htm

[3] See Franks, B. (2006) *Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms* (Edinburgh: AK Press) especially *Chapter 2: The Anarchist Ethic* and *Chapter 3: Agents of Change* pp.93–192

reformist, legalistic, and non-violent, and which completely replicate the world of party politics.

- We can also observe in the anti-Leninist rejection of 'playing the game' of instrumental politics and the duplicitousness and shameless opportunism this frequently demands, a shared contempt between class struggle anarchism and autonomous Marxism for 'working within' a system they seek openly to destroy.

An anti-political practice

A definition of 'autonomy,' that is 'self-government' or 'self-determination' remains a defining element of both autonomist Marxism, and class struggle anarchism. By this, we mean the 'autonomy' of the social subject or the capacity of this same subject for self-determination and self-governance, together with the recognition that such a practice is a goal of both communism and the inveterate antagonism to hierarchical power and the state shared by autonomist and anarchist thought. Against the popularly accepted notion of a state of such political 'anarchy' being a chaotic and brutish Hobbesian struggle of each-against-all, anarchism proposes the capacity for cooperative and rational organic social harmony, the result and goal of autonomy, self-determination and self-government. This form of society can be seen in the efforts to create new forms of living and ways of acting in the present that aim to open up alternative non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian pathways. Indeed the libertarian emphasis on autonomous practice as a mode of being, can be seen as a further development of Marx's observation that communism is not merely a 'programme' waiting to be put into practice, but is present as a *tension* and *force* forever threatening capital with its own historical becoming. Autonomous practice seeks its own self-creating criteria to further accelerate such a becoming which would signal the disintegration and supersession of capitalist social relations. We can list below some examples of such a practice:

- Autonomous practice strives for the encouragement of egalitarian and anti- hierarchical organisation, and methods that are careful to avoid reproducing the hierarchy and inequality of instrumental political practice and which aim to at all times challenge their emergence. Despite what Lenin may have believed, freedom is not and never has been a bourgeois or middle class virtue, but is the defining and enabling means and end of an authentic revolutionary practice.

- Examples of such autonomous practice include efforts to immediately communize resources and subvert and destroy the laws of value, price, profit — in effect the market itself. The 1970's self-reduction campaign in Italy is the most obvious example of this in which besides mass squatting and wide- scale rent strikes as a solution to housing need, thousands refused to pay full price or indeed anything at all, for essential services such as electricity, gas, water, and transport. A no less important example, particularly in a UK context, would be the 1989–90 mass non-payment campaign which defeated the Poll Tax.

Both these particular examples, Italian self-reduction and the anti-Poll Tax movement are useful in defining 'autonomy': we can see in such autonomous action the revolutionary social subject, the proletariat acting as a class for itself, by refusing and seeking to surpass the category of

proletarian altogether. It is also possible to see in such actions, the essential need and desire for freedom and social equality explicitly demanded by the refusal of conditions of exploitation, and hierarchy imposed by capital and the state.

Anti-Leninist Marxism and class struggle anarchism share the same determination to bring an end to exploitation and oppression in every form, and the same commitment to preventing their reappearance. There is a distinction to be made here between the rejection of political power as such and the forceful 'anti-power' which resists and opposes it; autonomous Marxism and revolutionary anarchism do not seek to assume state power but nor do they seek to 'tolerate' it. Just as Makhno's army fought a civil war against the White Army, the Ukrainian bourgeoisie and landowning class, Petliurist nationalists, and the Bolsheviks whilst endeavouring to create free communism, they also realised that this was not possible while the multiple fronts of reaction retained any influence or power. Such a recognition that autonomous action for self-emancipation by the exploited and oppressed themselves cannot succeed while the state exists, nor can any process of communization occur without the subversion and supersession of capitalist social relations in all their manifest forms: wage labour, money, value, etc. Indeed this remains a key ingredient of the revolutionary substance of Marxism and anarchism. In the words of Gilles Dauve:

> "The proletariat is not the working class, rather the class of the critique of work. It is the ever-present destruction of the old world, but only *potentially;* it becomes real only in a moment of social tension and upheaval, when it is compelled by capital to be the agent of communism. It only becomes the subversion of established society when it unifies itself, and organizes itself, not in order to make itself the dominant class, like the bourgeoisie in its time, but in order to destroy the society of classes; at that point there is only one social agent: mankind."[4]

Autonomy then, as a theory can be seen to embody the practice of new non- hierarchical, non-exploitative social relations in which human beings' capacity for freedom and cooperation is recognised and encouraged, instead of frustrated and blocked by other more powerful interests in an unending competition for material, and indeed psychological and emotional survival: the war of each-against-all that is late capitalism. The theory of autonomy, which is a key component of the Marxist and anarchist traditions we have identified in this paper, recognises men and women as ends in themselves, and not as *instrumental, functional means* to an end imposed and demanded by forces external and alien to their own needs and interests. This theory rejects and seeks to combat such an objectification of the human subject both for the end of an alternative, qualitatively superior form of society, and the revolutionary process of achieving it. As such, autonomous action seeks to challenge and subvert existing oppressive social relations of exploitation and hierarchy whilst setting itself the task of not reproducing these same social

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[4] Dauve, D. (1997) *Capitalism and Communism* section G *Proletariat and Revolution* in *The Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement* (London: Antagonism) online version `http://www.geocities.com/antagonism1/ecapcom2.html#G`

relations including the complete rejection of the Leninist notion of the proletariat and other oppressed groups as being incapable of recognising their own interests or taking offensive action to advance them.

It has been argued in the course of this paper, that the 'anti-politics of autonomy' remain of key significance for both autonomous Marxism and class struggle anarchism. The exact forms this autonomy may take are necessarily not fixed by either tradition; what remains an insuperable imperative however, is the same belief in the necessity for 'autonomy,' both in terms of the view they take of human subjectivity and agency, the sort of society they envision, and as the guiding principle for any anti-political revolutionary practice.

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ABOLISH CAPITAL!: Beyond the Marxist/Anarchist divide

Christopher Wellbrook

Alternate title: **Pick up a brick and throw it at a cop: Beyond the anarchist/Marxist divide**

> *Where would we be today without those 'defeats,' from which we draw historical experience, understanding, power and idealism ... There is but one condition. The question of why each defeat occurred must be answered.* R. Luxemburg (1919)

It is no coincidence that the Paris commune of 1871, the split in the First International, Russia 1917 and Spain 1936 are all key reference points for modern Marxist and anarchist theory. Similarly, the historical conflicts between anarchists and Marxists cannot be understood in isolation from these events. They are rooted in the experiences and lessons drawn from a real, continuing tradition of class-struggle. Whilst it is true that the polemics exchanged between Marxists and anarchists have often degenerated into caricature, the better of these have always dealt in the common currency of history. In light of this, it is the purpose of this study to explore a peculiar condition of theorists of in a revolutionary tradition in the West, in a period of advanced capitalism. For Luxemburg and other traditional proponents of revolutionary theory, the question was clear-cut: what was the most appropriate analysis to be derived from the failures, and limited successes, of the working class movement? However, in our age, the line between what the working class movement has gained and what it has lost is becoming ever more blurred.

This blurring is due to recuperation, capitalism's ability to incorporate and contain radical movements.

In the United Kingdom, radical ideas have never been so accessible. This stands in stark contrast to the experiences of the early pioneers of anti-capitalist criticism. Following the revolutions of 1848 Marx was periodically exiled from most mainland European states due to his radical activity and writings, Bakunin would spend six years rotting in the infamous Peter and Paul fortress for his part in the May insurrection in Dresden (1849), while Kropotkin was able to escape arrest in 1876 only to spend forty-one years in exile from his native land. All three experienced censorship, suppression and often incarceration because of their writings and activity in the revolutionary movement. Nowadays the teachings of all of these, and many others, can be found throughout University courses in Sociology, Art, Economics, Political Science, Philosophy and others. Even school students studying in the UK, whose experience typically contrasts with the critical thought encouraged at undergraduate level, can be taught, for example, how the anarchist view of the state differs from the Marxist one or the Marxist approach to religion (Mcnaughton, 2009). Our ideas have not only become acceptable, they are state-sanctioned.

In light of this, this essay intends to explore a number of key questions; What do these developments mean for us as revolutionary theorists and for our capacity for social criticism? Is

it even possible to be a revolutionary theorist? Can and do we pose a critical challenge to the existing social order?

Materially, nothing substantive has changed in the condition of the vast majority of working people across the globe. Capitalism still exists, exploitation still exists, waged labour exists and the state and class violence still exists. If anything the permissibility of radical ideas in the academic sphere has accompanied an equivalent intolerance, even outright attack upon, basic notions of workplace solidarity, critique and political dissent in the "real world." Permissibility in academia has also not been without its costs. Marxism and anarchism have become institutionalised to fit the mould of existing and acceptable bourgeois systems of education. It is no longer necessary (or desirable) to elaborate these ideas in the spirit of their original context — as a guide for revolutionary action. Instead they merely represent a commentary, an added perspective, which serves to augment understandings of existing social phenomena such as class, economics and political authority. Their key quality, their ability to mobilise, has been stripped away.

It is true to say that this process in itself, is not a unique phenomenon. There has, after all, been a long tradition of bourgeois intellectuals writing, discussing and utilising radical ideas. In fact, the sociologist Von Stein was to comment as early as 1850 that,

> It is the great merit of socialism to have made us aware for the first time of the relationship of labour to the free personality and to have discovered the existence and the power of the social order over men, as well as the contradiction between the social order and the free personality. (Von Stein, 1850: 279)

This was the language of what Marx and Engels would describe as "Bourgeois" or "conservative socialism" in the *Communist Manifesto*. That is, it represented efforts by the bourgeois intelligentsia to redress social grievances caused by capitalism while still preserving its privileged class status. Moreover, academia has traditionally been the forum in which these ideas have been articulated. However as Cleaver (1983) has noted, bourgeois reformism does not simply consist of what Marx (1848: 43) identified as "hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind" working their thought into "complete systems," but there has also been a wider tendency towards the appropriation of profitable aspects of Marxist and anarchist theory itself. As Cleaver is also keen to emphasise, neither should this be understood simply as an exercise in Marcusian "repressive tolerance" whereby insurgent ideas can be safely contained within the academy. These social ideas, albeit in a distorted form, can play a real role in the maintenance and continuation of bourgeois hegemony. In the West, Dauve is keen to emphasise the university structure as integral to this process:

> One of the natural channels of this evolution is the university, since the apparatus in which it is a part backs a considerable part of the research on the modernization of capital. Official "revolutionary" thought is the scouting party of capital. Thousands of appointed functionaries criticize capitalism from every direction. (Dauve, 1979)

Marx's analysis of economic cycles, crises and surplus value are widely incorporated into many modern courses in economics. Any savvy stockbroker will be sure to have a copy of *Capital Vol. 1* alongside the *Wealth of Nations* on his bookshelf. Cleaver (1983) even points to the role of explicitly anti-capitalist thought in bolstering the analysis of the business community, as evidenced by the increasing space given over in professional economic journals to radical ideas.

This process is also apparent in more subtle ways. For example, much of the Green movement in Europe has its origins in the radicalism and radical movements of the 1960s. Yet the revolutionary social ecology pioneered by anarchists such as Murray Bookchin is becoming increasingly marginal and with it the centrality of an anti-capitalist critique. The Green challenge that is posed today is not one that calls for the abolition of the capitalist system but, by-and-large, a reform of it into a carbon-free economy. A conflict between two competing alternatives — a Green, sustainable system vs. a carbon-based one — in fact masks a shared goal: the continued, stable functioning of the capitalist system. Equivalent developments can be seen in the contra-globalisation movement. The autonomism of Italian Marxists such as Negri and Tronti, "filtered via Deleuze and Guattari" (Wright, 2002: 2) has resulted in key components of anti-capitalist criticism, for example, the class relationship, the capitalist state etc. being replaced with more ambiguous concepts such as "global power" and the "multitude." The result of which is to replace a theoretical narrative that was originally concerned chiefly with class power on the factory floor, with one that has as its central concern the *regulation* of global economic development in all of its excesses — summitry, unchecked free trade, sweatshop labour, lack of accountability etc. Simultaneously, Marxism and anarchism can be, and have been, utilised as ideological "friend" and "enemy" of the political order while leaving the base cause of injustice — the *social* order — untouched by their criticism.

So, for example, if we look at the history of Marxism, while Marx's intention to develop a critical and revolutionary theory of political economy is central to understanding his contribution, equally, to fully grasp the revolutionary *potential* of his theory, its subsequent recuperation cannot be ignored. Dauve shows this problem at work in two key areas. Firstly, in Marx's tendency to outline the functioning of the economy "in- itself," that is to attribute the economic system with certain laws of motion that lead to a teleological reading of history or a conception of history which is essentially "agent-less." Secondly, in Marx's tendency, despite his insistence on the need for an explicitly communist movement, to articulate reformist demands, i.e. those later associated with the parties of Social Democracy. So, for example, the programme of *the Communist Manifesto* includes, "a heavy progressive or graduated income tax," "free education for all children in public schools" and the "centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state" etc.[1] Crump (1976) situates these tendencies in their historical context. He points particularly to the commentary of Engels in *Marx and the Neue Rheinische Zeitgung (1848–9);*

> If we did not desire to take up the movement from its already existing, most advanced, actually proletarian side and push it further, then nothing remained for us to do but to preach communism in a little provincial sheet and to found a tiny sect instead of a great party in action. But we had already been spoilt for the role of preachers in

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[1] It should be noted that Bakunin and other anarchists of the period were also equally prone to such reformist demands throughout their lifetime.

the wilderness; we had studied the utopians too well for that. We had not drafted our program for that. (Engels, 1884)

While Marx's prime objective was to put forward an adequately scientific analysis that privileged class struggle within an international socialist movement dominated by the ideology of bourgeois reformism this, in practice, was no easy task. Marx and Engels were caught, on the one hand, between their own communist principles and, on the other, the actual reformist behaviour, and involvement in the bourgeois revolutions of Europe, of the majority of the working class.[2] What resulted was a mixture of "stary-eyed romanticism and hard-headed realism," the worst aspects of which were seized and recuperated by practitioners of bourgeois theory. Something which can be seen most concretely in the development of "dialectical materialism" as an ideological by-product of this vulgarized Marxist theory;

Dialectical analysis was a method of critique common amongst Marx's generation and can be clearly traced from the radical discussion circles that emerged around Hegel's thought and German Romanticism. However, Marx himself, in comparison to some of the other issues he wrote about, rarely gave the dialectical method space to match the weight and import that it had in his seminal works. He devoted a chapter of his economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844 to a materialist critique of Hegel's philosophy and emphasised the utility of the dialectic as a method for comprehending the reproduction of humanity's alienation by labour. He raised this again in his critique of Proudhon in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and the dialectical character of economic development continually resurfaced as a metaphysics of political economy throughout his works. However, the ontological status of this dialectic was largely unqualified aside from a few short remarks in his correspondence. It was, Engels, not Marx who attempted to reach a positive resolution of this issue in *Anti-Duhring* (1877) and later in his posthumously published *Dialectics of Nature* (1883). This was the first articulation of what came to be known as, "dialectical materialism." This meant that, as Callinicos (1976) explains,

> interpreting the dialectic not simply as providing the structures specific to Marx's analysis of social formations like capitalism, but as actually representing the laws immanent in all reality, natural as well as social and in the reflection of thought... For Engels, then, the dialectic laws Hegel had discovered where the general governing nature, history and thought. Marx's worth was the triumphant application of these laws to history. (12–13)

Philosophically, this was the completion of the Enlightenment project — the application of rationality to all living things — and, consequently, to use Marx's own critique of idealist thought, a reproduction within Marxism of the continued alienation of humanity as *subject to* not *master of* the laws of their social universe. Politically, such an interpretation, served as a legitimising discourse for the social democratic programme of the Second International. The intellectuals of the German SPD in particular — Bernstein, Kautsky and Plekhanov — who arguably exercised a

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[2] Crump (1976) attributes this problem specifically with the impossibility of communist revolution in Europe during the Eighteenth century. This is an analysis that I believe does require greater critical evaluation relying as it does on certain teleological assumptions on technological and historical development. On a discursive level, however, I do agree with Crump that we can say with certain authority that radical theorists do now have, "the opportunity of constructing a theory of communism with minds which are relatively uncluttered with the baggage which belongs to the bourgeois revolution."

hegemonic influence over the Western European workers' movement were able to utilise Engel's formulation to justify an incremental and reformist strategy. If "dialectic laws" predicted the inevitable victory of the proletariat through a pre-ordained course of historical development then the task of the Marxist party was to forward the so-called "bourgeois revolution," even if this aim happened to conflict with those of the proletarian class. The leaders of the Second International were effectively able to contain the aspirations of their proletarian members while diverting their efforts towards capitalist development as part of a "bourgeois revolution." This was "stary- eyed romanticism and hard-headed realism" taken together and to their extreme. Marxist theorists could justify the continued preservation, even the active development, of capitalist society as justified by a theoretically abstract vision of communism that had little relation to human endeavour and everything to do with the progressive development of hidden, scientific laws. The theory of Lenin and his followers during the Russian revolution was merely the strategic application of these principles to a moment of class insurgency. The theory and the goals elaborated by the Second International were essentially retained, advocating state-capitalist reforms and preaching theoretical leadership of the party over the working class. Although Lenin would engage in many sustained polemics against Kautsky and his followers he would never deviate from the original philosophy and political goals of the second International (Dauve, 1977). The innovations forced by the Russian context and the conditions of heavy repression under the Tsar merely led to a particularly authoritarian brand of communist organisational practice. Moreover, after the Bolshevik seizure of power it became almost immediately clear that the factory councils' and peasant committees' desire for workers' self-management over production would conflict with Lenin's understanding of workers' control as

> a national, all-embracing, omnipresent, extremely precise and extremely scrupulous *accounting* [emphasis in original] of the production and distribution of goods. (Lenin, 1917)[3]

It is this role that "revolutionary thought" has historically played as an ideological smokescreen for capitalist development that leads Debord in his *Society of the Spectacle* to make the distinction between revolutionary *theory* and revolutionary *ideology.* It should be made clear, however, that such a distinction has not come as the result of persistent "mistakes" made by radical intellectuals and academics or the existence of deviant doctrines. It is rather a natural consequence of the continued functioning of capitalism and the continuing expression of class interests. As a consequence, to attempt to seek a methodological remedy to this problem, as many radical intellectuals have done, actually misses a far more fundamental issue. Capitalism is, after all, a real living system containing conflicting interests and, as Marx once observed, in every epoch, the ruling ideas are those of the ruling class. Accordingly, as much as radicals operating within the academic sphere may hope to escape or evade it, they cannot ignore the material conditions that frame, mutate and transform the products of intellectual labour.

The rehabilitation of radical theorists is a seemingly rational goal in the face of a social system that has continually recuperated and vulgarised revolutionary thought. Faced with these theoretical failures an intuitive response is to re-assert the original qualities that were so integral to the "true" Marx, Bakunin, Kropotkin etc. However, ultimately, without any appreciation of the

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[3] For a comprehensive history see "The Bolsheviks and Workers Control" *In:* Brinton, M. (2004) *For Worker's Power* (AKPress: Oakland, USA)

material and historical conditions that framed these theories in their original context this is an exercise in futility. What weighs upon us now as revolutionary theorists is not simply the historical failure of anarchist and Marxist theory, but the accumulated experience of the repeated failures of proletarian revolution.

Recuperation is, after all, a defensive mechanism. Only after revolutionary actions have failed and the ideas that accompanied them have lost their material substance is it possible for them to become a useful tool for the bourgeoisie. The "original" Marx, Bakunin, Kropotkin are useless to us precisely because their teachings have been absorbed into the ideological apparatus of the state and the bourgeoisie. In this respect, it is no surprise that Marxism and anarchism are now on the school curriculum; they are both components in the ideological management of the proletariat. That which cannot be absorbed and used in the practical management of the working classes, i.e. in economics, management theory and in the provision of social reforms, can instead be safely diffused within the universalistic grasp of bourgeois history or ethics. Students may come to a more critical appraisal of the role of the state, even the functioning of the class system, but ultimately they are dealing with relics of failed revolutionary projects — dead theory.

Recuperation is just an expression in ideas of what has already occurred in practice. It is an indication of how and why revolutionary projects have already failed. Subsequently, while it is important to recognise the distinction between ideology and theory and the interests they serve, to attempt to limit or even cut off aspects of revolutionary thought from recuperation, as the situationists attempted to, represents as fruitful course of action as attempting to think oneself out of capitalism.

Radical writers and intellectuals may work outside of a revolutionary context, but it is only in a revolutionary context, or at least in an analysis of past episodes, that their work has true critical value. It is only in unity with the working class movement that the work of theoreticians can be understood to be genuinely revolutionary. Theorists, in other words, should accept recuperation for what it is and instead of desperately attempting to keep the revolutionary flame alight during periods of reaction they focus instead on critically evaluating the limited successes of the working movement. The role of communist theorists therefore is to

> represent and defend the general interests of the movement. In all situations, they do not hesitate to express the whole meaning of what is going on, and to make practical proposals. If the expression is right and the proposal appropriate, they are parts of the struggle of the proletariat and contribute to build the "party" of the communist revolution. (Dauve and Martin, 1974)

Our ideal should be of a permanent bank of revolutionary theorists whose ideals are brought into unity with the progressive development of the communist movement.

To concentrate more specifically on what this offers in terms of the capacity of revolutionary theory I think it opens up a number of points for development. The utility of this approach is ultimately on taking head on the often awkward position that theorists have to negotiate between their capacity to forward social change and the constraints that are put upon them by their given circumstances, an idea that Marx famously expressed in his *Eighteenth Brumiaire of Louis Bonaparte:*

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances of their own choosing, but under circumstances existing al-

ready, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

From this position it is possible to understand recuperation as an indication of the far more serious constraints that weigh upon us both historically and materially. The ideological forces of the state and the bourgeois class will always attempt to divert and contain revolutionary ideas, and recuperation is the successful end product of this process. It is also necessary to recognise theorists and actors (for want of a better word) as elements of the same process. It is critical to reject the Leninist formulation of socialist intellectuals outside and somehow immune to the alienating effects of the class system. In many respects, this is an idea that has been common currency in anarchism for some time, The Dielo Truda group, for example, state in the *Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)* that,

> Anarchism … developed, not from the abstract reflections of some scientist or philosopher, but out of the direct struggle waged by the working people against capital, out of their needs and requirements, out of their psychology, their desire for freedom and equality, aspirations that become especially vivid in the most heroic stages of the working masses' life and struggle. Anarchism's outstanding thinkers — Bakunin, Kropotkin, and others — did not invent the idea of anarchism, but, having discovered it among the masses, merely helped develop and propagate it through the power of their thought and knowledge. (Dielo Truda Group, 1926)

It is nonetheless an important point for unity. In doing so, we reaffirm the original sentiment of early pioneers of both anarchism and Marxism that it is activity — solidarity, organisation and education — that is the revolutionary component of revolutionary theory.

The kind of Marxism and anarchism that those operating from this perspective hope to develop is one based on a continual and evolving dialogue between intellectuals and working class militants. Practically, this has to be rooted in the grassroots conditions of every historical struggle, building from concrete experiences upwards. We should see it as possible at all times to continually critically re-appraise the condition of our theory in communication with the existing, most advanced expressions of anti-capitalist resistance, however minor these may seem. Moreover, Anarchism and Marxism need this relationship to avoid stagnation. Without it there may be anarchists and Marxists, but there won't be revolutionaries. So many attempts to address recuperation have proceeded from a flawed assumption, that it is somehow possible to articulate *the* perfect theory, immune from co-option, relentless in its criticism and articulate in its guide for revolutionary action. However, such an endeavour starts from an idealist perspective — that somehow theory is a force in itself that can be shaped and moulded by intellectual effort alone. Theory, however, is nothing but a relic of past struggles. Whether this is in the form of the terms and concepts we draw from, the historical events at the core of our analysis or even the recuperated terms and notions we have to struggle against, they are all essentially material in character. The corpses in our mouths are those of murdered revolutionaries. If we are truly to take on the magnitude of recuperation then we also have to acknowledge that the only theory that has true critical value is one that is rooted in real and continuing social struggles.

We have, therefore, to take alternative courses of action. On the one hand, we can wait, speculate, analyse and anticipate. On the other, we can participate. Education is a powerful weapon, it no coincidence that it has historically been such a central component of socialist organising. Self-education has always been an important base of our movement. The difference now is that, in the West, contemporary students of anarchism and Marxism are not only confronted with traditional obstacles — poverty, lack of time and resources — but also the added difficulty of having to surpass the vulgar Marxism and anarchism that is taught in mainstream education.

When early agitators conceived their task as "bringing revolution to the masses" they made an error. Their task was not simply to disseminate anarchism and Marxism amongst the working classes, but also to learn from them. Revolutionaries, whether they concede the idea or not, are representatives of a continuing tradition of class struggle, they are the past meeting the present confrontation with capitalism. Our criticism should not be seen as taking place between theoretically privileged "outsiders" and naive "insiders" (as is the case with much positivistic social science), but as equals within the same struggle. We outline critical perspectives as developed from our own principles while simultaneously forwarding a wider discourse as based upon our collective experience. It is correct to criticise intellectuals for agonising over their "relationship" to the working class. The fact is that there is no relationship, they are components of the same movement or they are not. This is a perspective, even just looking briefly at some contemporary events, that is desperately lacking in our discipline.

On the afternoon of Saturday 6ᵗʰ September 2008, Greek police shot dead a 15-year-old student in the central Exarchia district in Athens. Police routinely clashed with immigrant and working class youths throughout the poorer districts of the capital, however, this time the confrontation would turn fatal. The events that followed came to be known in the mainstream media as part of the "Greek December." Public outrage at the police, along with continuing attacks on working conditions following the economic crisis, caused widespread mobilisations. Police stations burned, luxury shops were ransacked, roads blockaded and the centre of Athens saw continuous running battles with aggressive riot police. The first work to come out of academia on this subject was from the Hellenic Observatory in LSE. They published a collection of essays on the riots titled, *The Return of Street Politics?* in April 2009. The contributors were varied, from professors and economists throughout the UK and Europe to journalists and professional analysts, they even managed to squeeze in a few radical post-structuralists. Yet, despite the variety of political positions that were being drawn from there was a single methodological aim displayed throughout the collection. Every writer struggled to describe the events through the lens of their own ideological narrative, whether this meant seeing the events as an indication of the awakening of a democratic "multitude," a mass psychological display of youthful rebellion, a nihilist glimpse into a bleak future or even a cry for privatisation and freer economic markets. Not one of the authors chose to give those participating in the rebellion a voice. This was, even for those defending the actions of the rioters, an entirely one-way process. Even the analysis of so-called revolutionaries resorted to simple and arbitrary abstractions. For the Leninists it was the age-old "crisis of leadership" resurfacing, as naive and "insurrectionary" youth were "betrayed" by the failure of the political Left and the trade unions to take up the mantle. In the end, the most articulate expression of the energy behind the events was not to come from the sociologists, political scientists or even the radical theorists of European universities. It was to come from inside the insurrection, from the testimony of a "hot-headed" youth,

Until I turned eighteen, they thought I was on their side. Excellent behaviour, excellent marks, certificates in foreign languages, you know, all these make them call you a "good girl." Meaning that you will attend a good college, you will have a good job, you will make a nice family be a peace-loving individual. On Saturdays you will be going to the supermarket and on Sundays for a drive to the countryside. They have dug their own grave. A great slap was necessary for me to wake up. And here it is. I'm sorry, all you dearest. But you'll find me against you once again. I am just 1.70 of height and 55kg. But you don't have the slightest clue of what I am capable of. — A good student girl

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On the origins of the collapse of the First International

Paul B. Smith

What caused the Collapse of the First International?

Workers worldwide have the potential to form a class that can abolish capitalism and the state. However, there are certain necessary conditions for this to happen. First of all, workers need a theory capable of understanding the present. Secondly, they need an organisational form or forms that will provide them with the ability to take power (Ticktin, 2006, p25).

Prior to the founding of the First International, socialist groups were separated theoretically and organisationally from the labour movement. The First International was the first organisational form that combined theories of the nature of capitalism and its socialist alternative — in particular Proudhon's and Marx's — with workers' active political and economic resistance to capitalism. It will continue to be of interest to those students, intellectuals and activists who have similar preoccupations in the present and future.

It is notable that neither the organisational form of the International nor workers' theoretical awareness within it was sufficient for class formation to take place. Workers did not take power. On the contrary the organisation split into two groups neither of which survived for long. This was a significant defeat for the working class. The question this essay addresses is not only how did this happen but also what combination of subjective and objective forces were responsible for this defeat.

My aims here include a discussion of the recent historical context that has influenced perceptions of the collapse. I also want to ask the question whether it is possible to give a comprehensive explanation of it. This entails some discussion of method that might be used to answer to the question of explanation. I shall suggest a theoretical framework that might be used to interpret the historical events. This framework relies on an understanding of the concept of contradiction.

The context of interpretation

If the collapse of the First International was the first major defeat for the working class, later defeats have been understood in relation to it. This is especially the case with the defeat that dominated the last century — that of the Russian revolution in 1917. The emergence of Stalinism in the former USSR and its influence worldwide had a profound effect on both workers' understanding of theory and the organisational forms they adopted. Marxism claims to be a theory of working class self emancipation. Yet, during the Cold War, it became associated with totalitarian systems. Marxism was thought of as responsible for war, famine, economic shortages

and destruction (Ticktin, 2006, p12). The left supported regimes unparalleled in barbarity, inefficiency and inhumanity. Left wing opposition to Stalinism conceded much to it. For example, orthodox Trotskyists upheld the progressive nature of the nationalised property relations of the former Soviet Union. They also supported critically brutal nationalist movements and regimes in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Theoretically, the far left tended to be ignorant of or compromised by the Stalinist destruction of theory making it impossible or very difficult for workers to take an interest in or understand political economy. For some, this entailed entrapment within Althusser's version of structuralist sociology. For others, it meant a retreat into scholastic formalism.

The challenge that the events of 1968 had to capitalism mobilised a new generation of young workers and students. Many of these rejected Marxism as an inherently oppressive set of ideas. They abandoned workers as a potential revolutionary class and proclaimed the social movements of women, blacks and Gays as the vanguards of the struggle for human liberation. Others held on to the notion of working class self emancipation but were preoccupied with short-term workers' struggles in workplaces and communities. Some of these struggles were partial victories but most were defeats. This left many activists demoralised by the bureaucratic betrayals of a Stalinised or social democratically compromised trade union leadership.

A section of this generation was drawn to anarchism in the form that it emerged at the time of the First International. Bakunin appeared prescient in proclaiming that the revolution would find its perfection in Russia and that the Russian revolution would become the "guiding star for the salvation of all liberated humanity" (Rosdolsky, 1986, p168). Moreover, his ideas that all forms of democracy were oppressive resonated with those who felt betrayed by their social democratic or Stalinist elected representatives. Bakunin appeared not only to have predicted the Russian revolution, but also its evolution into Stalinism when he argued — against Marx — that workers' elected representatives would cease to be workers and act in their own self interest as a bureaucratic elite. Bakunin's argument against the possibility of a classless society mollified the disappointment of a generation led to believe that the former Soviet Union and European welfare states had created — through nationalisation and full employment — classless societies.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, capitalism declared itself triumphant. The supporting propaganda promoted the legend that the supermonster, Stalin, was the child of the monster Lenin. The next logical step was to declare that the monster Lenin was the child of the monster Marx. According to Bakunin, Marx was inherently authoritarian. His authoritarianism caused the collapse of the First International. Authoritarianism was inherent to Marxism. Stalinism, Leninism and Trotskyism were spawns of this original seed.

During the Cold War, there were two antagonistic camps on the question of the collapse of the First International. On the one side, there were those who argued that Marx was to blame. The other was that Bakunin was to blame. Bakunin the monster opposed Marx the monster. For example, Hal Draper, an unorthodox Trotskyist, has described Bakunin as a dirty, evil, racist swindler (Draper, 4, p303). This has echoes of the Stalinist description of Bakunin as a "rabid enemy of Marxism" (Minutes, 5, p588). In other words he was a mad dog — moreover a mad dog with a virus capable of infecting workers' minds.

Twenty years after the end of the Cold War, blaming either Bakunin or Marx seems queer. The absence of a theoretical account of the collapse reflects the poverty of this approach. A simple monocausal explanation that focuses on the actions of one historical individual, however powerful and influential, appears at best insufficient. It is most likely paranoid and lazy. Those

who still blame Marx or Bakunin (or both of these highly competitive men) do not seem to have got the point. This made well by Franz Mehring who wrote in his 19th century biography of Marx: "nothing is more un- Marxist than the idea that an unusually malicious individual … could have destroyed a proletarian organisation like the International" (Mehring, p483) What was it, then, that destroyed it?

Method

The First International was known at the time as the International Working Men's Association. It was the first international organisation that set as its goal a classless society. The latter was the means by which workers could be freed from economic and political forms of oppression. It lasted from 1864 until 1872, a period of eight years. The International welcomed the participation of anyone who was committed to the principle workers' self emancipation.

Despite its androcentric title, it not only welcomed women as members but upheld their need for separate women's sections. One of the American sections was led by two sisters, Victoria Woodhull and Tennie Caflin (Collins & Abramsky, p249). At least three women attended meetings of the General Council in London regularly. Harriet Law was the most vocal. She argued for central planning as the only alternative to the market (Collins & Abramsky p151). Her protest against the attitude of some of the male members to women workers is registered in the minutes (Minutes, 2, p239). The only attempt to exclude a social group was defeated at the first congress in Geneva. Tolain, a French Proudhonist, moved a motion that capitalists, professionals and anyone with a diploma should be excluded from membership. His attempt to limit membership to manual workers was voted down (Draper, II, pp558-559).

The International brought together an alliance of trade unionists, members of socialist, democratic and republican groups, freethinkers and members of mutualist societies — similar to credit unions and co-operatives today. Some of its members, including Bakunin, were freemasons. Its collapse is marked by the split that occurred in 1872 between the General Council led by Marx and the antiauthoritarians inspired by Bakunin. Of the two competing Internationals, the anti-authoritarian lasted the longest. This was for a further three years until 1876.

Bakunin joined the International in 1868. A year later, after he had lost a motion at the Basle congress, he decided to target Marx as an enemy and split his allies away from him (Carr, pp370-371). This began a struggle for leadership. It was a struggle that neither Marx nor Bakunin won. The collapse was a Pyrrhic victory for both leaders. For Marx, it meant that the organisation had been saved from conspiratorial and terroristically inclined influences. For Bakunin, the threat of a Jewish- Germanic conspiracy against the revolution had been defeated. The possibility of a united movement for workers' emancipation had been killed off in the process. The temporary alliance Bakunin's followers forged with disaffected English reformist trade unionists against the General Council quickly fell apart. By 1877, it is arguable that there was a further split in the antiauthoritarian International when Belgian trade unionists called for a "United Socialist Congress" to unite all elements of the European radical and labour movements (Braunthal, p192).

What might count as a plausible explanation of the disintegration and collapse of the International? I contend that it is insufficient to explain it according to the antagonism between Marx and Bakunin. The antagonism between Marx and Bakunin was palpable and it certainly played a

role in the collapse. However, an overemphasis on their subjectivity distorts both the importance of their ideas and the role that ideas play in historical events.

These two leaders had substantial political and personal differences. They were theoretically and organisationally opposed. Not only did they have opposed conceptions of the socialist goal but also of the means of achieving it. Marx called for the abolition of classes, Bakunin for their equalisation. Marx supported workers engaged in open, legal, political activity including the establishment of socialist political parties capable of engaging within the electoral process. Bakunin was opposed to all forms of political activity except the immediate seizure of power and the establishment of communal production. Marx argued that the transition to socialism required a workers' state capable of planning production and phasing out the market. Bakunin held that any such state would entail the oppression of workers by a bureaucratic elite. Marx was a Jewish German communist. Bakunin believed in a conspiracy of Jewish communists and financiers and that Germans were racially authoritarian (Draper, 4, p293 & Kelly, p219).

Throughout the evolution of the International, there had been plenty of political and organisational controversy that had not led to disintegration and collapse. There had been lively debates on political action, on nationalisation, on Poland and Ireland. Moreover there had been disputes over the relationship between the General Council and the national sections over autonomy and policy making. Bakunin's entry into the International did not mean that disintegration and collapse were inevitable. Marx had grounds to be confident that Bakunin's intervention could be contained. There was little that was new in his ideas — they had all been discussed and debated in clearer forms previous to his joining. According to Marx, Bakunin's political programme was a mixture of empty platitudes, pretentious ideas and banal improvisation (Mehring, p411). In other words, Bakunin's ideas posed no real threat.

If a one sided emphasis on ideas and personalities does not capture the whole picture, it is also difficult to reduce the explanation of the collapse to the material practices of labour at a particular moment in its formation by and resistance to capital's drive for accumulation. The ideas of the two antagonists cannot be reduced to the fact that workers were successful in organising solidarity for strikes across national boundaries during an upturn in the economy, even though this is true (Riazanov, pp136-137). Thus Marx's ideas were not the sole result of his engagement with the organised core of productive workers in Britain, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland. His political economy of capitalism did not entail that reforms that strengthened the position of trade unions were the only way in which a socialist revolution could be brought into being.

Nor were Bakunin's ideas the sole result of his reflections on workers with strong connections to the peasantry and the land whose traditions of resistance were destructive, conspiratorial and insurrectionary. His opposition to the authority of the General Council and what he called "state communism" cannot be reduced to the material power that individuals in Italy, Spain, Poland and Russia only recently transformed into agricultural and industrial wage workers had to force capitalism to change. In either case, it is not true that self propelling material forces conglomerated fatalistically into actions that neither leader nor their allies could have avoided (Meszaros, p93)

All the different theories, ideas and doctrines that influenced the International had their origins in forms of intellectual production. These forms corresponded to different stages in labour's response and resistance to the emergence of capital's domination over social relations. They had an ongoing formation and interaction with other ideas and practices. Thus Marx's concept of socialism grew out of his critique of political economy. Political economy had emerged with Adam Smith at a time when the exploitation of labour power in industrial production had become the

dominant source of an economic surplus. Socialists used political economy to understand and challenge capitalism. In order to understand Proudhon's ideas on socialism, co-operatives and credit, Marx argued, one needed to understand Proudhon's political economy. This, he showed, was hardly different from Robert Owen's followers. The political economy of these early socialists was an application of a Smithian and Ricardian understanding of the labour theory of value. It led to hopeless experiments trying to abolish money in co-operative forms of production and consumption (Smith, 2009, p117).

Bakunin did not study political economy. His ideas on freedom came from Hegel. Russian Hegelians had argued that the spirit of freedom and civilisation had passed from the Germans to the Slavs. Until his re-entry to European politics after a long period of imprisonment in a Tsarist jail, he had been a democratic pan-Slavist. His ideas on socialism and political activity came late and grew out of his engagement with followers of Proudhon. His ideas on organisation however were similar to those of Blanqui and others who followed leftwing Jacobin traditions. These were mixed with a dash of nihilistic terrorism. (Draper, 4, p130).

An explanation, therefore, that keeps the totality of changes in material forces, ideas, proletarian class formation and bourgeois class reaction in readers' minds is more likely to be plausible than one that opposes superstructural to productive forces or attempts the impossible task of reducing ideas mechanically to their material base. Put differently, accounts that oppose subjective to objective determinants of historical events and vice versa are likely to be partial and incomplete. A plausible explanation of the collapse would be a comprehensive one. It would be many-sided and recognise the full range of causal determinants. It would be one capable of accounting for rapid changes in consciousness both from revolution to counterrevolution and vice versa.

I shall argue here that the question of determinants of the collapse of the International can be answered by examining certain contradictions within the movement from atomised workers to a class (Ticktin, 1987, p13). Contradictions consist of opposites which act as poles of attraction or forces that have the power either to be superseded by a new form of proletarian collectivity or to fall apart, causing crises, disintegration and collapse within existing organisational forms.

I shall examine two contradictions within the form of organisation adopted by the International. The first contradiction consists of competing tendencies towards centralisation and decentralisation in the mode of leadership. The second contradiction consists of competing tendencies towards greater secrecy and greater openness in the mode of communication. Finally I shall attempt to explain the movement of these contradictions in relation to both the uneven development of the proletariat and the uneven response of the bourgeoisie to the challenge posed by the Paris Commune.

Centralisation and decentralisation in the mode of leadership

The International was formed as a means to establish a unified and combined response to the political and economic oppression experienced by workers. The rules clearly recognise the power of union and combination that workers can achieve through their various organisations (Minutes, 2, p267). The composition and location of the General Council reflected this. English trade unions had fought and led decisive strikes against employers. This included solidarity action in support of victimised bricklayers (Collins & Abramsky, pp14-17). Moreover, through the Chartists and

other campaigns, they had the experience of political involvement. This had forced the ruling class to concede suffrage to sections of skilled workers in the 1867 Reform Act and universal education in the 1870 Education Act.

The General Council stated that its usefulness in supporting workers attempting to exercise their collective power would be through its "utmost efforts to combine the disconnected working men's societies, represented by central national organs" (Minutes, 2, p267). The General Council therefore saw itself as a body that would assist the process of national centralisation as a means to developing collective proletarian power.

On the other hand, the statement on self emancipation preceding the rules was open to different interpretation. This stated that workers' emancipation would be "conquered by working classes themselves." This would be a political and economic emancipation that entailed the abolition of class society. The vague wording of this allowed some to argue that the process of emancipation could be achieved from above — either through an alliance with radical bourgeois elements or through a coup d'etat or insurrection. Others argued that self emancipation could only come from below through independent proletarian organisations trade unions, co-operatives or political parties (Riazanov, p157).

The General Council represented a tendency for greater centralisation from the start of the International. However, it was put under pressure to centralise even further by groups that upheld the notion that working class emancipation could be achieved from above. It was able to successfully resist this pressure until the London conference of 1871. These two groups consisted of followers of Blanqui and followers of Lassalle.

The relationship between Lassalle and Marx was difficult. Within the sphere of German socialist politics, Marx stood for revolution from below and Lassalle for a top down collaboration with Bismarck. This was a different kind of reformism from that of the English trade union leaders. It depended on a cross class alliance between workers and the aristocracy rather than between workers and the bourgeoisie. Lassalle wanted the Prussian government to finance workers' cooperatives and trade unions his group had formed. In response, Marx was scathing in his condemnation of how Lassalle's policies would allow the "asses of officialdom" to control the German labour movement (Draper, 4, p63).

Lassalle's group refused to join the International but attempted to influence it in 1868. Centralisation was a dominant theme of the group. After Lassalle died, Schweitzer, who took over the leadership, stated that centralisation should be the overriding goal of the labour movement. He argued that democratic centralisation was the key to the victory of the working class. An editorial in its newspaper in 1868 called on the General Council to centralise its leadership so that it had more control over the national federations. There is no evidence the General Council heeded Schweitzer's advice (Freymond, p33).

Lassalle's group excluded itself from the International. The dominant interpretation of the principle of self emancipation in the International united English trade unionists, German communists such as Marx, and French Proudhonists. This was that change should come from below. Marx had subscribed to the idea of democratic centralism when he was a member of the Communist League in 1848 and saw no inconsistency between this and revolution from below. The Lassallean advocates of democratic centralisation were clearly reformists. Bakunin also had his own version of centralised leadership from below but it excluded democratic control.

The other group that stood for greater centralisation and revolution from above were the Blanquists. They stood for the imposition of a revolutionary socialist dictatorship through a seizure

of state power organised secretly by a disciplined and centralised network revolutionaries. Once in power, they planned to galvanise the masses into revolution. They intervened at the 1866 Geneva Congress in order to denounce the International and disrupt it. They were ejected and had no further influence on the International until after the repression of the Paris Commune.

In 1871 thirty three of them sought asylum in London as refugees. Some of these joined the General Council and supplied delegates to the London conference of 1871. The Blanquists had hopes of dominating the leadership of the International and demanded that it become a disciplined, centralised international party with a reorganised General Council at its head. By the Hague Congress of 1872, they were arguing that the General Council should constitute itself as the vanguard of an international revolutionary workers party. They denounced the General Council for refusing to face up to this task (Collins & Abramsky, p230).

Finally, Bakunin was initially a supporter of centralisation. He voted for moves to give the General Council greater powers at the Basle Congress in 1869. This was motivated by personal ambition and the hope that the General Council would take action against those sections in Switzerland whose members he opposed.

The opposing decentralising tendencies manifested themselves throughout the organisation from its inception until its demise. One of the founding rules stated that every society that joined could keep their existing organisations intact (Minutes, 1, p268). This meant that every affiliated society could manage its own special affairs without reference to the International. This could be interpreted as applying to sections or branches. Early on in 1865, Belgian workers had asserted their autonomy against an unelected representative of the General Council who wanted to bring a variety of democratic and republican groups into a national federation. This caused a dispute that was resolved through a decision by the General Council to affirm the right of every branch to elect its own officers "subject to the approval of the Central Council" (Freymond, p17)

The Swiss were perhaps the most active and enthusiastic of the national groups of workers in the International. It was among Swiss workers that the contradiction between centralising and decentralising tendencies was the most pronounced. At the Geneva Congress in 1866, there were fifteen Swiss sections represented as against four French and three German. When Bakunin arrived in Switzerland in 1868 over thirty sections had been formed. In Geneva, the building workers had rebelled against the clockmakers forming separate antagonistic branches (Freymond, p15). The issues of reform from above and revolution from below were confused with arguments for centralisation and decentralisation.

In Switzerland strikes had been unusual. This changed with the arrival of the International. The Geneva building workers and the Basle ribbon makers fought unprecedented disputes against intransigent employers. Backed by the financial and moral support of English, French and American workers, the Swiss workers fought for holidays and shorter working hours despite lock outs and the hostility of the Swiss bourgeoisie to the International. At the same time, one of the first representatives of the International, Pierre Coullery of the La Chaux-de-Fonds branch had led Jura workers — domestic workers scattered in mountain villages and unused to mass organisation and action — into an electoral alliance with bourgeois and monarchist radicals (Mehring, p414). The Jura workers felt betrayed by the political leadership of the International and chose a new representative: James Guillaume, a member of Bakunin's circle.

Bakunin and Guillaume were able to exploit political and economic divisions within the Swiss working class. Through Guillaume, Bakunin gained influence with the isolated Jura watchmakers — in decline under the impact of competition from British and American mass produced watches.

In Geneva, Swiss sections included both those of the "fabrique" — enfranchised skilled jewellery and watch making workers — and those of unenfranchised "gros metiers" — building workers of immigrant Italian, French and German origin. The highly paid enfranchised "fabrique" workers of the luxury trades of Geneva had concluded electoral compromises with bourgeois political parties. Bakunin called on the "gros metiers" to reject political action for the vote and concentrate on plans for social upheaval. At the Basle Congress in 1869, he moved a motion for the abolition of the right of inheritance. This was intended to attack the "fabrique" workers' attachment to private property (Carr p362). He also denounced the Zurich section's call for referenda on canton legislation as "bourgeois."

The move by French speaking sections to form a national federation of Franco-Italian Swiss workers led to an unresolved split in 1870 with two national groups claiming to represent the International in Switzerland. One had a base in the "fabrique." This was loyal to the General Council and based in Geneva. The other had a base in the Jura watchmakers and "gros metiers." This was loyal to Bakunin's Alliance (Mehring, pp430-431). The attempt to centralise various sections into a national federation had collapsed into two antagonistic decentralised and unco-ordinated groups.

The Jura Federation in Switzerland formed the base for the Bakuninist campaign against the General Council. This campaign gained support from two further disputes that were evidence of centralising and decentralising tendencies. The first was the question of representation in the USA. The second was the move to decentralise the English section of the International.

The first concerned the General Council's order that Section 12 of the North American Federation be dissolved in 1871. Section 12 was led by Woodhull and Caflin — two feminists who argued that women's liberation should precede any change in class relations (Minutes, 5, p324). A dispute had arisen over an attempt Section12 had made to take over the leadership of the North American Federation. This had been challenged by U.S. sections consisting of foreign born workers. Section 12 had made an appeal calling on the Federation to form an alternative U.S government consisting of radicals. This would run alongside and correspond with the US Congress (Minutes 5, p324). The General Council's order was an exercise of its greater central powers. It showed how centralisation could be used to resolve political disputes between decentralised sections. In response, Woodhull allied with the Bakuninists. This was an unprincipled alliance as Woodhull argued for electoral political activity whereas the Bakuninists were opposed to it.

The second dispute was similarly unprincipled. The General Council had acted both as a co-ordinating body for the International and the English trade union movement. John Hales, an English trade unionist member of the General Council, had argued that England needed its own national section for five years. He won this demand at the London conference of 1871. Hales was a supporter of the idea of a British working class political party — he was an early advocate of a Labour party. However, after gaining the vote in 1867, he was — like other trade union leaders — under pressure to support the Tories or the Liberals. He broke with Marx after the Hague in 1872. He took offence at Marx's remark that the English trade union leaders were "more or less bought up by the bourgeoisie and the government" (Draper, 2, p130) He chose thereafter to side with the Bakuninists. He joined them in the first anti-authoritarian International in 1873. He soon abandoned this alliance and ended his life a Liberal.

This shows the two contradictory forces in operation simultaneously. Hales stood both for national autonomy and for a centralised international leadership. Whilst he was a member of

the General Council, he had allied with Marx on the idea of working class emancipation from below. However, when he became the leader of a decentralised national Federation, he moved towards support for the idea of working class emancipation from above. His temporary alliance with the Bakuninists on the question of autonomy was therefore a tactic that hid his reformism.

Secrecy and openness in the mode of communication

Secrecy in the mode of communication has two sides: one as a means of control and the other as a means of resistance to control. On the one side, secrecy is a means by which an oppressive power can repress and politically atomise collective resistance to it. A mode of communication that restricts information to the few who initiate and execute plans for control is itself an effective form of control. Similarly, secrecy entails hiding information concerning the effect of those plans (especially if they involve torture or summary execution). This is also a form of control.

On the other side, secrecy can be both a means of maintaining forms of collective opposition to an oppressive power (for example during periods of state repression) and a means of planning to overthrow or destroy that power (especially if it involves assassinations or forms of terrorism). The two sides of secrecy often coincide. This happens when conspiratorial organisations are penetrated by paid informers and provocateurs. The success of secret intelligence and secret police forces in the twentieth century has made most conspiratorial organisations ineffective. The fact that terrorist organisations thrive is, in part, due to the collapse of this mode of control. The collapse of Saddam Hussein's secret police after the invasion in 2003 and the occupying power's prompt re-employment of former officers come to mind here.

Openness in the mode of communication is essential for democratic planning. A free flow of information is necessary for individuals to make judgements concerning the truth or falsity of statements, to evaluate critically mistakes, to assess the success of proposed plans, and to judge whether elected representatives have fulfilled their mandate. Freedom of communication, assembly and expression is required for ideas to reach a mass audience through the forms of media and transport available to them.

The General Council of the International adopted an open form of organisation that presupposed a free flow of information. Its goal was to become a mass organisation of workers worldwide and at its height tens of thousands of workers were affiliated to it. The fact that minutes were kept is an indication that members were able to inspect and correct the record of opinions and decisions made. The International was formally democratic. The founding rules stated that no independent local society should be precluded from directly corresponding with the General Council. Members of the Council were elected at Congresses at which every local branch could send a delegate (Minutes, 2, pp269-270). If a branch were more than five hundred members, it could send an extra delegate. Members took full advantage of the new media and forms of transport — the telegraph and the railways.

However, the influence of conspiratorial methods of organisation on the International was still strong. These had a long history and were various in origins. Freemasonry, although not a conspiratorial organisation, had a secret mode of communication between members. This allowed republican, democratic and materialist literature to circulate and be discussed during periods when freedom of the press was limited by the Catholic Church and absolutist regimes. It played an important role in developing the ideas needed for the transition from a mercantile to an in-

dustrial form of capitalism. During periods of repression and reaction, the secrecy freemasonry afforded allowed republicans and democrats the opportunity to communicate and organise free from the fear of arrest or imprisonment. Many of the generation of revolutionaries that had led the democratic movements of 1848 became masons. This was as true of the French emigres in London that helped to found the International as it was of Bakunin, Mazzini and Garibaldi. Bakunin had been a mason since 1845 (Carr, p128).

In France, non-Proudhonist socialists and communists had an attachment to conspiratorial forms organisation. These had their origins in the French revolution with the ideas of Babeuf and Buonarroti. They were kept alive by Blanqui. Blanquists were initiated blindfolded. They were made to repeat a catechism and sworn to secrecy (Bernstein, pp73-74).

Another source of attachment to secrecy was the long tradition of peasant revolt. All leaders of peasant revolts have, of necessity, had to organise covertly — bound by oath to death within a secret fraternity. Bakunin's ideas on revolutionary organisation had elements taken from these various sources that maintained secrecy as a mode of communication. He stressed the importance of a collective invisible centralised dictatorship based on an anonymous, secret organisation of revolutionaries. This was similar in conception to Blanquism. The organisation would draw up a plan in secrecy which would be discussed and determined beforehand. They would then use this plan to direct the spontaneous activity of the masses. The masses would have no awareness of the dictatorship exercised over them (Kelly, pp242-244). Bakunin used this model in failed attempts at insurrection at Lyons in 1870 and Bologna in 1874.

The secret and spontaneous direction of the masses was similar to way peasant leaders had organised insurrections. In the 1848 revolution, Bakunin had placed his hopes for world-wide revolution upon a mass revolt of the peasantry in Eastern Europe, especially Russia. His revolutionary aspirations reflected the methods of peasant revolt against feudal despotism. In his "Confession to the Tsar" he expressed a desire to destroy all castles, and burn all documents of an administrative, governmental and juridical nature. His desire accurately mirrored the reality of what happened in peasant revolts -the destruction of everything associated with the oppressive yoke of the feudal master (Howes, p111).

During the time he was active within the International, he became an advocate of the revolutionary aspirations of those who were recently dispossessed from the land and forced to sell their labour power for a wage. He had an intuitive understanding of the forces that were changing the face of Europe and the world. The advance of capitalism presaged a terminal crisis for remnants of feudal relations of dependency between serfs and masters. Serfdom was abolished in Russia in the 1850s. The subordinate rural population was being transformed into a poor peasantry or an agricultural or urban proletariat. Dispossession of land meant either a move into small scale commodity production or into the position of a landless labourer forced to compete for a wage in town or countryside. Bakunin's ideas of an alternative to capitalism were to revive ideas of communal forms of production of the land that had survived throughout the feudal period. He also channelled the real hatred of the new political and economic forces into older organisational and revolutionary forms — secret organisations with a mass base intent on the destruction of state and church. His chosen vehicle for this form was the International.

It has been stated that the International was born out of the struggle against the old methods of political conspiracy and secret organisations (Nicolaevsky, p56). These old methods were typical of France during the period of the Restoration and the July Monarchy. From 1832 to 1840, there had been six attempts at assassinating the French King. However, under the influence of

the Chartists , new forms of organisation had arisen. These mixed an open communication of socialist ideas with the building mass organisations of labourers. The followers of the founding utopian socialists had built their own legal organisations but tended to ignore the mass political struggles of workers for the vote and the economic struggles of workers organised in trade unions. Proudhon's French working class followers came to the International with these perspectives. On the other hand socialist ideas had also influenced members of conspiratorial republican and democratic groups. The defeat of the 1848–49 revolution set the open forms of organisation back and the old type of conspiratorial organisation came once again to the fore (Nicolaevsky, p40).

Marx was well aware of these competing tendencies. The Communist League had been a propagandist organisation and Marx had fought against attempts to make it into a conspiratorial group. He argued that where revolutionaries enjoyed democratic rights such as freedom of the press and freedom of assembly, then there was no need for secrecy. Conversely, where these basic democratic rights were yet to be won or withdrawn by the state, the need for secrecy was forced on workers and their communist allies. This was a step backwards. The importance of the struggle for democratic rights was the extension of the freedoms of the bourgeoisie to workers and their allies. This extension was necessary if the consciousness of the proletariat was to advance through a process of education to an awareness of its historical role.

When the International was formed in 1864, workers had different levels of freedom to organise and engage in political activity. This depended upon the extent of control the bourgeoisie had over the superstructure. In France, there was a ban on political association and the formation of trade unions. Workers had only just been granted the right to strike. In Britain, workers had the right to associate and to strike. Moreover as a result of the Chartist campaign for universal male suffrage, they had gained concessions from the bourgeoisie such as a partial inclusion in the suffrage in 1867 and universal education for working class children in 1870. These concessions were paid out of state revenue derived from the move away from industrial to finance capital and the surplus value extracted from the super exploitation of labour power in Asia and Africa. The British bourgeoisie had control over the aristocracy who were dependent on the profits of capitalist farmers for their rents. The peasantry had ceased to exist as a class and the whole of the rural population were converted into landless labourers dependent on wages as a source of income.

The French emigres that helped form the International were refugees from the 1848 period. They retained a secret mode of communication as members of a Masonic type of organisation called the Philadelphians. Members were also associated with a group called *Commune Revolutionnaire* formed by Felix Pyat, a left republican member of the French national Assembly in 1848. They also fraternised with Italian emigres who followed Mazzini. The French shared with the Italians an attachment to secrecy, conspiratorial activity and a sympathy with individual acts of terror especially attempts to assassinate tyrants such as Napoleon the third (Nicolaevsky, p43).

These members formed a branch of the International in London. Some of them were members of the General Council. Many of the early struggles within the council were between the conspiratorial London French and the open Proudhonists based in France. One of the reasons the latter were attracted to the International was that they could get round repressive legislation. They could argue they were members of a foreign organisation and therefore not violating the law against political societies. One of the causes of dispute between the Proudhonists and the London French was that the latter's attachment to secrecy attracted the attention of the French

police and this threatened the security of the Paris section's attempts to propagandise amongst workers and build mass organisations.

By 1866, the London French had become an embarrassment to the General Council. In the Lefort case of 1865 the English and German members of the General Council supported the Proudhonists against the London French. Lefort stood for the violent overthrow of the Empire and the restoration of parliamentary democracy. His propaganda was devoted to the advocacy of political change as opposed to economic demands supported by workers (Collins & Abramsky, pp101-103). A year later members had attended a dinner in commemoration of the 1848 revolution at which Pyat gave a speech that suggested he would support an attempt to assassinate Napoleon. This was reported in the press and the General Council felt obliged to distance itself from Pyat and his followers in the International. The General Council stated its commitment to openness as a mode of communication and its opposition to terrorism. In 1868, the French state moved against the International in Paris arresting leading members of the Paris section who were put on trial for being members of a political society (Collins & Abramsky, p136). Documents taken from correspondence with the London French were used as evidence that the International was a secret organisation attempting to overthrow the Empire. The trial affected Proudhonists whose position was for political abstention from political activity. It was a warning by the French state that they should continue to keep away from politics and have nothing to do with republicans and Blanquists.

The General Council had a continual battle to disassociate itself from and to assert the International's non-conspiratorial and anti-terrorist nature. Thus the General Council upheld the Irish Fenians' use of physical force as the only possible means of challenging British state oppression at the same time as arguing there were a range of peaceful means open to workers in England.

The French state attempted to harass the International's operations by characterising it as a potentially terrorist organisation. The Central Committee of the French Federation were tried for being members of a secret society three times (Braunthal, p106). Conspiracy became the major plank of the French state's propaganda campaign against the International in the repression that followed the defeat of the Paris Commune. Anyone who was a member or sympathiser of the International was liable to imprisonment. The International, it was alleged, was the secret organisation that had planned and organised the Commune. Favre, Thiers' foreign minister, attempted to mobilise a European wide campaign against the International. This was supported by the Pope, Bismarck and Beust, the Austro-Hungarian Chancellor. Significantly, it failed to get the support of the British government who refused to pass emergency legislation against it. Marx's support for the Commune in his document produce for the General Council — *The Civil War in France* - alienated some of the English trade unionists. The British government wisely judged that to attack the International as a whole had the potential to antagonise and politicise the British labour movement. This could cause a breach in the cross class alliances that had been formed with trade unionists (Braunthal, p163).

The General Council rejected the request for affiliation by Bakunin's organisation the "Alliance of Socialist Democracy" in 1868. The Alliance's programme stated that the Alliance had a special philosophical mission to bring about the "equalisation of classes." This contradicted the International's founding document. This stated that class rule and class society needed to be abolished. For Marx it represented the idea that working class emancipation was compatible with value, money and capital. He also took exception to the clause in the Alliance's programme

which rejected all forms of political action which did not have as its immediate aim the triumph of the workers' cause against Capital.

However it was not the issue of differences in the theory and their programmatic expression that motivated the General Council to reject affiliation. Previous differences had been resolved democratically through debates at Congress. The reason was that, if the Alliance had been allowed to affiliate there would have been two central committees and two contending and competing power structures. Moreover, although the Alliance — in response to rejection — decided to dissolve itself into the International, the General Council was not convinced that its members were converted to openness as a mode of communication. For example, new Spanish members recruited by one of Bakunin's Italian followers Fanelli did not distinguish between the Alliance and the International. They were led to believe they were one and the same organisation. Suspicions grew that Bakunin retained the Alliance as a secret conspiratorial organisation.

Of note is that Bakunin's practice embodied the contradiction between secrecy and openness of modes of communication. In other words openness was the public face of his political activity. He kept his commitment to secrecy private. It was his disingenuous embrace of these contradictory forces that led him to be accused of deceit regarding his plans to split the International. The contemporary evidence that Bakunin had not abandoned the older mode of communication and its sympathies with terrorism was provided by the Netchayeff affair in 1870. Impressed by the young Russian nihilist's revolutionary fervour, Bakunin sent Netchayeff back to Russia with letters indicating that he had the support of an International network of revolutionaries led by Bakunin to agitate on their behalf. Netchayeff was an unscrupulous character who murdered one of his friends, robbed Bakunin of money and threatened to kill Marx's publisher when he asked Bakunin to pay back the advance he had been given to translate Capital into Russian.

By 1871, the General Council were facing what seemed to be a losing battle to save the International as an organisation committed to openness. As a result of the General Council's endorsement of Marx's pamphlet *The Civil War in France,* the International came under external attack by the French, German and Austrian states as a secret conspiratorial organisation sympathetic to terrorism. Moreover, it was growing in Italy and Spain under a leadership that, internally, did not contradict this impression and seemed ambivalent concerning the need to protect openness. Moreover, at the same time that bourgeois newspapers were hinting that Marx was part of a Jewish conspiracy; Bakunin was vilifying him on the same grounds (Collins & Abramsky, p215). It was in this atmosphere that the London congress was called by the General Council in 1871. This increased its disciplinary powers. As a result of this, the Italian federation refused to attend the Hague Congress of 1872 thus denying the Bakuninists the opportunity of taking over the leadership of the International and abolishing the General Council.

The final playing out of the contradiction between openness and secrecy explains why the decision was taken at the Hague to move the General Council from London to New York. In order to defeat the anti-authoritarians, the General Council relied on Blanquist refugees from the Commune to support the move to greater centralisation. The International's disintegration involved the loss of tendencies that stood for openness in modes of communication. The Proudhonists were imprisoned by the French state and powerful English trade unionists had abandoned ship under the pressure of the campaign against the International's support for the Commune. In this weakened state, the General Council would have been taken over by the Blanquists who were even less committed to openness as a mode of communication than the Bakuninists (Nicolaevsky,

p56). New York was the only place that an open form of the International could survive. In fact, the move signified the demise both of a unified International and the General Council.

Conclusion

I have attempted to answer the essay question by indicating that there was an interaction of two tendencies or forces. The first was towards centralisation at the core of the leadership and decentralisation at the periphery. The pull of these forces was confused with different notions of workers' self emancipation — from above and from below. The latter — in particular concepts of the nature of the socialist goal and the means of realising this — coincided with an assertion of and a struggle against conspiratorial forms of secrecy. In other words, the antagonism between open, democratic, mass forms of collectivity and closed, elitist forms of leadership was raised to a new level of awareness. The combined effect of these forces caused an unforeseen and unwelcome disintegration and collapse. Neither Marx nor Bakunin planned for this even if there is evidence that both leaders knew that the International could split and were, after a life and death struggle for leadership, resigned to the final outcome.

Finally, I need to mention the impact of what might be called a contradiction between theory and practice. This in itself is a determined result of the division between intellectual and other forms of labour within capitalism. How far did the International contribute to workers' theoretical awareness of their ability to take power? This awareness was limited. The leadership was educated through debate and discussion of various positions at Congresses. However, the International had no education programme and the General Council made no effort to organise groups to study theory. It does not make sense, for example, to state that the General Council's move towards greater centralisation at the London conference of 1871 was Marx's attempt to impose a theoretical programme of the International. There was nothing written during the life of the International comparable to the Erfurt programme of 1891 or to Trotsky's transitional programme. Marx had written a programme for the Communist Manifesto and attempted to realise this through his involvement in the International but this never became the programme of the International. The International was based on a principle of workers' self emancipation and a classless society as a means to realising this movement for emancipation. There was no programme that members agreed on about the nature of the classless society or the political means of achieving it. A Marxist was not someone committed to understanding and developing Marx's critique of political economy, his theory of history or his conception of socialism. "Marxist" was a term of abuse invented by Bakuninists to describe anyone who was a friend of Marx. English reformist trade unionist leaders and French Blanquists were Marxist in this sense. On the contrary, there were a diversity of intellectual currents within the International and not one of them was dominant. Only Marx and the Proudhonists had a theoretical understanding of socialism based on a political economy of capitalism. The Blanquists, Bakuninists, and English trade unionists were activists little concerned with theory. Bakunin has been described as being opposed to theory in principle (Thomas, p284). The same could be said of the English trade unionists. This does not mean the leadership of the International did not consist of educated individuals who thought about what they were doing, had plans and wrote about them in newspapers and journals. Indeed in this sense they were more theoretical than many people on the left today. However this thinking was confined to the immediate tasks of the class struggle,

organisation, resistance, propaganda and solidarity. The leadership of the International did not concern itself with controversies over the truth or falsity of Marx and Proudhon's theories of value nor connect this debate with different conceptions of socialism and how to achieve it.

Nonetheless, the brief flowering and vicious suppression of the Paris Commune made a difference to the climate of opinion. It made the open communication of all forms of controversy difficult. Not only were previously active sections, such as the Proudhonists in France driven underground but the International was targeted as a terrorist organisation that had secretly conspired against the French government. This was a different environment from one in which the ruling class tolerated the International's existence despite it being a thorn in the flesh of previously uninhibited forms of capital accumulation.

If the Commune had not happened, would the International have collapsed? It is likely that the success of the International would have forced the ruling class into a coordinated response but it is not clear whether this would have been led by Britain and a policy of cooption rather than by the French and Prussian's choice of repression. The response of the International ruling class to the Commune and the International's support for the Commune was varied according to different national perceptions of the International's threat. Differences between the legal superstructures were themselves determinate responses to previous phases in the class struggle and uneven development. Thus in France and Germany, the International was banned, but in Britain it was not. The British bourgeoisie was wise to follow a path of cooption of trade union leaders intent on reform as a means of amelioration of workers' economic oppression. The acquiescence of British workers' leaders to their bourgeois superiors would, of course have been less likely, had British capital not shifted from industrial investment into financial investment in the Empire. Those of us familiar with Lenin, know that the super-exploitation of the subject colonial populations through brute force supplied the surplus value that paid for the state financed housing and welfare schemes of Britain and Germany.

Both the Commune and the International were defeats for the working class. Neither was successful in overthrowing capitalism and establishing the conditions for working class emancipation. The Commune showed that a socialist alternative to capitalism was possible but that it would be resisted violently by the ruling class. It wasn't until the October Revolution of 1917 that there was another opportunity for proletarian power world-wide. The International was a crucial response to and exacerbating element with the political and economic crisis of the 1850s and 1860s. Out of its defeat rose a new phase of capital accumulation based more clearly on the need to secure class collaboration through the investment of state revenue in unproductive labour. This included a decisive shift towards finance capital and away from industrial capital. This tendency accelerated in the subsequent century. It has dominated capitalist social relations and the role of finance capital is only now becoming transparent. Put differently, the International and the Commune were the triggers that started a process of capitalist decline.

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Ideology and Politics: Overcoming the divide between red and black

George Sotiropoulos

'A Bedouin, perhaps, a Citizen, never' (?)[1]: Overcoming the Red and Black divide

> '*What, then, is Bauer's solution to the Jewish question and what is the result? To formulate a question is already to solve it. The critique of the Jewish question is the answer to it. Here is a resume: We must emancipate ourselves before we can emancipate others.*'
>
> — **Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question'**[2]

What relevance does a discussion of the divide between anarchism and Marxism can possibly have nowadays? Slavoj Zizek has expressed the problem pertinently: 'Things look bad for great Causes today, in a "postmodern" era when, although the ideological scene is fragmented into a panoply of positions which struggle for hegemony, there is an underlying consensus: the era of big explanations is over, we need "weak thought" attentive to the rhizomatic texture of reality; in politics too, we should not longer aim at all-explaining systems and global emancipatory projects; the violent imposition of grand solutions should leave room for forms of specific resistance and intervention.'[3] Insofar as we deal with two classical advocates of 'great Causes,' it appears that the answer to our question can only be negative.

But if the specter of communism is haunting Europe no more, the global order that has been under construction in the last decades *is* haunted by specters, 'terrorism,' of course, but also the specter of revolts and social unrest, phenomena which are tied to the blunt failure of 'globalization' to meet its (supposed) aims. Vast socio-economic inequalities, destitution, not least, the recent 'crisis' that promises to aggravate such phenomena or other related ones, like unemployment, have made once confident dreams of global prosperity, peace and democracy to seem hollow.

In such a landscape, as Latin America after all testifies (for all the reservations one may have), we shouldn't be too hasty closing the coffin of revolutionary socialism. But along with a possible resurgence of the latter's emancipatory vision what also becomes topical is the age-old tension between its two main ideological strands; Bismarck's statement used in the call for papers is suggestive. To set things straight, I am not planning to offer here a program of 'conflict resolution.'

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[1] The quoted phrase appeared in one of the various blogs that have been created during the insurrection that took place in Greece, last December.

[2] *Selected Writings,* ed. D. McLellan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.48

[3] S. Zizek, *In Defence of Lost Causes,* (London-New York: Verso, 2008), p.1

Rather, my paper has as its point of reference the call for a 'reinvention of politics,' which in one way or another is voiced all the more frequently by scholars, notably, Zizek, Antonio Negri, Jacque Ranciere, Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben and Takis Fotopoulos. How exactly the problem of the divide between Marxism and anarchism merges with this theme will become clearer soon enough. For now it suffices to pose the question on a hypothetical basis: if we assume that reconciliation between the 'red and black' must be a necessary part of such a project of politicization, what exactly should it amount to? To tackle with this problem, we shall start with a bit of history.

The First Split

The first signs of the bifurcation that would follow can be traced in the brief exchange of letters between Karl Marx and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon as well as in the polemic the former conducted after the publication of the latter's *The Philosophy of Poverty*.[4] The tension would come to its head though within the circles of this spontaneous association of workers that posterity knows as the First International, personified (again) in Marx and Mikhail Bakunin. Of course, Bakunin cannot be identified with anarchism in the same way that Marx may be said to be the founder of Marxism (even if allegedly he pronounced himself not to be a Marxist). In fact, it is dubious whether Bakunin can be called a political philosopher or theorist at all -he definitely did not consider himself to be one. Consequently, some scholars, following Marx, have regarded his writings as nothing more than a pastiche of borrowed ideas crowned by a passionate, nay feverish, desire for action.[5] But Bakunin's writings should not be so easily brushed away. If nothing else, it would be intellectual bias not to acknowledge the insightful elements that his critique of Marx contained. If it is too much to say that he foresaw 'totalitarianism,' his premonitions concerning the development of a new class of bureaucrats and experts that would ruthlessly dominate the workers that in theory they represent, have (for us) an almost prophetic quality.[6]

Depending on their loyalties, scholars tend to put the blame for the split in the First International either on Marx or on Bakunin. David McLellan and Michel Harrington, for instance, suggest that Marx stood for a democratic and open organization whereas Bakunin fostered sectarianism and conspiracy.[7] In contrast, anarchist thinkers like Rudolph Rocker have argued that

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[4] Cf. L. Roemheld, 'Marx-Proudhon: Their Exchange of Letters in 1846 — On an Episode of World- historical Importance,' J. Hilmer, 'Two Views about Socialism: Why Karl Marx Shunned an Academic Debate with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon,' *Democracy & Nature,* 6:1, (2000), pp.73–84, 85–94

[5] e.g. E. H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961); W. Bannour, 'Bakunin' in F. Chatelet (ed.), *Philosophy, vol. II: From Kant to Husserl — The 20h Century,* trans. K. Papagiorgis, (Athens: 'Gnosis,' 2006), pp. 175–86; there is also the well-known book by Aileen Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) that reduces Bakunin's ideas to a psychological case-study; as for Marx's virulent critique of Bakunin's views see 'On Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy,' Selected Writings,* pp.606–9. Marx has in fact adopted the suspicion that Bakunin was a Russian spy. This is (most likely) incorrect, but James Ghastain has argued that for a period Bakunin was a paid agent of the French Republic; 'Bakunin as a French Secret Agent in 1848,' *History Today,* August, 1981, pp.5–9

[6] See for instance, M. Bakunin, 'Critique of Economic Causality and of Historical Materialism,' 'Critique of the Marxist Theory of the State,' *The Paris Commune of 1871 and the idea of the State,* ed. J. Xylagras, trans. J. Loumala, (Athens: Eleftheros Typos, 1973), pp.76–90, 94–103, *Statism and Anarchy,* trans. B. Alexiou, (Athens: Eleftheros Typos, 1978)

[7] D. McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx,* (London: McMillan Press, 1984), p.102; M. Harrington, *Socialism,* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972), p.62ff

Bakunin wanted to protect the decentralized and federalist organizational structure of the International against Marx's authoritarian program.[8] Such explanations far from being simply subsequent interpretations are grounded in the respective accounts given by Marx and Bakunin themselves and both are up to an extent correct;[9] Bakunin's penchant for conspiracy cannot be denied, but it is also hard to deny an authoritarian tendency in Marx. For my part though, I agree with those commentators who stress that the debate will remain incomprehensible unless attention is given to the theoretical differences that shaped in turn questions of strategy and tactics.[10] For sure, Alvin Gouldner observes that these differences were stifled and acquired their rigid ideological character *through* this very debate, whose motivations exceeded the domain of theory.[11] For the time being though what matters is to draw the points of contention, as they took form mainly around three focal issues: the methods to be used for the abolition of the *status quo,* the revolutionary subject and the character of the social formation that would arise after the revolution had succeeded.

In summary form thus, Marx, although adamant himself about the necessity of a 'social' revolution, advocated also the need for 'political' struggle, something that led him accept the possibility that the abolition of capitalism can come, at least in certain countries, through peaceful means. Conversely, Bakunin rejected all efforts to take over 'political power' and instead insisted that the struggle must focus solely on the social-economic domain, foreclosing, thus, the potential of a peaceful transition. As far as the revolutionary subject is concerned, Marx conferred a privileged place on the proletariat, meaning essentially the industrial workers in urban centers, whereas Bakunin was critical of the exclusory character of the category of 'class,' speaking instead for the revolutionary potential of the masses, especially the peasants and the *Lumpenproletariat.* Finally, while Marx held that after the revolution, since the 'old world' will have left its remnants, there will be a need for a transitional period, the notorious dictatorship of the proletariat, Bakunin argued that along with capitalism it is instrumental to send immediately to the dustbin of history any form of State as well. Although other minor or major themes could be pointed out, all in all, it was around these conflicting assumptions that the dividing line would be drawn between Marxism (statist socialism) and anarchism (libertarian socialism).

Remember-Remember the 6th of December[12]

In the decades that followed Marx's and Bakunin's deaths, anarchism and Marxism, underwent several transmutations, developing along the way, especially Marxism, orthodoxies and, as a result, 'heretical' figures. Kautsky, Lenin, and Bukharin were Marxists but so were Luxembourg, Gramsci and Walter Benjamin. Sergei Nechaev and Emile Henry were anarchists but so were Gustav Landauer, Buenaventura Durruti and so claims to be Noam Chomsky. Marx has been read

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[8] R. Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture* vol.2, trans. J. Karytsas, (Athens: Ardin, 2001), p.255ff

[9] See M. Bakunin, 'Letter to the Newspaper *Liberte*\ 'The International and Karl Marx, *The Paris Commune of 1871,* pp.38–50, 51–75; K. Marx, 'Letter to Bolte,' 23/11/1871, *Selected Writings,* 636–7

[10] e.g. D. C. Hodges, 'Bakunin's Controversy with Marx: An Analysis of the Tensions within Modern Socialism,' *American Journal of Economics and Sociology,* 19:3, (1960), pp.259–274; G. Rousis, *The State: From Machiavelli to Weber,* (Athens: Govostis Publications, 1994), pp.205–27; B. Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom,* (Montreal/New York: Black Rose Books, 1993), p.58ff

[11] A. W. Gouldner, 'Marx's Last Battle: Bakunin and the First International,' *Theory and Society,* 11:6, (1982), pp.853–884

[12] Graffito in the streets of Athens

through psychoanalytic, existential, Heideggerian and structural lenses, while both Marxism and anarchism developed Christian strands, even though for both Marx and Bakunin the negation of religion was a *sine qua non* of human emancipation. Furthermore, after the 60s, the vocabulary of Marxism and anarchism has been enriched by categories -*imagination, desire, play*- that had, at best, only a minimal role in their classic schemata. To call oneself, thus, an anarchist or a Marxist, especially from the 20th century onwards, is far from being a straightforward statement. And yet, the rivalry between the 'red and black' continues to persist, even in countries where both these ideologies together are a feeble minority. So, should we conclude that the more things change the more remain the same? Has the divide ended up being a petrified remnant of the past?

In Greece last December, ignited by the death of a young kid shot down by a police officer, a considerable segment of the population, especially of the youth, went out in the streets. Many different interpretations have been offered for the riots that ensued; some treated them as nothing more than an outburst of rage, others consider them as manifestations of a genuine revolt. Not only I side with the latter view, but I also hold that these two weeks must be considered an *event*, conceived along the broad lines curved by Alain Badiou: a 'point of irruption' of the existing (ontological) order of things.[13] That is so insofar as not only violence itself was not 'blind,' 'meaningless' or simply prompted by disillusionment, as the Mass Media insisted, but, also, because Greece during this period was filled with *heterotopias*, that is, spaces, and within them forms of association, that broke with and transcended the established order and the forms of relation and identity attached to it. Of course, all these, much to the relief of politicians and journalists, did not last long. But, as Badiou insists, the importance of events lies not in their temporal extension or durability as much as in that they open rifts for the production or in his own words 'subtraction' of new forms of truth and subjectivity. The catchword here is *fidelity,* i.e. a subjective gesture that affirms and verifies the importance of the event and is ready to carry forward its consequential power.

Now, both anarchist and Marxist groups were actively engaged in the revolt; especially the former played a prominent role. Moreover, there was definitely a tendency to assert ideological convictions; characteristically, a banner in one of the central occupations was declaring, 'Down with Democracy, Hail Anarchy.' However, at the same time, in the various heterotopias of those days (in gatherings, occupations etc), ideological affiliations and codes were to a considerable extent suspended under the evocative symbol of 'justice,' which drew together people with or without prior ideological determinations. The 'eventness' of those days is not only a projected theoretical schema; that something out of the ordinary happened, something that calls for thought and that we have somehow to respond to, has largely become a shared experience among radical milieu. A graffito put the matter perceptively: 'December was not an answer, it was a question.'

The point driven at here therefore, is that the revolt of December *qua* event opened up the potential for an overcoming of the red-black divide. Indeed, in the subsequent months there were

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[13] A. Badiou, 'The Event as Trans-Being,' *Theoretical Writings,* ed. & trans. R. Brassier — A. Toscano, (London-New York: Continuum, 2005), p.99; the main works that Badiou elaborates his theory of the event is *Being and Event* and *The Logic of the Worlds.* Whether Badiou himself would consider the revolt an event does not matter. My deployment of the term does not mean that I follow him in his analysis of the event in all the details or that I accept the ontology that stands at the background. The notion is understood in its broadest sense, as an eruption that (a) opens up a productive-creative potentiality and (b) cannot be comprehended solely in reference to the framework within which it occurred, the conditions that constituted the 'eventual site.'

several instances that pointed towards this direction, like common actions and assemblies that lacked a clear ideological stigma. Nowadays however, although such trends have not eclipsed (far from it), the dynamic that was generated seems to wane and old dichotomies begin to assert their selves, as it was paradigmatically attested in last Mayday, where the radical left and anarchist groups went on organizing different demonstrations.

The case of Greece may be said to be representative in a twofold sense. First, it testifies to a characteristic difficulty in anarchism and Marxism, more than a century after the first split and after so many common defeats, to reconcile. At the same time, Greece reveals the sites where Marxists and anarchists meet: in events of revolt and in the constitution of political spaces that seek to disentangle from the grip of this huge web of administration that is official politics today. It can be arguably said, therefore, that the problem of reconciliation passes through the question, how comfortably does the red and black sit within such political spaces of self-regulation. And the core thesis animating this paper is that there is a fundamental tension between Marxism and anarchism *qua* ideologies and an *open political consciousness.* The latter term however is admittedly vague, hence, in order to move on it is necessary to offer some clarifications.

'The multitude has gathered'[14]

If by 'the political' is meant the ambience of practices, institutions and procedures that organize, regulate and administrate a social field of order, then, there has never been a community that is not political, tribal units included. Likewise, if 'political power' designates simply the 'existence of instances capable of formulating explicitly sanctionable injunctions,'[15] then such power is again present in every communal field, embedded in and generated by the aforementioned institutions etc. However, against this 'vague and rarefied sense that would encompass any possible way of organizing the collectivity,'[16] there is also another more precise sense of the political, or rather of 'politics,' namely, the one developed in ancient Greece. Hannah Arendt is surely right; 'The Greek *polis* will continue to leave at the bottom of our political existence ...for as long as we use the word "politics."'[17]

Lest I am accused of Eurocentrism or worse of concealed patriotism, it would be well to note that certain constitutive elements of politics or 'political government,' as these terms were understood in Greece, (e.g. deliberation and popular assemblies), can be traced in numerous other civilizational units. In fact, Pierre Clastres has shown that horizontal forms of political organization (although not conceptualized to pertain to a differentiated political domain) existed already from the tribal level.[18] But if such features were not invented in Greece, they were actualized there in unprecedented degrees, something necessarily accompanied by the articulation of a discursive and conceptual matrix that, along with the fabrication of the term, rendered the *logos* of politics transparent to itself. This, to be sure, does not make Greece an eternal model, some-

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[14] Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution,* 20.3, trans. I. Zervos, (Athens: Papyros, 1976)

[15] C. Castoriadis, 'Power, Politics, Autonomy,' *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy: Essays in Political Philosophy,* ed. D. A. Curtis, (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.156

[16] J-L Nancy, 'Church, State, Resistance' in H. de Vries — L. E. Sullivan (eds.), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World,* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), p. 103

[17] 'Introduction' to W. Benjamin, *Illuminations,* ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zohn, (London: Fontana Press, 1992), p.53

[18] P. Clastres, *Society against the State,* trans. K. Kapsabeli, (Athens: Alexandreia, 1992)

thing that would be true even if one could disregard the several limitations of the Greek political experience, which are too well-known to be recounted. Nevertheless, the fact remains that in this place we can witness the development of a type of communal organization (a certain 'rationality' and a certain 'practice') signified as 'political' or 'politics,' that had as its corner-stones notions like freedom, equality and active participation. And as will be argued again soon, what is all-significant is that the latter have also been orienting principles of the revolutionary tradition and of the two main ideologies affiliated with it, Marxism and anarchism. Of course one can use words like politics or democracy as he or she wishes. But if we want to have a clear picture in our heads of what we are talking about; if, equally importantly, we do not consider freedom and equality merely abstract or regulative ideals but *embodied realities*, then a reconstruction of the experiences implied in the first concise and explicit articulation of a practice (politics) that sought to materialize freedom and equality in a concrete sociopolitical formation, is surely something more than an academic exercise.[19]

Broadly speaking, thus, what took place in Greece, with Athens being the most characteristic, if not typical, case, is a 'politicization of the civic order,' by which are denoted primarily two phenomena: (a) the order of the community became subject to decisions that the body politic promulgated through deliberation in the public space; (b) civic relations among the various classes were constructed as transactions between citizens *(polites)* sharing a common identity and an equal status. The latter point suggests that politicization can't be reduced to the problem of governance, for it also implicated the constitution of a specific 'ethical subject,' the citizen, which was realized in and through a specific way of life, the *bios politicos*.[20] As a proper analysis of these events would have to entail a reconstruction of the Greek world in its various dimensions, including the 'theological' and the 'cosmological,' here I will restrict myself in outlining only these features that pertain to our theme.

We may begin by enumerating (unavoidably in a somewhat dogmatic manner) what politics was *not*. They were not a necessary evil related to the fallen nature of humanity. They were not 'the hand-maiden of economy,' the latter being conceived as the main locus of human activity in need of 'political' regulation- whether minimal or maximal. Generally, politics were not identified with (expertise) administration of private and group interests or of fields and forces, e.g. production, which supposedly constitute the 'real' motor of social-historical becoming. Accordingly, politics or the political was not equated with the State, that is, with an apparatus that is materially, and discursively figured to be, 'above' civil society, whether as its watchdog, as a

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[19] The analysis that follows is based on research conducted for my PhD thesis, which has a chapter devoted on Greece. For further study out of a rich literature the following works are highly recommended: K. A. Raaflaub — J. Ober — R. W. Wallace, *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece,* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007); J. Ober, *The Athenian Revolution: Essays on Ancient Greek Democracy and Political Theory,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); C. Meier, *The Greek Discovery of Politics,* trans. D. McLintock, (London: Harvard University Press, 1990); Z. Antonopoulou -Trehli, *The Political Philosophy of Ancient Greek Art: Politics as art — art as politics,* (Athens: Livani Publications, 2001); K. Papaioannou, *Art and Culture in Ancient Greece,* ed. & trans. Ch. Stamatopoulou, (Athens: Enallaktikes Ekdoseis, 1998); C. Castoriadis, 'The Greek *Polis* and the Creation of Democracy,' *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy,* pp.81–123; J. P. Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought,* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1982); P. Flensted-Jensen — T. H. Nielsen — L. Rubinstein (eds.), *Polis & Politics: Studies in Ancient Greek History,* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press/University of Copenhagen, 2000); E. Meiksins Wood, *Citizens to Lords: a Social History of Western Political Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages,* (London-New York: Verso, 2008)

[20] The notion of the 'ethical subject' is of course taken over from Michel Foucault; *The History of Sexuality* vol. II: *The Use of Pleasures,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp.25–32, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,' *The Foucault Reader,* ed. P. Rabinow, (London: Penguin, 1991), pp.340–72

'universal estate' that transcends its parochialisms, or as a 'superstructure.' Finally, politics were not biopolitics, that is, the government of life as *a biological condition*, what the Greeks called *zoe*. For sure, according to Agamben the 'inclusion of bare life in the political sphere' or else the 'production of a biopolitical body' is as old as sovereign power.[21] But if that is so, it remains that for better or worse, in Greece the elevation of life's productivity, health, enhancement etc into a primal political concern, whether on the level of the individual specimen or on that of population, (the basic meaning of 'biopolitics' as drafted by Foucault)[22] did not take place.

Through these 'negatives' it is easier to appreciate the positive content that politics assumed. For, the fact that politics was not reduced to administration or regulation of something more fundamental means that the political organization and trans- or reformation of the community could be bestowed with an intrinsic worth, that is, it could be experienced as something that is valuable in itself. I am not arguing here that political government and the *bios politicos* arise directly by the fact that politics were not perceived to be this or that. Obviously, any negative conditions had to be coupled with other more positive ones, for instance, a heightened consciousness of human ability or a peculiar type of 'cosmic' religiosity that enabled and propelled men to act. The end-result though was clear: active engagement in the common affairs of the *polis* became an indispensable part of the *just order,* and, thus, of the *good life.* This is not to say that politics were a means to an end; here, Arendt's reminder of the difference between 'in order to' and 'for the sake of is suggestive.[23] The *good society,* ('what-ought-to-be'), was not projected in an eschatological future, but it belonged to the *Now,* that is, to the domain of the present, which is the temporal domain that politics belong as well. Simply put, political activity wasn't a bridge for the future utopia but the *enactment of* utopia.

The fundamental moment was when the responsibility and capacity to govern and form the *polis* was configured as a collective process. For sure, we cannot really speak of a single moment, but of a historical trend with certain focal points of irruption and crystallization. In all events, the crux of the matter is that politics were conceived to be an activity and a process that involves all those who were entitled citizenship. This may sound trivial; in reality though it was deeply radical and revolutionary, for it very much signaled a disruption of the *status quo,* realized specifically in the assertion of the civic presence of the lower classes (the *demos* in a narrow sense) and the parallel insertion of equality and freedom at the heart of justice. And upon these events eventually arose what, following Aristotle, has been coined 'political government,' i.e. a distribution of political power in horizontal, participatory and egalitarian forms of association. To quote Euripides

> Freedom is shown clearly in these words: "Who has an opinion that benefits the *polis* and wants in everybody to reveal?" Thus everybody speaks or remains silent. Which better equality do you know?[24]

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[21] G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* trans. J. Stavrakakis, (Athens: Scripta, 2005), p.25

[22] See, for instance, M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality vol.1: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. G. Rozake, (Athens: Kedros, 2005), p.163ff, 'Security, Territory and Population,' 'The Birth of Biopolitics,' 'On the Government of the Living,' *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth, The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–84, vol.1*, ed. P. Rabinow, trans. R. Hurley et al, (Allen Lane: Penguin Press, 1997), pp.67–71, 73–79, 81–85

[23] H. Arendt 'The Concept of History, Ancient and Modern,' *The Portable Hannah Arendt,* ed. P. Baehr, (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), p.302

[24] *Suppliants,* 437–46; trans. T. Roussos, (Athens: Kaktos, 1992)

We are brought back to the point made earlier; citizenship was not a mere formality, guarantying certain rights or an abstract equality in front of the law; much less can it be reduced to its etymological basis, 'someone who resides or was born in the *polis.*' Rather, as Aristotle informs, 'the citizen is defined above all else by the ability to participate in judgment and power.'[25] To redeploy Foucault's terminology, citizenship was a form of ethical subjectivity, which had participation as one of its formative moments; the individual through joined praxis and his constitution as a citizen was transformed from a passive being that is the *subjectus* of history, subjected, that is, to forms of historical production, to an active *subjectum* endowed with historical agency. But all forms of subjectivity or identity are relational, something that is evidently true for citizenship, which is constituted through common praxis and within a public space. To be a citizen meant nothing less than to recognize in the face of the other an equal and, thus, to enter with him (not her though) into forms of relation sealed by reciprocity and openness. Likewise, political friendship, the spiritual bond underscoring citizenship, testified to the experience that one's freedom is established and maintained *through* the freedom of the other. It follows that the constitution of persons as citizens marked at the same time the constitution of the *polis* as a societal mode that manifested the free association of equals. To be sure, equality was restricted on the political domain, since prevailing social differentiations were not abolished.[26] But this does not make it a fa9ade, for, the political was wrested from such differentiations; thus, whereas in the previous state of affairs the civic order translated social inequality into a hierarchical distribution of political power, in the new polis-order, especially when politicization culminated to a democratic regime, wealth didn't mean command and poverty did not mean obedience. As Herodotus made Otanes put it, 'for I neither want to rule nor to be ruled.'[27]

It could be countered that citizenship in Greece was embedded in a communitarian- identitarian logic grafted upon a 'blood and soil' mythologem. This is true; it is also true that the constitution of the *polis* as a community of spirit was accompanied by an externalization of hostility, or as Karl Schmitt would have it, by a re-articulation of the 'friend-foe' distinction.[28] Yet, without ignoring these problems (on the contrary, they deserve a detailed study), I still think that they were not endemic to the *bios politicos.* What made the people to identify themselves as peers and equals and what brought them together in solidarity in action was not so much a sanctioned particularism as their common participation in a world where fate was *common* and where justice disclosed itself as a *common* ideal and a *common* burden. In this sense, we must distinguish citizenship in its substantial content, which is to say, *that which can be repeated and addressed beyond the polis,* from the historical limitations and contingencies within which it was configured. To be a citizen not as a formal-legal category attached to a State or social field, but as a form of subjectivity revolving around participation in that which is common is *universalizable* in the sense given to the notion by Badiou:[29] citizenship is a form of ethical subjectivity that every person can show fidelity to, since, in principle *everyone can be a citizen*, even if the order to which he/she partakes is a 'global' one.

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[25] *Politics,* III, 1275a 24–25, trans. N. Paritsi, (Athens, Papyros, 1975)

[26] Yet, especially in *poleis* like Athens where politicization culminated to a democratic-isonomous regime, exploitation of the poor classes by the wealthy was disabled and the elites had to constantly contribute to the well-being of the *polis.* The differences with today are telling

[27] *Histories,* III.83; trans. G. Rawlinson, (Kent: Wordsworth Classics, 1996)- *translation modified*

[28] C. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political,* trans. A. Lavranou, (Athens: Kritiki, 1988)

[29] *In Defence of Lost Causes,* p.416

29 See, for instance, A. Badiou, 'Eight Theses on the Universal,' 'Politics as Truth Procedure' *Theoretical Writings,* pp.143–52, 153–60, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism,* trans. R. Brassier, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003)

In effect this brings us to the issue of 'truth.' Of course, one hardly has to read Heidegger to recognize the polysemic nature of this term. Yet, simplifying as it may be, it is fair to say that for the most part in Greece truth, whether as correspondence or un-concealment whether as a cognitive process or an existential condition of the good life, was figured as a *dialogical and participatory event,* so, in principle *everyone had an access to it.* For the domain of politics specifically, this denoted that there was no Truth that could be used to measure and judge political (that is, temporal) affairs and which someone could claim to hold for himself, acquiring as such power over the community. Rather, all the decisions about the destiny of the *polis* were to be attained through participatory procedures and determined by dialogue and persuasion. But here is the crucial point; for this experience at the same time presupposed that truth was not identifiable with the human activities pursuing it but retained its transcendent texture not in the sense of being other-worldly but in the sense that truth is an *instance* of and *belongs to* reality — or a given situation — and, thus, it formally exceeds men and their knowledge. Put aphoristically, truth was not only produced but also *disclosed* in and through the participatory act. This in turn had important implications for citizenship *qua* ethical subjectivity. To be a citizen implied commitment to the assumption that truth is not coextensive with ones activities or cognitive capacities; no matter how well-informed an individual opinion may be, citizenship demanded an 'openness' which recognized that truth can be articulated and ratified only through participatory processes. Moreover, this also implied that the individual as well as the collectivity could err, not simply in the sense of reaching a wrong decision, but in the substantial sense of a failure to live *in* truth. And this not only enabled critical selfreflection but also opened the space of *repentance.*

Let us try to sum up. Insurrectory events usually implicate an activation of the masses spurred by a demand for justice. The Greeks in developing and regularizing such a type of common activity, gave it name and positive form; politics, the *bios politicos*, political government. And ever since then, any invocation of a politics that is not reduced to administration, of a *genuine politics*, is also an invocation whether explicit or implicit of the Greek experience. In the preceding paragraphs, thus, I tried to delineate the following points; politics are emancipatory, egalitarian (which is why Zizek is right that genuine politics are also always democratic)[30] and utopian in the substantial sense that they *enact the good society,* a society, that is, of freedom, justice and reciprocity. Accordingly the citizen as the ethical subject that embodies politics is a universalizing subjectivity that is grounded on and performs a positive affirmation of human equality. Last but not least, a genuine political consciousness is an *open* consciousness that is committed not only to freedom, justice and equality but also to the transcendent and dialogic nature of truth. We may return to the red and black.

Politics in Utopia

Arendt has observed that Marx's ideal society, 'is a state of affairs where all human activities derive as naturally from human "nature" as the secretion of wax by bees for making the honey-

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[30] H. Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.89n21

comb.'[31] Upon such images of individual assimilation to community or species-life it has been argued that Marx's vision of the future society is deeply anti-political.[32] In his article on 'Marx and Utopia' Richard Nordahl has attempted to challenge this thesis.[33] Likewise, in a more recent essay Claudio Katz endeavors to demonstrate that Marx's thought is substantially informed by the classical Greek political experience.[34] Both scholars I believe make a good point. Not only in his early ruminations on 'true democracy,' but also later, especially in his writings on the Paris Commune, it is apparent that for Marx participation, selfgovernment, egalitarian relations etc, will be constitutive features of the communist society.[35] Moreover, beyond Marx, it would be unfair not to recognize a commitment to a substantial type of politics -to *genuine* politics, in Marxist or Marxisant thinkers and groups, from the *Spartakusbund* to the *Autonomia Operaia,* exemplified above all in the central place attributed to (workers) councils.

A similar argument can be applied to anarchism; indeed for the latter, with its explicit commitment to decentralized, down to top, organization etc the central place that participatory politics occupy is even easier to sustain for its main intellectual figures, (from Bakunin to Murray Bookchin and Hakim Bay) as well as for several anarchist groups, the most representative instance being the Spanish civil war. Given that, it is not accidental that current social movements, like the now fading 'antiglobalization movement,' have adopted anarchistic tactics of direct action or that even communist thinkers, like Negri and Badiou, follow anarchist thought in stressing the importance of autonomous spaces that escape the logic of representation and embody unmediated forms of association.[36

My argument here is that both anarchism and Marxism take over the Greek political paradigm and inscribe it within an *explicit universal project of emancipation.* This does not concern direct historical influence (though in some cases like Marx it is that also). It does not matter if thinkers and movements have not been explicitly 'inspired' by the Greek political experience; it does not also matter whether the term 'politics' has been deployed. The point is that both Marxism and anarchism, from their very beginning, have been committed to a form of communal association and organization that invokes the political paradigm of the Greeks while seeking, as Marx put it in a different context, 'to reproduce its truth on a higher plane.'[36] But this is only one side of the coin.

As mentioned, Marx and Bakunin drew a distinction between 'political' and 'social' struggles. Behind this distinction operate two major assumptions. First, a functional- instrumental reading of 'the political' that renders politics a *means* to an end. The very talk about a 'political struggle'

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[31] For Marxism/socialism in general a classic expression of this view is Bernard Crick's, *In Defense of Politics,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993)

[32] R. Nordahl, 'Marx and Utopia: A Critique of the "Orthodox" View,' *Canadian Journal of Political Science,* 20:4 (1987), pp.755–783

[33] C. Katz, 'The Socialist Polis: Antiquity and Socialism in Marx's Thought,' *The Review of Politics,* 56:2, (1994), pp.237–260 This is also recognized by Arendt, *The Human Condition,* p.131n82

[34] K. Marx, *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right,' The Civil War in France, Selected Writings,* p.33ff, 584ff; McLellan and Harrington are probably right that Marx's *encomium* of the Commune must not be taken at face value. Still, whatever Marx believed about the Commune and its prospects, it is generally safe to assume that he recognized in the insurrection certain institutional structures and corresponding practices that would have a central place in the post-capitalist society.

[35] For current social movements cf. R. J. F. Day, 'From Hegemony to Affinity: The political logic of the newest social movements,' *Cultural Studies,* 18:5, (2004), pp.716–48; B. Epstein, 'Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization Movements,' *Monthly Review,* September 2001, pp.1–14

[36] K. Marx, *Grundrisse, Selected Writings,* p.395

that can either be adopted or not as a medium for reaching a social formation whereby 'political power' will no longer be *needed* is a clear testimony to this proposition. Secondly, and in close proximity, the identification of the political with the State, which leads Marx to claim, 'From the political point of view the state and any organization of society are not two distinct things'; and later, 'The political soul of the revolution consists...in a tendency of the classes without political influence to end their isolation from the top positions in the state.'[37] By upholding these related assumptions both thinkers are well within the confines of modern thought. It is secondary if Marx and Bakunin do not conceptualize the State as the emergence of order upon a fictitious natural condition, along the lines of Hobbes or Locke; the crucial point is that they adopt the premise that 'the political' corresponds to a central apparatus that is distinct from the social formation which it regulates and organizes.[38] It follows, both thinkers mainly understand by political struggle activities directed towards the organization of a party that competes for centralized power, or, as Bakunin once does, a negative activity which seeks to destroy the state apparatus.[39] Moreover, since both Marx and Bakunin stress that complex social units are structured along vertical lines of class-antagonism they cannot but conclude that the political is the formal organization of oppression. Of course, Bakunin highlights that the State is an oppressive mechanism in its own right. Yet, the shared conviction is that the main function of the political consists in coercion. Thus, Marx, who assumes that a transitional period will exist between the old and new world, advocates the need of a political formation that will suppress the reactionary forces, whereas Bakunin, who is adamant that the revolution has to implement the new society immediately, dispels such an apparatus altogether.

The point driven at here is that there is an ambiguity that lies at the heart of both ideological traditions and that has accompanied them in their unfolding, sometimes even within the same persons and groups. On the one hand an advocacy of a noninstrumental, non-statist politics and on the other a functional reading of the political that locates it 'above' social reality as the formal organization of the conflicting forces that cut through society. And even now when the positively political strain in Marxist and anarchistic groups has come to the fore, notably in their entanglement in current movements of direct action and the creation of zones of self-regulation, the age-old distinction between 'political' and 'social' struggles, and consequently the divide between those who opt for or dismiss the former, continues to persist.

Now, if the problem could be reduced only to a misreading or confusion, it could be overcome by a more refined articulation of politics, one that explicitly subtracts it from the State and divorces it from coercion and the means-ends logic. In simplified terms, it would be enough to acknowledge that social struggles, when they aim at a re/trans-formation or displacement of existing relations, are political in the most substantial sense. Such a task, which is already

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[37] 'Critical Remarks on the Article: "The King of Prussia and Social Reform,"' *ibid,* p.134, 135; This assumption, and its implications discussed below become apparent also in the following texts: 'On the Jewish Question,' *The Poverty of Philosophy,* 'Inaugural Address to the First International,' p.63ff, p.232, p.575ff; of course the most famous expression is the *Communist Manifesto*; for Bakunin apart from the texts cited so far see also the brief article 'Political Consciousness and the Culture of Statism' in *The Paris Commune of 1871,* pp.91–3 and the programmes he had composed for the Alliance in *Selected Writings,* ed. A. Lehning, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), pp.166–77

[38] From this assumption stem other modern conventions like the translation of the *polis* as 'city-state' or that the 'primitives' lacked any political organization. On the latter issue see the chapter in Clastres,' *Society against the State,* 'Copernicus and the Savages,' pp. 11–32

[39] M. Bakunin, 'Political Consciousness and the Culture of Statism,' p.92

performed by thinkers such as Badiou et al, would after all only clarify what is already present. Sadly, things are not so easy.

Ideology & Truth

Among the several vague notions and concepts used by political theory, 'ideology' is arguably one of the most contested; hence, it would be pretentious to aspire to offer an exhaustive definition.[40] But there is no reason to pursue such an endeavor. Rather the term here is deployed in the sense adopted by standard text-books to refer to the various currents of thought that have defined the modern political landscape: a body of 'ideas' and 'concepts' regarding man, history and order. For sure, Foucault's observation about liberalism (that it is a 'practice.oriented towards objectives and regulating itself by means of a sustained reflection')[41] may well be applied to all other major ideological traditions; in fact, it could be said to be their primary form. Yet, one cannot also deny that, as they develop, ideologies (in spite of the fact that within them there is room for bewildering variations) are defined by the cementation of a basic ensemble of 'ideas' towards which the person who espouses them feels committed.

This is enough in terms of a primary definition; what interests me on this occasion is the tendency of political ideologies, and particularly the revolutionary ideologies of Marxism and anarchism, to 'close' upon their selves, to become, that is, totalizing systems of thought and identity which 'block' human consciousness. The notion of 'closure,' as a technical term, is drawn from Eric Voegelin, one of the most trenchant critics of (revolutionary) ideologies.[42] For sure, Voegelin maintained that the primary closure effected by ideological systems of thought is towards the transcendent Ground of reality; in other words, though he was reluctant after a point in his career to use this term, ideologies for Voegelin have brought a *religious* closure which cuts off human beings from the divine Ground of (their) existence, the end result being a deformed-pathological type of subjectivity.[43] As a matter of fact, it has been argued here as well that politics implicate a *transcendent* moment, but, whether the latter testifies to a movement whose terminus is a divine Beyond has to be bracketed off. Rather, my use of the term is considerably modified; by ideological closure I refer to the cementation of a set of rigid ideas and ultimately identity, i.e. a referential form of *self-recognition* and *self-localization,* that (a) hinder 'reflective distance'

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[40] For a comprehensive review see Roger Eatwell's 'Introduction' in R. Eatwell — A. Wright (eds.), *Contemporary Political Ideologies,* (London-new York: Continuum, 2000), pp.1–22; Paul Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia,* [ed. G. H. Taylor, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986)] remains an invaluable reading; also, a very interesting analysis of the concept that I read recently, with rich bibliography, is from Catherine Bell in her *Ritual Theory-Ritual Practice,* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.187ff

[41] 'The Birth of Biopolitics,' p.74

[42] Voegelin took over this concept by Henry Bergson who used it -in conjunction to the respective one of 'openness'- in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*

[43] See, for instance, E. Voegelin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution,* ed. J. H. Hallowel, (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1982), *The Political Religions, The New Science of Politics, Science, Politics and Gnosticism: Modernity Without Restraint, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin,* Vol. 5, ed. M. Henningsen, trans. V. A. Schildhauer, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), *Anamnesis: On the Theory of History and Politics, Collected Works* vol. 6, ed. D. Walsh, trans. M. J. Hanak, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), pp.280–96, 341ff, 'Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme,' *Published Essays 1966–1985, Collected Works* vol. 12, ed. E. Sandoz, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), pp.315–75, 'The Eclipse of Reality,' *What is History? And Other Late Unpublished Writings, Collected Works,* vol. 28, eds. T. A. Hollweck-P. Caringella, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990, pp. 111–62

from ones certainties;[44] (b) present the other person in a *categorical form that prevents genuine dialogue.* The problem, which exceeds anarchism and Marxism, has been diagnosed pertinently by Horkheimer:

> Ideas today are treated with a lazy seriousness.Human's desire to submit to them or revolt against them as if they were gods. Ideas begin by playing the role of professional guides and end up as authorities and *Furer.* Whoever states them is treated as a prophet or as a heretic, as an object that the masses have to adore or as a prey to be hunted by the Gestapo. This treatment of ideas only as verdicts, guiding lines and mottos characterizes the weakened man of today's era. Long before the Gestapo appears his spiritual functions have been reduced to declarative propositions. The movement of thought is confined to slogans, diagnoses and prognoses. Every man is classified: fascist, Jew, foreign or 'ours.' And this determines the stance adopted towards him for good.[45]

That such critical and 'intersubjective' closure is related to a general closure towards reality will be also suggested here; my main concern, though, is its thoroughly antipolitical implications.

There is an issue, however, where my analysis explicitly digresses from Voegelin's. The latter held that anarchism and Marxism are intrinsically symptoms of a 'close soul,' a verdict which he passed to socialism (or communism) in general. I strongly disagree. Though this is hardly a sufficient definition, it is safe to argue that socialism signifies a historical movement (metaphorically and literally) that seeks to establish forms of social organization and material production based on cooperation and equality. Voegelin castigates the latter as a perilous fantasy, but, this cannot be possibly considered a 'realist' position; it is itself a conviction in need of explanation. In any case, *qua* historical movement socialism is also an *event,* not in the sense of a momentary occurrence, but of something that *emerges* out of a situation and as a *response* to it, the situation broadly being the industrial order of capitalism and its failure to realize the ideals of the French Revolution. In this vein, thus, anarchism and Marxism should be seen primarily as practical-critical vehicles of the event of emancipation that socialism embodies, which is to say that in their own turn Marxism and anarchism constitute responses to the event of socialism. It follows that instead of dismissing them *a priori*, like Voegelin, the crucial task is to track the path through which they trail towards ideological closure.

In his early critique of Hegel Marx argued that

> It is therefore the task of history, now the truth is no longer in the beyond, to establish the truth of the here and now.[46]

Similarly, in his celebrated 'Theses on Feuerbach' (second thesis) he states that

> The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the this- sidedness of his thinking in practice.[47]

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[44] The quoted notion is again borrowed from Voegelin; *Order and History V: In Search of Order, Collected Works* vol.18, ed. E. Sandoz, (Columbia-London: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p.63ff

[45] M. Horkheimer, 'Art and Mass Culture' in M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno *et al, Art and Mass Culture,* ed. & trans. Z. Sarikas, (Athens: Ypsilon/Vivlia, 1984), p.64

[46] 'Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction,' *Selected Writings,* p.72

[47] 'Theses on Feuerbach,' *ibid,* p.171

No matter how much Marx's thought developed afterwards it is arguable that these programmatic statements lie at the heart of the Marxian project to 'change' instead of merely 'interpreting' the world. Bakunin for his part did not generally create systematic works of theory and thus comprehensive and sophisticated formulae like those of Marx. Yet, he was as well an ardent materialist who sought to expunge from his thought any shred of 'metaphysics.' Thus, 'thought' and 'revolt' — the main principles that differentiate man from his animal basis and at the same time the motors of historical movement — are conceptualized as emergent properties of 'creative matter' (revolt specifically is an 'instinct') without reference to any orientating transcendental principles.[48] To this extent, it is arguable that Bakunin would not only concede with Marx's statements, but that the latter can be profitably used as summaries of his programmatic position as well.

Now, on one level Marx's statements seek to sustain, against an idealistic or dualist denigration of material existence, that praxis is a necessary moment in the articulation of truth. This is not only a fundamental insight (to my eyes at least), but it also takes up and re-articulates the experience that we found in Greece; was not truth there as well brought from a Beyond down to the level of human activity? Yet, if we pay more attention to the statements, we will find a subtle but fundamental difference. For, Marx does not simply redraw truth *into* the Real, nor does he only say that every truth is materialized and ratified through human praxis. What he does is to *identify* truth with human activity; as such, any space between truth and action, bodily or mental, collapses.

Am I splitting hairs here? I think not. For the Greeks, as we saw, truth though not outside reality exceeded human knowledge and action. Thus, the discursive practices that were developed in Greece for attaining and embodying truth had as governing principles and presuppositions participation and openness to reality and to the other person. This meant that action, whether 'political,' 'aesthetic,' or 'theoretical,' was experienced as a *responsive testimony* to principles such as Justice, Beauty, Wisdom, which transcended human beings. Such ontological categories in Marx and Bakunin are foreclosed. Man *makes* truth and that is why eventually the latter is ratified and finds its ontological domain, its 'Court,' in history. The truth of man is his historical becoming and the truth of history is the productive activity of men. By the same token, the consciousness that action is summoned forth by reality and constitutes as such, a mode of *giveness* is obfuscated; action, that is, loses its responsive dimension and is reduced to an assertion of man's *will*.

This conviction would be complemented and its dynamic accentuated by another experience, which we can designate as the deformation of utopia from an orientating horizon to a historical certainty situated in the future. Voegelin has detected here an 'immanentist' version of the Christian eschatological expectation of deliverance; what was other-worldly and offered by Grace is to be realized by the human-all-too-human. This diagnosis is suggestive insofar it intimates that at the root of this transformation of faith sustained by hope and love into certainty we can trace the belief that thought and praxis have no resting points beyond themselves. Yet, apart from its commitment to a problematic dualism (which by the way fails to do justice to the dynamic of Christian political spirituality), such a schema tends to simplify under the category of *'ersatz religiosity'* operations which, as Voegelin knows, are more complicated.

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[48] See M. Bakunin, *God and State,* trans. N. B. Alexiou — A. Gikas, (Athens: Eleytheros Typos, 1986), p.26ff

In Marxism the deformation of utopia is largely effected through this 'deterministic, scientific aspect' of Marx's thought, which Guy Debord has characterized as the 'rift' leading to 'ideol-ogization.'[49] This is the well-known celebration of productive forces that allowed Marx to put forward arguments such as that ' Steam, electricity, and the self-acting mule were revolution-ists of a rather more dangerous character than even citizens Barbes, Raspail, Blanqui.'[50] Marx's thought, to be sure, is too nuanced to be accommodated in a single schema, but, this cannot alter the fact that Marx entertained the idea that he was discovering laws that function as the laws of natural sciences. The result was quite ambiguous, nay paradoxical; by positing the classless society as a historical inevitability, the 'truth' that human activities produce was detached from the latter and became something like (evolutionary) Providence. Truth was discovered before it was actually practiced.

In the anarchist movement scientific pretensions have not been absent from its main thinkers, notably Proudhon and Kropotkin (or later Bookchin), but also Bakunin. Yet anarchism did not generally claim for itself a title like 'scientific socialism' nor did it produce reductive-deterministic philosophies of history. Anarchism's eschatological strain was rather accentuated by an apocalyptic fervor, that is, a burning faith verging into dogmatic certainty in this moment whereby the old world will be enveloped in a 'holy fire,' out of which will spring the new society. To quote Bakunin,

> Revolution in the present is the negative, as soon however as it triumphs it will au-tomatically become positive. There will be a qualitative change, a life-giving apoc-alypse, a new sky and a new earth, a young and all-mighty world within which all present disharmonies will be resolved in a harmonious whole.[51]

Such an apocalyptic experience is not alien to Marx and Marxism, quite the opposite. But, it is incorporated in and modified by the latter's scientific aspirations; in contrast, in anarchism, insofar as it bents and looks towards an essentially *volitional* moment of Negation, such aspira-tions have been generally relegated in front of the preponderant presence of the apocalyptic.[52] Having pointed, however, the differences, it remains that the end-result was substantially com-mon: the truth of history was surrounded with a finality far surpassing the teleological and/or progressivist schemata created by modern thought that far.

To avoid misrepresentations, I do not argue that anarchism and Marxism as bodies of ideas and practice and eventually as closed systems of thought and identity can be reduced or arise directly from the two experiences under consideration. Yet, the latter, and especially the identification of truth with action and its reduction to an assertive operation, may be said to be their primary gestures, which were soon to turn into self- evident givens, that is, into 'a habit of mind.'[53] As such they must be also considered to be their largely un-reflected ground; that is so insofar as under their formative spell, ideas and practices wouldn't be perceived as participatory acts

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[49] G. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* trans. Sylvia, (Athens: Diethnis Vivliothiki, 2000), §84, p.62

[50] 'Speech on the Anniversary of the People's Paper, *Selected Writings,* p.368

[51] Cited in G. Rousis, *The State*, p.211

[52] That anarchism is the most representative instance of an apocalyptic-chiliastic consciousness among 'modern utopias' has been long ago noted by Karl Manheim in his *Ideology and Utopia,* trans. G. Androulidakis, (Athens: 'Gnosis,' 1997), p.231ff

[53] The quoted notion is borrowed from Stuart Hall, cited in W. Brown, 'Resisting Left Melancholy,' *Boundary 2,* 26:3, (1999), pp.19–27; http://muse.ihu.edu/iournals/boundary/v026/26.3brown.html (accessed 23/06/2009)

searching to disclose and embody truth but as the assertive manifestation of a 'truth' that has been absorbed by man and which, to make things worse, was certain to be realized in history. This did not only lead to 'a catastrophic faith in revolution'[54] that would consistently forestall 'true democracy' in favor of authoritarian regimes, reformist complacency or a celebration of destruction; before that it affected the way men perceive and communicate with others.

Marx, as hinted, was too serious a thinker to fall to the trap of his own doctrinal tendencies and, with some qualifications, so was Bakunin. And yet, the effects of ideological closure become apparent already within the First International. Earlier, heed was paid to Gouldner's argument that the disagreement between Marx and Bakunin was colored by non-theoretical factors. In a similar tone, George Rousis notes that the Marx-Bakunin debate was determined by a 'misrepresentation of one's opinions by the other, in the context of a public confrontation and the search for ideological prevalence, an accentuation of existing oppositions at the expense of existing fundamental common views and mainly common problematics.'[55] Whatever personal motivations or qualities of character may have had a contributory role here, I wish to focus on the very fact that a debate which revolved around crucial theoretical issues like the nature of the State was turned into a ferocious (and sterile) polemic. Foucault has summed the character of polemics nicely. 'The polemicist... proceeds encased in privileges that he possesses in advance and will never agree to question. On principle, he possesses rights authorizing him to wage war and making that struggle a just undertaking; the person he confronts is not a partner in the search for truth, but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful and whose very existence constitutes a threat.'[56]

Is it not reasonable to assume that in the case of Marx and Bakunin, the deformation of debate into a polemic, resulting not surprisingly in an expulsion, was related to the way they configured and experienced truth? Especially for Marx his well-documented penchant for polemics cannot be divorced by his belief that the truth which is to be proved by man's praxis can be deciphered in the isolation of the National Library. Bakunin, who insisted on the impossibility of a single scientific-philosophical Truth, may seem more democratic; for once, he was ready to recognize Marx's contribution.[57] Yet, we also know that he promoted the creation of small circles that would act as an 'invisible dictatorship' and that would give the necessary push in order for the masses to meet their destiny.[58] Scholars, e.g. Carr, usually concentrate on the role of Bakunin's personality; evidently this was a serious factor. At the same time though, whether they are fictitious or not, are not such shadowy organs of propaganda always animated by the conviction that they hold the truth that is to be made?

Subsequently, when the process of ideologization would be complete, Marxism and anarchism became a body of 'ideas' grounded upon the now habitual conviction that truth is not only man-made but seized and waiting to be realized, and ready to be used as slogans and weapons by its militants: 'democratic centralism,' 'destruction is creative,' 'real basis and superstructure,' 'propaganda by the deed,' 'one solution, revolution.' These (and other) are the well-known formulae that, to borrow Wendy Brown's succinct observation, we end up loving 'more than we love the

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[54] J-P Sartre, 'Is this a Democracy?,' *Modern Times: Selected Non-Fiction,* ed. G. Wall, trans. G. Wall — R. Buss, (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 147

[55] *The State: From Machiavelli to Weber,* p.206

[56] M. Foucault, 'Polemics, Politics, and Problemizations: An Interview,' *The Foucault Reader,* p.382

[57] 'The International and Karl Marx,' p.62; see also his letter to Herzen cited in Carr, *Mikhail Bakunin,* p.385

[58] See, for instance, his letters to Albert Richard and Nechaev in *Selected Writings,* pp.178–94

existing world that we presumably seek to alter with these terms or the future that would be aligned with them.'[59] Corresponding to this process would be the constitution of 'the Marxist' and 'the anarchist' as forms of self-identification that reveal a subject committed not so much to a universalizable event, but to the prevalence of the correct ideology. That is, Marxism and anarchism were to become, to a considerable extent, identities that rendered their adherents not partners in the quest to realize the good society but *functionaries of truth*; the party-vanguard who plans and the revolutionary who bombs his way to communism (the truth of history) are the most representative figures here.

This event in turn (something that as pointed out is especially true for Marxism, whose scientific pretensions made it far more prone to dogmatization) would create rifts even within the creeds; the question would arise who is the 'real' Marxist or revolutionary and who the 'traitor,' since it was assumed that inferences which were perceived to be wrong were nothing less than betrayals of the Cause. We return to the previously hinted problem of orthodoxy; and wherever orthodoxies appear the space arises for sectarianism as well, that is, for the creation of groups who believe that they are the carriers of truth usually in protest to a dogma that has prevailed. To be sure, truth may be separated from any (historical) objectivity or finality and become purely 'subjective'; this is the stance adopted, for instance, by the new urban guerilla group in Greece 'Sect of Revolutionaries.'[60] Still, since they continue to firmly believe that truth is coextensive with action the result is more or less the same: truth loses its dialogic character and becomes purely assertive, so that it can be attested even in the assassination of a small-rank police officer.

Of course, the historical anarchist and Marxist movements can neither be reduced to the above mentioned figures nor to sectarianism and a battle for orthodoxy. It should also be recognized that anarchist and Marxisant groups in the previous century had in certain instances attempted to develop political spaces far more inclusive than those formed in Greece (temporary ones though mostly during revolutionary upheavals). To this extent, we should speak of *gradations* of closure and openness within the two ideological traditions. The primary problem of revolutionary ideologies however, threatening all anarchists and Marxists and *which remains a problem for us today*, is the constitution of a self-righteous identity that tends to stifle to its adherents preconceived ideas of what is true and right and what is to be done. In other words, the primary problem is the construction of an identity that separates even when it calls us to gather. To this extent, ideology *qua* such an identity has to be placed at the antipode of politics. So, where does this lead us in terms of the question posed at the beginning?

Aufhebung

Nothing is further from my intentions than to claim to have offered an exhaustive explanation of the 'failure' of anarchism and Marxism. My pivotal assumption was that both revolutionary creeds, even those segments whose actual practice dispensed with open dialogue and persuasion altogether, have been committed (even only for the future) to a 'politics' whose first explicit actualization occurred in ancient Greece. In this context, it cannot be ignored that although Marx and Bakunin (as well as other thinkers) entertained on many occasions the idea that the

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[59] 'Resisting Left Melancholy,' p.21

[60] This is made known in the manifesto they sent after their latest act. The document is posted in the Athens *Indymedia* site: `http://athens.indvmedia.org/front.php3?lang=el&article id=1048828`

'new world' was round the corner, the sociopolitical formation that both anarchism and Marxism have in mind has not been materialized. Evidently, the reasons for such 'failure' are many and, apart from much more space, it would take a more detailed historical analysis to reconstruct them. Yet, it is far from unimportant, especially if we recall that Marxism and anarchism were the two main ideologies informing most revolutionary upheavals in the last century, that the divide between the red and black served as a basis of bitter conflicts within revolutionary movements as well as a stumbling block that prevented the one from hearing the other, even if it was only a matter of taking seriously letters of caution, like those Kropotkin sent to Lenin.[61] To this extent, the cementation of Marxism and anarchism from practical-critical vehicles of emancipation into closed ideological systems of thought and identity should be regarded as a main operative factor obtruding the development of this form of consciousness or better *participatory ontology* that would be necessary for the full-flourishing of a truly political life.[62] And what I have argued in turn is that one line of meaning leading to this closure stems from the absorption of truth into the orbit of praxis, which lies at the origin of both creeds.

Emile Cioran has remarked in one of his aphorisms that 'it is not easy to play with honesty Jeremiah or Isaiah.'[63] At a period where we face a cataclysm of apocalyptic warnings this is a timely reminder; then again, one does not have to be a prophet to recognize that if one of the possible worlds of tomorrow is the 'Fortress World,' it is already being formed today.[64] In this gloomy vision, we should add that identity- politics are distinctly inadequate as responses to the challenges we face. For, not only they fail to constitute the basis for an affirmative egalitarian and unifying political vision, they also take the current institutional matrix for granted. The same inadequacy, it needs to be stressed, applies for the affiliated politics of tolerance.[65] In the end of the day, most 'cosmopolitan' Empires were keen to tolerate beliefs and practices as long as they complied or did not threat the status quo. To be sure, I am not saying that respect of difference is nothing but a fa9ade; much less do I wish to undermine the important democratic gains that liberal societies have achieved. Yet, it would be a mistake to cling to worn-out cliches of multiculturalism, constitutional freedoms, individual choice etc, when we witness in front of us the sliding of democracy, even in its frail liberal form, to the current sociopolitical state of affairs, designated poignantly as a 'post-democratic society of the spectacle' or 'technooligarchy.'[66]

The point here is that if participatory politics are a desideratum, as it is so often said to be the case, then their emancipatory and utopian character has to be brought to the fore i.e. it has to be turned from a latent feature to an explicit *project.* We are back thus to the assertion made in the introductory section, concerning the relevance and salience of Marxism and anarchism.

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[61] P. Kropotkin, 'Two Letters to Lenin,' *To the Young*, trans. N. B. Alexiou, (Athens: Eleftheros Typos, 1975), pp.94–99

[62] Not that this would have guaranteed 'victory.' Obviously history does not work this way.

[63] E. Cioran, *The Evil Demiurge,* trans. Th. Hatzopoulos, (Athens: Exantas-Nimata, 1994), p.183

[64] The quoted notion is borrowed from A. Hammond, *Which World? Scenarios for the 21st Century: Global Destinies, Regional Choices*, (Washington DC: Island Press, 1998)

[65] Apart from the relevant observations of Badiou and Zizek, for some pertinent critiques of identity- politics and the 'cult of tolerance' cf. W. Brown, *Politics out of History,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 'Subjects of Tolerance: Why We Are Civilized and They are the Barbarians' in *Political Theologies*, pp.298–317; E. Meiksins Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism,* trans. A. Oikonomou, (Athens: Ekdoseis Stahy, 1998), pp.233–56

[66] The first notion is from Agamben *(Homo Sacer,* p.30); the second from Hans Zolo, *Democracy and Complexity: A Realist Approach,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992)

For all their self-righteousness, both traditions continue to produce indispensable critiques that point to the necessity of transcending the present order of things. Likewise, beyond the critical-theoretical level, Marxisant and (especially) anarchist groups remain central agents in the emergence of political spaces, that is, of heterotopias which irrupt the present by realizing within it *glimpses of utopia.* In a very real sense this is an actualization of the 'overcoming' proposed here.

Important though as the creation of 'autonomous zones' or the 'newest movements' may be, the numerous singularities at work have not as yet fostered the production of a new political subject. This could be seen as a virtue; personally I agree with Badiou: against the 'false universality' of capitalism we weed the emergence of a genuine universal. In other words, the displacement and replacement of 'what-is' with 'what- ought-to-be' needs the constitution of an inclusive mass movement that will embody the new emancipatory politics. To this extent, anarchism and Marxism, insofar as they continue to enclose its militants within identities that separate, do not only foster the politics which are to come, but also inhibit them. Of course, to say that politics is part of the answer to our 'post-political' predicament is only to pose the problem. For, as it has been suggested throughout, such a politics pertain to the domain of ontology; what is to be transformed is not simply 'society' but the way we relate to each other and the world. In effect this ties the problem of emancipation to the problem of *redemption.* But this, as they say, is a different story.

To conclude, Marx in the quotation used as an epigraph maintained that selfemancipation is the first step for human emancipation. On that occasion his reference point was religion. If by the latter we mean this doctrinal construct that expels hope for deliverance to the after-life while in this life sustains various forms of exploitation and domination one must agree. By the same token, however, is it not perhaps equally necessary nowadays to emancipate also from the ideological closure of revolutionary doctrines? If such is the case, then to overcome the divide *between* the 'red and black' may mean to move *beyond* them; not Marxists, not anarchists, but citizens.

Black and red: an historical-philosophical enquiry into their convergence

Chiara Bottici

Alternate title: **Black and Red: The Freedom of Equals.**

> "Oggi lo sviluppo immenso che ha preso la produzione, il crescere di quei bisogni che non possono soddisfarsi se non col concorso di gran numero di uomini di tutti i paesi, i mezzi di comunicazione, l'abitudine dei viaggi, la scienza, la letteratura, i commerci, le guerre stesse, hanno stretto e vanno sempre piu stringendo l'umanita in un corpo solo, le cui parti, solidali tra loro, possono solo trovare pienezza e le liberta di sviluppo nella salute delle altre parti e del tutto"

(Malatesta, E. 2001, L'anarchia, p. 24).

In 1967, Italian anarchist Belgrado Pedrini wrote a poem entitled "Slaves." The image that dominates the poem is that of a galleon, in which everybody works as a slave, deprived of any freedom. Days and nights passes but nothing changes, until someone starts to incite his fellows to the rebellion by pointing out that only by fighting all together can they regain freedom (Pedrini 2001a: 69). In a galleon, you cannot be free on your own, because if you are the only one free you will constantly be threatened by the slavery of the others. There is no intermediate way: we are either all free or all slaves. Hence the need to fight: *"Su, schiavi, all'armi, all'armi!/Pugnam col braccioforte;/gridiam, gridiam: giustizia,/e liberta o morteV'*

The personal story of Pedrini is similar to that of many anarchists who lived the troubled years of the fight against the Italian fascist regime. Imprisoned for the death of a fascist policeman, he was liberated by the partisans during the "Resistenza," but then put back to jail after the end of the war as if he had been a normal criminal. Ministry of justice was then the communist Palmiro Togliatti. Pedrini's vicissitudes are a living testimony of the hostility between anarchists and communists. Not a single communist that had been imprisoned by the fascist regime remained in jail after the liberation. But many anarchists did.[1] Yet, paradoxically, precisely in Pedrini's poem, we find the symbol of a peculiar view of freedom which, so I will argue, represents the platform for the convergence of Anarchism and Marxism. Pedrini's metaphors of the galleon tells us two important things: firstly, that we are all on the same boat and, secondly, that the freedom of every individual strictly depends on that of all the others. You cannot be free alone, because freedom can only be realised as "freedom of equals."

The aim of this paper is to argue that there is a significant convergence between Marxism and Anarchism in that they both conceive of freedom in this way. After exploring the meaning of this conception of freedom (§. 1) and distinguishing it from that of autonomy (§.2), I will argue

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[1] As it emerges in Pedrini's posthumous autobiography (Pedrini 2001b).

that today social, economic and political conditions render this view particularly timely and call for an overcoming of the historical divisions between Anarchism and Marxism (§.3, §.4).

§. 1 The freedom of equals.

At the beginning was freedom. It is a commonplace to say that freedom is the crucial issue for anarchism, so much so that some have claimed that this word summarises the sense of the entire anarchic doctrine and credo (Bottici 2010). Yet, there are good reasons to argue that freedom is also the crucial concern for Marx, who, from his very early writings, comes to be concerned with the problem of the conditions for the emancipation of human beings. Indeed, the entire path of his thought could be described as a reflection on the conditions for freedom, understood first as a more general human emancipation and, later on, as freedom from exploitation in the light of his theory of surplus value.[2] In this section, I will illustrate this view of freedom and distinguish it from that of freedom as autonomy, whilst in the following one I will show that Marxism and Anarchism can provide each other the antidote for their possible degeneration.

But why freedom at the beginning? Max Stirner has a very helpful way to phrase the answer. In his masterpiece, *The Ego and its Own,* he observes that most theories of the society purse the issue of: "What is the essence of man? What is its nature" (Stirner 1990). Theories either directly begin with such a question or take it as an implicit assumption. Yet, Stirner observes, the question is not *what* is the human being, but rather *who*: and the answer is that "I" , in my uniqueness, am the human being (Stirner 1990). In other words, we should not start with an abstract theory about some presumed essence or (which is the same) nature of the human being, but with the simple fact "I" am, here and now, in my uniqueness. Otherwise said, there is no other beginning because "I've set my cause on nothing" *(Ich hab'mein'Sach'auf nichts gestellt)* (Stirner 1990): 41, 351).

It may appear paradoxical to start with a quotation from Stirner, an author that has been very much criticised within both Marxism and anarchism for its strong individualism. Yet, we can here find a radical formulation of a starting point to think about the centrality of freedom: freedom is at the beginning, because at the beginning there is the "I" in its concreteness or, even better, every being that has the capacity to say "I am." The ego is at the beginning a pure activity, capacity to move and to speak. But if this interpretation is correct, and the being that say "I am" cannot but be a being endowed with language, than it follows that Stirner's deduction of a radical individualism, which negates the very idea of a society, is ultimately contradictory.

The ability to speak, and thus language, presupposes a plurality of "ego" because no language can ever be learned without a plurality of beings. An asocial being, such as the one that Stirner deduces, would be a speech-less being. So if Stirner is right in identifying this primordial activity of consciousness as the starting point for thinking about freedom, he is nevertheless wrong in deducing from it such a radical egoism. His radical individualism, which he presents as a rigorous logical deduction, may well be the historical egoism of the then emerging European bourgeoisie. As Marx and Engels made clear in their "The German Ideology," the presumed unique and sole

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[2] On the first, see for instance Marx' early writings such as the *On the Jewish Question* and *The Economic and Political Manuscript of 1844* (Marx 1978a and Marx 1978b), whereas the second is the view that emerges in all of his mature writings, at least since *The Capital* (Marx 1980). For a general analysis of the problem of freedom in Marx, see Petrucciani 1996.

human being divinised by Stirner is the ideological representation of the German bourgeois of the nineteenth century (Marx and Engles 1976, I, III, "Saint Max"). Such representation of the human being as an individual separated from all other individuals is a "Robinsonade" (Marx 1978c: 221), the fantastic representation of a man lost on an island which correspond to the very concrete economic development of the epoch.

There is not such an isolate and unrelated individual as the one presupposed by Stirner, because the mere possibility to speak presupposes a being endowed with language. The human being does not become social at some point and only for some purposes, but it is social from the very beginning. We do not create the society, but are rather created by it. In one of his lectures on anarchy, Bakunin illustrates the point through the following example: take a young human being endowed with the most brilliant and genial faculties (Bakunin 1996: 28). If thrown at a very young age in a desert, such a being will either perish (as it is very likely) or else survive but become a brute deprived of speech. Together with speech, we will also be lacking in the development of proper thinking, because there cannot be any thought without words. Sure, one can also reflect though images and representations, but in order to articulate a thought one needs words, words that can only learn by interacting with other human beings.

This view lies at the heart of Bakunin's idea that you can be free only if everybody's else is free (Bakunin 1996, 2000). The view may appears paradoxical, but this is so because we have so much internalised the ideological construction of the human beings as a independent individual, that we have difficulties in representing freedom as a relation rather than as a property of which separate individuals are endowed. Let me illustrate Bakunin's idea in more details. The major point is that since the human beings are so much dependent on one another, one cannot be free in isolation, but only through a free web of reciprocal interdependence. Although quite refined in its developments, it is not a view very far from common sense: freedom, in Bakunin's view, consists in "in the right not to obey to anybody else and to determine my acts in conformity with my convictions, mediated through the equally free consciousness of everybody " (Bakunin 1996:81). So freedom is the capacity to do what I want, to act in conformity with my convictions, but — and here it comes the refinement — in order to know what my own deepest convictions are I need the mediation of the "equally free consciousness of everybody"

We can clearly see how such a view differs from the mainstream liberal view of freedom as self-determination. In Bakunin's view, there is not such a thing as an isolated self that can determine her/himself independently of the other human beings. It is a point where Marx and Bakunin patently converge (but the list could be extended to many others exponents of both traditions). Social contract theories are wrong not only in supposing that society is not coeval to the human beings themselves, because there cannot be such an original state where the individuals live in a "natural" and not fully "social" way. They are also wrong in that they take the single individual, separated from all the others as their starting point. As we have already pointed out Marx acutely observes that this image of the individual as discrete being is not at the beginning of history, because the more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole and vinculated by the innumerable customs and ties of tradition (Marx 1978c: 221). The primitive human beings are far from being the free, independent being depicted by social contract theorist such Rousseau. The freedom that they attribute to the individual in the supposed state of nature is in fact that of the members of the modern civil society, whose emergence they are witnessing.

To the social contract, both Marx and Bakunin oppose the idea that the human beings is determined by his/her position within the society. In a passage that echoes the contemporary theorists of the technologies of the self such a Foucault,[3] Bakunin observes that it is not the individuals who create society, but the society that, so to speak, "individualises itself in every individual" (Bakunin 2000: 85). Bakunin is well aware that freedom as self-determination remains an empty word if there is not such a thing as a "self" that can autonomously choose. The crucial point is not simply doing what I want, but to be sure that what I believe is the fruit of my free choice actually is. If I am led by the circumstances of my life to believe that my servitude is either immutable or even desirable, there is no way I can be free. It's the dilemma of a voluntary servitude and therefore the techniques through which such compliant subjects are created, which has been at the centre of reflection of anarchist thinkers for a long time.[4]

In Bakunin's view, the human beings are completely determined by both material and representational social factors. When still in the womb of their mother, every human being is already determined by a high number of geographical, climatic, and economic factors that constitute the material nature of their social condition (Bakunin 2000: 86). But together with such a series of material factors, which Marx investigated in a far greater details, Bakunin also mentions a series of beliefs, ideas, and representations that are equally, if not more crucial. Again, in an extremely timely passage, Bakunin observes that every generation finds as already made a whole world of ideas, images and sentiments which it inherits from the previous epochs (Bakunin 2000: 87).[5] Yet they do not present themselves to the newborn as a system of ideas, since children would not be able to apprehend it in this form. Rather such a world of ideas imposes itself as world of "personified facts," made concrete in the persons and the things that surround them, as a world that speaks to their senses through whatever they hears and see since their very early days (Bakunin 2000: 87).[6]

Put in more contemporary words, the individual become such only through a process of socialisation that begins immediately, at least since the very first encounters with language and the presence of other human beings. As psychoanalysis has shown, it is through such a process that the individual is led to internalise and assimilates the imaginary significations of that particular society s/he live in (Castoriadis 1987). To put it in Castoriadis' words, the individuals are at the same time instituting and instituted by the society they live in (Castoriadis 1987).

This is the reason why freedom cannot but be a freedom of equals. One cannot be free in a society where the others are not free. This is so because, as Bakunin puts it, "To be free means for the individual to be recognised, considered and treated as such by another individuals, and by all the individuals that surround him or her" (Bakunin 2000: 92, trans and emphasis mine). But in order to do so you need to have been in touch with the imaginary significations of it. The latter implies recognition, to be recognised and to recognise the other as free.[7] A master who does not recognise the freedom of his slaves is for this reason not free himself because he contributes to perpetrate the image of slavery within the society of which he is part. Slavery will come back to him, in a form or another. and that inevitably influences him. As Malatesta, by

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[3] See, for instance, Foucault 1988.

[4] On voluntary servitude, see for instance De la Boetie 2005.

[5] Note the resemblance to Castoriadis' idea of the imaginary constitution of society (Castoriadis 1987).

[6] On the contemporary development of such an idea, see for instance Bottici 2007.

[7] On the importance of the concept of recognition, see Honneth 1995. Bakunin, like Honneth, also probably derives the concept of recognition from Hegel.

quoting Bakunin, puts its, " I strongly care about what all the other human beings are, because however independent I may appear or believe to be for my social position, be it a Pope, Czar or even Emperor, I am the perpetual product of what the human beings are in their reciprocal relationship: if they are ignorant, miserable, slaves, my existence is determined by their slavery. I — enlightened and clever- will be stupid for their stupidity, I — brave and courageous- will be slave for their enslavement, I — rich — shiver inside for their misery, I — privileged — turn pale with fear in front of their justice. I — who want to be free — cannot be so because all the human beings around me do not yet want to be free, and therefore, become against me instruments of oppression" (Malatesta 2001: 23). It is a radical idea of freedom, but one that, if red in light of more recent developments, is more timely than ever before.

§. 2 Back to freedom, beyond autonomy

In sum, freedom is inevitably freedom of equals, because I cannot be free if everybody else around me is not free, or, which is the same, if I do not have both the material and the cognitive means to realise my freedom. We are imbued with the customs, ideas and images that dominate our society. Human beings are not independent selves that, like billiard balls, kick each other on a green table. They are separate bodies that are instituted by the society in which they live. There are two main consequences that follows from such a view. Let me briefly illustrate them.

The first is that it implies a very concrete idea of how to realise freedom. Bakunin calls it a "materialist conception of freedom" (Bakunin 2000: 91) and opposed it to the idealistic one. If freedom is to be realised not just by a separate self (which does not exist) but through the society itself, it follows that an entire reorganisation of society is necessary for its realisation. It is well known that in Bakunin's view this can only be done through a reorganisation of society from below, according to the principle of free association and federation (see for instance Bakunin 2000: 96).

But why is it so? Free federalism follows from a view of freedom articulated in three moments. The first, Bakunin says is the positive and social moment and consists in the full development of all the human faculties and potentialities through education and material wellbeing — all things that can only be acquired through the psychical and intellectual work of the whole society (Bakunin 2000: 82). It is a view very close to Marx' positive conception of freedom, according to which freedom does not consists in the negative capacity to avoid this or that, but in the positive power to develop our potentialities.[8] The basic idea is that abstract civil and political rights are empty words if I do not have the material and the intellectual means to exercise them (this, incidentally, does not mean that we can negative freedoms are not important, but only that they need positive ones in order to be fulfilled).

The second is more negative and Bakunin calls it "the moment of the revolt" (Bakunin 2000: 82). It is the revolt against every authority, human or divine. God in the first place, because, how he puts is ,"as long as we have a master in the sky, we will not be free on earth" (ibid). Bakunin had a very traditional idea of such a God, but I think we can today extend it to all forms of transcendent authority. If we believe that we owe to such divine authority unconditional obedience, we are

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[8] See for instance *The Holy Family*, where Marx says that man is not free for the negative force to avoid this or that, but for the positive power to develop his own individuality (Marx and Engels 1975). On the distinction between positive and negative freedom, see Berlin 1969 and Bobbio 1995.

necessarily slaves of it, as well as of its intermediary, such as ministers, prophets, or messiahs (ibid). But this must be combined with the revolt against specifically human authority. Here Bakunin introduces a fine distinction between the legal and formal authority of the state and what he calls the "tyranny of the society" (ibid). The revolt against the first, is easier because the enemy can easily be identified, but the one against the second is much more complicated.

Society, as we have seen, exercises its tyranny through customs, traditions, sentiments, prejudices and habits on both our material and the intellectual life. Part of its influence is natural and we cannot escape it (Bakunin 2000: 84), but part of it is not. Bakunin seems to believe that education and scientific knowledge is sufficient to this end, but I believe that we have more grounds today to be sceptical about it. Knowledge is not enough. Knowledge does not liberate from power because it is itself power. The production of scientific knowledge is no exception to the tyranny of society, because, as Michel Foucault has shown us, it may even be the chief mean for the domestication of revolt and the creation of compliant subjects.[9] Natural and social sciences, such as chemistry, demography, sociology have all proved to be potential means to discipline and domesticate human beings rather than to liberate them.

Where to start from then? Where to get a liberation from the subtle tyranny that the society exercise through its customs, traditions and sentiments? Here, I believe, comes the radical interpretation of federalism. Proudhon's motto "multiply your associations and be free" can indeed be seen as a multiplication of both the political, but also the social and imaginary ties one is subjected to (Proudhon 2001). By entering into contacts with different social imaginaries and expanding one's own knowledge to different regimes of truth, it is possible to find a moment of friction where the tyranny of society breaks down. As I will try to show later on, it is here that, particularly today, the possibility of freedom lies.

But before I do so, let me briefly illustrate the second consequence, that is, it being a complex view of freedom which goes well beyond mere autonomy. There are many different definitions of autonomy, but the most important (because the most influential) is that which goes back to its etymology: autonomy literally means "autos"-"nomos," to give the law to oneself. From this original meaning and through the influence of Rousseau and Kant, the term came to mean selfdetermination more in general, as if every determination would be operated by the subjection to the law (which, I believe, is far from being the case). I cannot enter the details here of the historical path of the concept of autonomy, but let me just briefly mention the deep influence that it has exercised on liberal and democratic thought until very recently.[10]

Yet, the concept of autonomy is not immune from criticism. The most obvious is that it presupposes a "self" that can actually give a law to him/herself. As we have already suggested, this assumption is far from being unquestioned. If it is true that, since our coming into this world, we are determined by a number of social, economic and cultural factors, the assumption of a self separated form the others may result to be completely fallacious. We may believe that the law we have agreed to is one that we have freely chosen, but this choice will in all likelihood be the result of what Bakunin calls the subtle tyranny of society.

Furthermore, the idea of a separate self is an assumption that inevitably leads to what we may call a limitative view of freedom. If we believe that human beings are self-enclosed selves endowed with their own autonomy, the problem necessarily becomes that of limiting it, in order

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[9] To begin with, see Foucault 1980.

[10] On the origins of the concept and its historical roots in modern moral philosophy, see Schneewind 1998.

to make space for that of the others: like billiard balls kicking each other on an empty green table their respective freedoms are deemed to conflict with one another. On the contrary, if we assume that we are the product of the society we live in, a completely different perspective emerges: the problem is no longer how to limit freedom, but rather how to enhance it. In other words, don't limit freedom, create it, because it may not be there yet.

Different authors have tried to address the problem of autonomy. Radical thinkers such as Cornelius Castoriadis in France and the Workerism in Italy have for instance tried to solve the dilemma by arguing that autonomy is also a collective enterprise. Workerism in Italy argued for the autonomy of the proletariat, showing that agency is immanent to its spontaneous action and does not need the guiding role of the party (Lotringer and Marazzi 2007).[11] On the other side, the French Marxist and psychoanalyst Castoriadis articulated the problem of autonomy in relation to the problem of the imaginary significations within which we all are socialised (Castoriadis 1987). In his view, I am autonomous if I am at the origins of what will be *(arche ton esomenon* as Aristotle used to say) and I know myself to be so (Castoriadis 1986: 479). Autonomy means that my discourse has to take the place of what is given as the discourse of the others — a view, that like Bakunin's one, stresses the importance of the cognitive means for the realisation of freedom.

These interventions have certainly brought the discussion on the problem of autonomy much further than where modern liberal thinking had left it. Yet, as I will now try to argue, focusing only on autonomy is misleading. Autonomy is an important condition for freedom, but only one part of it. You cannot be free without being autonomous, but being autonomous does not automatically means to be free. This particularly emerges if we consider that the contrary of "autonomy" is "heteronomy," a condition where one is given the law by somebody else, whereas the opposite of freedom is "oppression," something that can take place in ways others than simply by being given the law to somebody else.[12] The tyranny of society that we have described above can takes place in many different ways, which go well beyond the law and include even self-oppression and voluntary servitude. In sum, freedom and autonomy are conceptually speaking only partially overlapping. For those who are sceptical of analytic philosophical distinction, just consider common language: I can say that my child is very autonomous, because he can dress himself, eat and walk on his own, but by no means this amount to his freedom. It is very clear: to be autonomous does not yet mean to be free.

But it is not just a terminological. It is a question of conceptual clarity that has crucial consequences on the practice of freedom itself. For instance many autonomist movements gave rise to utopian communities, based on the principle of autonomy thinking that this is the main road for the realisation of freedom. Let us admit for the moment that one could still realise such autonomous communities in our globalising world. The question is: are the people living is such communities really free? My impression is that they are (possibly) autonomous in the sense of being (materially) independent from the outside, but by no means free and perhaps not even self-determined. If you live in a self-imposed ghetto, separated from the rest of the world, you are not free, because you cannot live where you want, but you are not even self-determined because your choice to live in that particular community is imposed by some external factors (read: the rest of the world).

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[11] Hardt and Negri developed it through Spinoza's notion of multitude (Hardt and Negri 2004).

[12] Proudhon pointed this out very clearly where he describes the antinomy between the two principle of freedom and authority (Proudhon 2001: 125–135).

Thinkers like Goodman may be right in saying that autonomy is an necessary step. In his view, the problem with oppressed people lusting for freedom is that, if they manage to break free, then they do not know what to do (Goodman 2009:331). Not having been autonomous, they do not know how to go about it, and before they learn it is usually too late. New managers will have taken over and they may, or may not, be benevolent and imbued with the revolution, but they never will be in a hurry to abdicate. We should therefore agree with him in that autonomy is an important condition for freedom, perhaps even the most important because it amounts to a sort of school for it. Yet, it still remains only one part of it.

To conclude on this point, the critics of the concept of freedom, such as Goodman, who argued that freedom is a cumbersome metaphysical concept are perhaps right. Autonomy is much thinner and apparently easier to realise. But it is a burden that we have to assume if we want to avoid the self-imposed ghetto of autonomy.

§. 3 Black and red: reciprocal antidotes.

In the previous sections I have tried to illustrate why Marxism and anarchism converge in the idea that freedom can only be a freedom of equals. What I want to do in the remaining part is to argue that a connubial between Marxism and anarchism is particularly beneficial in that they can find in each other the reciprocal antidote for their possible degenerations.

Firstly, anarchism needs Marxism in order to prevent both the individualist and the metaphysic degeneration of its absolutisation of freedom. Let me start from the first, the individualist danger. It is a fact that the radical praise of freedom that characterises anarchism in all of its historical manifestation can be declined in both directions: an individualist, according to which freedom is mainly the freedom of the individual, and a social one, according to which freedom can only be attained collectively (Bottici 2010). I prefer to call it "social" because as such it includes both the anarcho-communism, on the lines of Kropotkin, and the collectivist variant, which, on the lines of Bakunin, leaves some space for the individual enjoyment of property.

The point is not only that, historically speaking, an individualist interpretation of anarchism has proved to be possible. We began this essay with Stirner's advocacy of a radical egoism, but many other examples can be added. One just have to think of the very influential anarchocapitalism, which, particularly in the US, promotes a radical anarchic evaluation of freedom by combining it with its advocacy of an unrestricted development of the principle of capitalism.[13] One may simply dismiss these positions as fallacious "Robinsonades," but the point remains that they are still very influential because in line with the prevailing individualist assumptions that underpin at least our western world.

Even more: In the face of the difficulties encountered in promoting the realisation of the freedom of equals on a large scale, anarchists may easily fall into the individualist temptation and limit their fight to the realisation of spaces of autonomy in limited, self-enclosed communities. This, I believe, is the risk that many autonomists movements in Italy and Germany for instance have run in the past: the creation of autonomous communities may well turn into a form of individualism on a large scale. The creation of such self-enclosed spaces is usually justified on the basis of the argument that they prefigure what a free society may look like, but they risk to

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[13] See for instance, `http://www.anti-state.com/` and `http://www.strike-the-root.com/` accessed 1 September 2009).

prefigure nothing but what the society actually is: individuals, singular or collective, pursuing their own interests in isolation.

For this possible degeneration, Marxism contains a powerful antidote. Marx's critique of the Robinsonades can be extended at all levels to concretely support the idea that either we are all free or all equally slaves. The reason why Marxism is better equipped than traditional anarchism to make this point (as we have seen Bakunin equally supported the idea of freedom as freedom of equals) is that it more strongly focused on the economic conditions for the realisation of such a freedom. No other author has to my knowledge embarked on such an extensive scientific analysis of the concrete economic conditions for the realisation of freedom. Marx and Engels' critique of the utopian socialism and more in generally the idea that it is sufficient to describe an ideal state of things and this will automatically follows just because of its intrinsic intellectual value is a powerful reminder of the dangers of any abstract and unrealistic metaphysic of freedom: by envisaging utopian communities on the basis of the sole fanatical belief in the miraculous effects of ones own social sciences, one risks ending up in a reactionary position unable to keep the pace of the current state of the world.[14]

I cannot enter here a detailed analysis of Marx' analysis of capitalism and modernity. Sure, there are parts of it that are outdated- in particular for the novelties brought about by post-Fordism and flexible capitalism.[15] Let me just point here out to what I believe are the most timely parts of his work. In the first place, there is analysis of capitalism capacity to overcome all sorts of political barriers. We live in an epoch where there is so much talk about globalisation and the crisis of the nation states *vis-a-vis* the capacity of the economy to go beyond national boundaries, but this is something that nobody had ever predicted more acutely and more precisely than Marx. In many places of his work he talks about the capitalism capacity to go beyond national boundaries, like the following passage from the Manifesto of the Communist Party: "The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. [..] In the place of old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrowmindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature" (Marx and Engels, 1978: 477–8)

In a time when there is so much talk about the novelty of globalisation which, so many argues, calls for a new form of cosmopolitanism, it is worth to go back to this passage: here Marx and Engles clearly pointed to the "cosmopolitan character" of both capitalistic production and consumption, to the fact that with the heavy artillery of the "cheap prices of its commodities" capitalism will batter down all Chinese walls (Marx and Engels, 1978: 8), so that in place of the old local and national self-sufficiency, we have "intercourse in every direction" at both the material and cognitive level (Marx and Engles 1978: 477).

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[14] On this point, see in particular the critique to utopian socialists and communists in the Manifesto (Marx and Engels 1978: 491–499).

[15] For a short but acute presentation of those novelties, see Marazzi 1999.

Nobody, I believe, could ever deny the timeliness of these remarks. It has become something like a commonplace to say that we live in a globalising world, where material and cultural boundaries are being challenged from many different sides. And I think that only the historical amnesia of a generation of scholars that, after 1989, have too quickly become not just "post-" but also militant "ex-" Marxist can explain how is it possible to talk so much about globalisation without ever mentioning the author who most emphatically and accurately predicted it more than a century ago.

But Marx's economic analysis gave further underpinning to the concept of freedom of equals that we have highlighted above also with his path-breaking analysis of the commodities fetishism (Marx 1980: 103–115). If Bakunin is right in saying that freedom has to be a freedom of equals because from the beginning we are subjected to the tyranny of society which imposes its material and representational significations on our minds and bodies, then it is precisely from the possible commoditisation of such significations that we have to start. Perhaps only the visionary and Situationist Guy Debord has sufficiently underlined this point (Debord 1994)[16] with his idea of a society of spectacle, he rightly pointed out that mass-media were the most relevant fetish of our times. Debord recovers Marx' fundamental insight about commodity fetishism and brought it to a further level: Marx's telling begin of *The Capital* "The world is an immense collection of commodities" become the first thesis of Debord: "The world is an immense collection of spectacles"(check English quot). We live in a society of spectacle that fundamentally means commoditisation of the social imaginary within which all are socialised and cannot therefore exists. The global social imaginary we live in is imbued with commodities fetishism up to point that even our bodies are constituted by it. Fashion, pop culture, Hollywood films, along with the various technologies of the self are only the primary and most visible examples.

But it is not only anarchism that needs Marxism if a freedom of equals is to be realised. Anarchism plays an equally crucial part in that it contains the antidote for a possible (and real) statist and authoritarian degeneration of Marxism. It is a fact that Marx remained mainly vague as to the path to embark to realise freedom. The impression that one mainly gets by reading his entire work is that he believed a revolution would automatically follows from the contradictions of capitalism society. In this he probably remained too much linked to Hegel's dialectic, according to which from a series of structural contradictions their inevitable overcoming must follow (quot) . Yet, he also mentions the very much debated "revolutionary dictatorship of proletariat" as the moment of transition towards a communist society. As he puts in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*: "Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat" (Marx 1978d: 538).

As well known the idea which, to be true, occupies only a couple of brief passages in his monumental work)[17] was taken up by Lenin along with other Marxist thinkers. Furthermore, to many it seemed to have become a concrete living reality with the Soviet state socialism — which, in fact, according to certain readings was in fact a form of bureaucratic State capitalism (see for instance Castoriadis). Against this statist degeneration, anarchism has the most powerful

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[16] Shukaitis and Graeber offer an interesting explanation of the reasons why Debord is so little quoted in the academic text: See, Shukaitis and Graeber 2007: 21–23.

[17] The only other place where it appears is A letter to Weydemeyer of 1852.

antidote: the idea that means must be commensurate to the ends and that freedom can only be realised through freedom itself. It is an idea that occupies a central part of Bakunin's work but that recurs in all anarchist thinkers: freedom can only be realised through freedom itself and endanger it with the pretext to protect is dangerous non sense which ultimately cannot but destroy it (see for instance Bakunin 2000: 98 and Malatesta 2001: 52).

The experience of the Soviet Union showed that anarchists were right in their critique of Marxists: a workers' state cannot but reproduce the same logic of every state, where a minority of bureaucrats rule over the majority of people (and, incidentally, I believe that the current resurgence of interest in anarchism is also due to the fact that the decline in popularity of Marxism following the fall of the Berlin's wall has left a sort of vacuum in the left). But anarchism does not only provide the antidote to the statist degeneration: it can more broadly prevent the authoritarian trap into which any attempt to realise the freedom of equals can fall.

Proudhon pointed out this very clearly where he observes that communism can also be realised through the principle of authority. In his view, there are four main types of government , which correspond to the two main principles of authority and freedom: regimes of authority are both the government of all by one (monarchy) and the government of all by all (what he calls panarchy or communism), whilst regimes of freedom are both the government of all by everybody (democracy) and the government of everyone by everyone, which is the anarchy or self-rule (Proudhon 2001: 125–133). Proudhon's federalism can indeed be interpreted as a combination of the last two forms of government, what he calls respectively democracy and anarchy. And the same hold for Bakunin's free federation that we have mentioned above.

§. 4 One world, one freedom.

The connubial between Marxism and anarchism that we have outlined above is not simply a demand of the theoretical and practical reason. It is not a marriage that simply *ought* to take place if the freedom of equals is to be realised. It is something that is inscribed in the nature of the changes we are witnessing and that, for the sake of brevity, we can summarise under the name of globalisation. Put in a nutshell, there is only one freedom because the world has become one. Globalisation does not only mean that there are processes that objectively unifies the globe, but also, and foremost, that we have come to recognise this fact. In a minimal sense, this has always been the case, because we have always inhabited in one and the same planet. What is different today is that we have to recognise this, because there is no longer the possibility to call ourselves out.

Let me briefly illustrate what I mean with this. Globalisation is often presented as a set of processes which shift the spatial form of human organisation and activity to transcontinental and inter-regional patterns of activity, interactions and exercises of power.[18] Globalisation, in its numerous aspects — economic, technological, political and cultural — has created such a situation that events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can have significant consequences for individuals and communities in other quite distant parts of the globe. In sum, the concept of globalisation points to the stretching and deepening of social relations and institutions across space and time.

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[18] See McGrew 1992 or Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, Perraton 1999.

Fluxes from the local to the global and vice versa have unified the planet. The world has become one at all levels: economic, political, military and cultural. With regard to the first, we have already seen how early Marx diagnosed the "cosmopolitan" character of capitalism. Here suffice to add that, however more complex and flexible the current global capitalism may be, Marx and Engels' prediction that "in the place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every directions, universal inter-dependence of nations" (Marx and Engels 1978: 476) still holds true. Together with economic comes the political globalisation: they are inseparable from many points of view. Promoter of the economic and financial globalisation, the nation state seems to be one of its most illustrious victim. Sure, states are far from vanishing (and the repressive policies they are enacting all over the world is a stark reminder of this fact) but they are certainly challenged by a dispersion of sovereignty both above and below them.

But perhaps the domain where the crisis of the system of nation states is more evident is that of security. It is in the field where the modern state, at least since Thomas Hobbes, has traditionally, although surreptitiously, drawn the strongest justification for its existence that one can at best measure the degree of its crisis. Human beings, so the modern argument went, are led to cede their unconditional freedom to the sovereign power in order to enhance their security.[19] Even admitting that this has ever been the case (and I would deny it did), it no longer holds true. The state is today simply patently incapable to guarantee the security of it citizens, not only *vis-a vis* attacks with nuclear, bacteriological or other non conventional weapons, but also, and perhaps most importantly *vis-a vis* ecological and other kinds of man-made global challenges. No single state could ever arrest an epidemiological attack or even simply contrast global warming effects. Hence the dispersion of sovereignty through what some have called a "multilayered global governance" and Negri and Hardt named instead "empire" by which they mean a system of authority which has no definitive centre.[20] (Incidentally, in an epoch when book proliferate about the decline of the nation states it is surprising that so few academics felt the need to go back to anarchism, that tradition of thought which most incisively advocated and predicted their decline).

But this is only one side of the story. Globalisation does not only mean an horizontal extension of the chains of interdependence: it also implies an intensification of vertical ones. Power is not only dispersed below and above the nation states, it has also penetrated within the deepest mechanisms of life: in a word, it has become bio-power. The biopolitical transformation that Hardt and Negri integrated in their concept of empire (Hardt and Negri 2000) has first been diagnosed by Michel Foucault who draws it back to the intimate constitution of modernity. Foucault major intuition is the idea the while in the first part of modernity the sovereign power was mainly a power to inflict death, with the late modernity it becomes a power that is aimed at inciting, promoting articulating, in a word disciplining life itself. The modality of such a power are the two poles of the individual body and the body of the populations, whereas the means through which it is exercised are disciplines such as medicine, biology, statistics, demography and the science of

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[19] I cannot enter here the details of the critique of the prevalence of the problem of security in the justifications for the existence of the modern state. Let me briefly recall the paradox of such a justification, which, as Agamben has recently pointed out, consists in the fact that the subjects confers to the modern sovereign the right to kill them in order to receive the guarantee of their life (Agamben 1998).

[20] See Held, Mcgrew, Goldblatt, Perraton 1999 and Hardt and Negri 2000.

police.[21] Yet, today such a biopolitical transformation goes beyond Foucault's political analysis: it now invests not only the modes of governance but also the economic production, in that it is the whole of our subjectivity that is invested by it in post-Fordist capitalism (Hardt and Negri 2000; Bazzicalupo 2006).

Today governance is therefore global both it its spatial and in its nature. The fact that people felt the need of a new word ("governance" or "governamentality" instead of "government") is due to the fact that the thing itself has changed. No longer the centralised, vertical power of the modern nation state, but a reticular and decentralised form of power which is enriched by the pervasiveness provided by the new biopolitical technologies. It is a transformation that can offer possibilities for liberation but also open the path to the most horrible servitude. Power can today more than ever come to control the deepest mechanism of life[22] and together with it also the way in which we think about it.

The governance is global because it extends into our bodies and therefore also the way we think of them. Together with our bodies, it also disciplines our minds. Not by chance, economic and political globalisation are unthinkable outside of the cultural one. The stretching and deepening of the social chains of interdependence also means the stretching and deepening of the imaginary chains that potentially connect the entire globe. We think globally, because the globe has become the horizon of our perception of the world, but also because our social imaginaries are increasingly intermingled.

This is what Debord tried to convey with his idea of a society of spectacle. He pointed out very early that the first danger for freedom comes from the commoditisation of our social imaginary. In the epoch of Hollywood and the global networks of communication, we cannot but agree that the world has become an immense collection of spectacles (Debord 1994: thesis 1). But Debord also persuasively argues that the spectacle is not only a set of images, but also, and foremost, a social relationship between people that is mediated through images (Debord 1994: thesis 4). This basically means that the way in which we relate to the others is mediated by the images that we have internalised from the social imaginary, which, however, is a social imaginary increasingly dominated by commodity fetishism.

Just consider what politics has become and what it used to be. The activity that we usually mean with this term is unconceivable outside of the continual flux of images that enter our screens every day. But the competition among images, like that among every other commodities, is very hard so that the golden rule of audience imposes itself: only those images that can capture peoples attention can become part of the spectacle. Hence the increasing spectacularisation of politics. What used to be an activity done by real people has become to a large extent a pure spectacle, so that images are no longer what mediate our doing politics, but what risks doing politics in our stead.

In one thing however Debord was wrong. Like Marx before him, he though that it was possible to counterpoise to the spectacle the reality of things (see, for instance, Debord 1995: thesis 7). In the epoch of virtual reality, images have instead become ongoing processes so that there is no longer the possibility to distinguish between original and fake. In other words, the society of

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[21] Foucault first uses the term in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality,* entitled The *Will to Knowledge* (Foucault 1980–90).

[22] To make an example, if an eighteenth century writer when discussing the natural limits to political power could still observe that "a Parliament can do everything but make a woman a man, and a man a woman" (Dicey 1959: 43), this no longer hold because even the change of sex of individual can be regulated by state law

spectacle has become global, in the double sense that it has stretched its boundaries to embrace the entire globe, but also that it has invaded all ambits of life so that one can no longer say where the spectacle ends and real life begins.

The major result of such a process is that politics has become to great extent a struggle for people's imagination. Power has always depended on imagination. If power is the capacity to influence another person and make him or her do what he or she otherwise would not have done, then it is clear that the most effective power is the power that can be felt without being seen. In this sense, the power to construct a successful version of reality, much before than that to dispose of the means for coercion, is what ultimately guarantees political power per se. But today, as a consequence of the increased role that images play in our social life and their potential extension to the whole globe, this has reached a further stage: the control over the means for physical coercion is overcome by the greater role played by the control of the means of interpretation (Bottici and Challand 2010).

Within this scenario, freedom is possible only as freedom of equals. Bakunin's idea that you cannot be free unless everybody else around you is free is more timely than ever. Cognitive is the oppression, cognitive, and therefore collective, must be the liberation. If our being increasingly depends on what other people think and imagine we are, then it is clear that freedom can only be attained collectively. There is no intermediate possibility: We are either all slaves or all free.

The new global movements that have emerged worldwide in the last fifteen years have shown this very clearly.[23] With their direct actions in occasion of G8 and other summits, they may not have changed the course of those specific political meeting, but they have changed the spectacle that was put on stage by them (Incidentally, note that the pure spectacle is the only purpose of such meetings as nothing concrete ever comes out of them that was not already decided before). The organisation and the actions of the new-global movement perfectly responds to the challenges of our epoch. This is not only because many of its militants have been influenced by either Marxism or anarchism, the two traditions of thought from which we derived the idea of freedom as freedom of equals. This is because as Graeber put it, "anarchism is at the heart of the movement, its soul; the source of most of what's new and hopeful about it" (Graeber 2002: 62). By this I do not mean that its activists recognise themselves as "anarchist" in some sense — which is far from being the case as many have noted (Juris 2009). I mean that the intimate logic of its functioning is anarchical in its essence because it responds to the principle of free federation and association.[24]

As well known, the movement lacks any central authority, a single charismatic leader or even a fully fledged programme decided once and for all. Yet, this does not mean that activists do not know what they want, as observers used to think in the traditional terms of hierarchical politics may think. It means that it a movement that grew up according to a logic of networking which strictly follows the each time emerging needs and affinities among the people. Its organisation

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[23] Note that the reasons why the media worldwide has possibly called a movement that is the result of and even advocates globalisation "no-global" is the strength of neoliberal ideology itself (or at least, its past strength). The idea behind this is that neoliberalism is one and the same thing of globalisation, so that whoever criticise its dogmas of "there are no alternatives" is immediately stigmatised as a critics of globalisation itself.

[24] Juris is therefore in my view wrong when he observes that the movement's is only partially anarchist in that its logic also derives from a wider networking logic associated with late capitalism (Juris 1999: 213). In my view, one can say exactly the opposite: the movement is anarchical because it follows such a wider networking logic, which may well ultimately derive from post-Fordist capitalism, but has grown by far beyond it.

is non- hierarchical, its coordination decentralised, its decision making shaped by a new attempt to reinvent direct democracy (and thus favouring strategies for consensus finding rather than simple majority rule). In brief, it works according to the principle of free federalism.

So commentators are mistaken when they observe that the movement is not or only partially anarchist in that its logic derives from a wider networking logic associated with late capitalism (Juris 1999: 213). In my view, one can say exactly the opposite: the movement is anarchical precisely because it follows such a wider networking logic, which may well ultimately derive from post-Fordist capitalism, but has grown by far beyond it. One finds the same logic in the most different sectors of social life and the results are at times astonishing.

Let me give you two examples. The first taken from my home country, Italy. Of the most interesting examples of the way in which networking can fight capitalism exploitation are the experience of the so called GAS. This is the acronym for *Gruppi di acquisto solidale* or Solidarity Based Purchasing Groups, which proliferated often in the shade of the experience of the Social forums. The basic ideas behind them is that small groups of people gather together usually in the same territory to create a group that is able to buy directly from the producers. All of them are then networked in wider associations organised on a regional and then national level.[25] Through the flexible logic of networking, members of the GAS are able to buy products of a very high quality for a reduced price and at the same time support small enterprises that escape the logic of corporate capitalism. Such networks are very efficient in providing material goods for very convenient prices but also works as platform for the diffusion of information.

The second example concerns instead exactly this point, the sharing of information. Few people have in my view yet sufficiently stressed the revolution that the internet is bringing about for the diffusion of knowledge.[26] Internet has not only deeply changed our possibilities for networking, but also the way we can think about the world. In other words, it has change the spectacle of it. Independent media, websites of the most different sorts, open access sources such as Wikipedia. The latter is in my view an happy example of the efficiency of anarchism: apply to the principle that the competence is not individual but a collective process of free contribution and what you obtain is the biggest encyclopaedia ever realised, working in many different languages and whose quality, according to an independent study, is equivalent to that of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.[27] Sure internet requires technical skills and the possibility to have access to it, but all those who can have them automatically gain access to an immense reservoir of knowledge. This I believe is very likely to challenge the nature of the production of knowledge and in particular its extremely specialised nature that resulted from the logic of the modernity.

Conclusions

Globalisation has become reflexive. People act in the world and think about their action with the entire globe as their horizon of experience. Activists networking from one side of the globe to the

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[25] See for instance the website of the national network of Italian GAS at `http://www.retegas.org/index.php?module=pagesetter&func=viewpub&tid=2&pid=10` (accessed 3 September 2009).

[26] On the political impact of open source technologies, see for instance Berry 2008.

[27] "Wikipedia o la fine delle perizie infallibili," in *Le monde Diplomatique-Il manifesto,* april 2009, pp. 20.21. the article also mentions an experiment according to which the time for the correction of false information expressly put in some of its articles is only three hours.

other, migrants crossing (legally or illegally) borders and, to a certain extent, even multinational corporations and political institutions above and below the nation states, they all say one and the same thing: networks are better than hierarchies. Otherwise said, globalisation has demonstrated what modern political thought has always been reluctant to recognise: an anarchic order is possible and even desirable.

In conclusion, let me recall Pedrini's poem from which we began. It is not by chance that his poem, first put into music by Paola Nicolazzi, has only recently become a very popular song in Italy and elsewhere under the tile of "The galeon" (Il galeone). Recovered by the contemporary rock band, "Les anarchistes," it accompanied the rise of the new-global movements in Italy and elsewhere. The reason why so many people found it so inspiring in these days is that it perfectly expresses the view of freedom outlined before: one is the world, one must be freedom, because we are all on the same boat. In a world in which the fate of a few islands depends on the behaviour of the industries on the other side of the globe, in which the planet has become a global society of spectacle, you cannot be autonomous without being free, or, what is the same, you cannot be free on your own. It is a very radical view of freedom, but one that is more timely than ever before. History itself has reversed the liberal motto "your freedom ends where that of the others begin" into a new one: "your freedom can only begin with that of everybody else."

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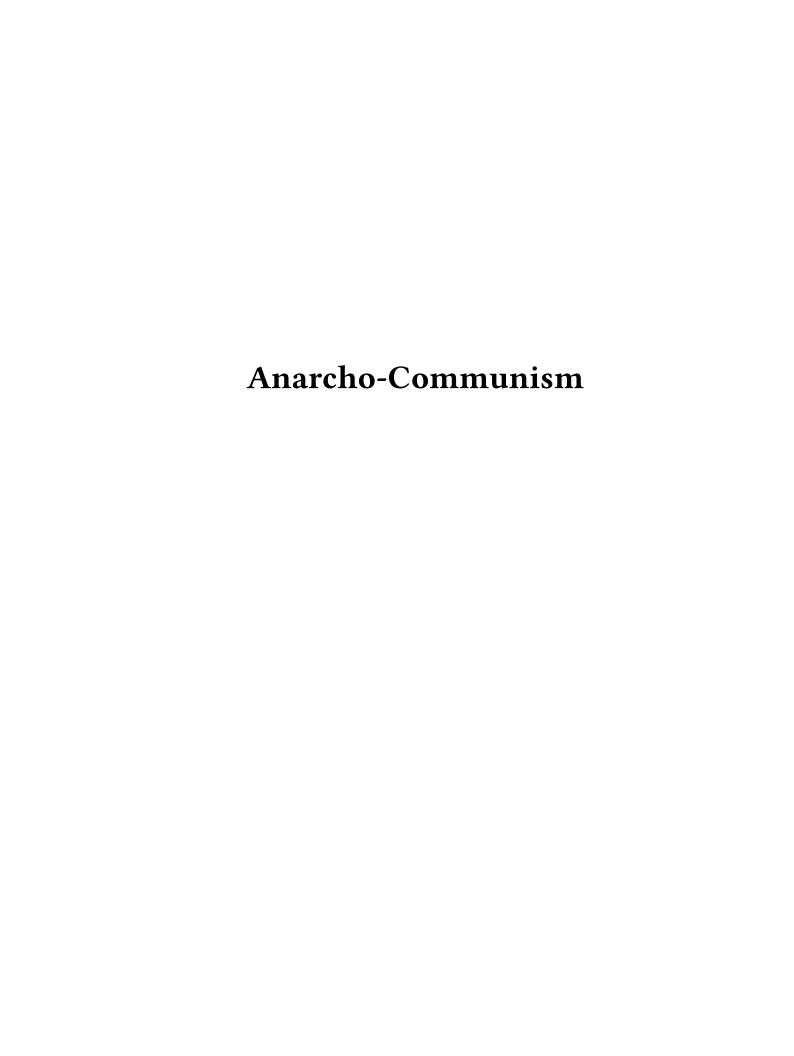Debord, G. 1994, *The Society of Spectacle,* New York, Zone Books

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Anarcho-Communism

Beyond black and red: Situationists and the legacy of the workers movement

Jean-Cristophe Angaut

Situationnists have often been reduced to a mere group of artists criticizing everyday life, far away from social struggles.[1] The common description of their contribution to the events of 1968 in France is symptomatic of this reduction: either the so-called cultural orientation of these events is attributed to them, or it is said that, because the role of the situationnists has been too much emphasized, these events are reduced in the collective memory to their cultural part.[2] Nevertheless, this tendency tends to weaken, since one begins to actually read the situationnists' text, instead of just talking about them in general. From this reading, it appears that the situationnists have been linked and/or opposed with most of the 60's revolutionary groups (for example, Debord has been briefly a member of "Pouvoir ouvrier," a group belonging "Socialisme ou barbarie" in the very beginning of the 60's); it also appears that since the beginning of the 60's, in the two main texts of situationnist theory *(The society of the spectacle* by Debord and *The Revolution of Everyday Life* by Vaneigem[3]) as well as in their review *L'Internationale Situationniste*, they pointed up slogans of the workers councils; and, last but not least, they considered the events of 1968 as a revolutionary event, being the first illegal general strike of workers in history, rather than a student event. Therefore it is interesting to question their relations with the history of the workers movement. Or, this history led to a split between two trends, marxism and anarchism, red and black, communism and collectivism.

In this paper, I'd like to study the way situationnists are linked to this legacy, how they might have provided a way of going beyond this division between marxism and anarchism and what are the limits of this way. I will study this attempt in two directions. First, the situationnists have tried to critisize the separation between anticapitalist and antihierarchic struggles as an ideological one. In their relations with other revolutionary groups, this led to a harsh criticism against Marxist and Libertarian organizations that prospered around this division. If this part of the history of the situationnists is quite well known, the relation with their theories is not always clearly mentionned. Then, I would like to show thas this attempt to go beyond the separation between black and red leads to come back before the separation, by using the concepts and themes of the Young Hegelians movement — a movement Marx and Bakunin used to belong to.

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[1] Recent books have corrected this picture. See Shigenobu Gonzalvez, *Guy Debord ou la beaute du negatif* Paris, Nautilus, 2002 and Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord,* Paris, Denoel, 2001.

[2] Jean-Christophe Angaut, « La fin des avant-gardes: les situationnistes et Mai 68 », *ActuelMarx,* n° 41, 2009.

[3] Raoul Vaneigem, *Manuel de savoir-vivre a l'usage desjeunesgenerations* [1963–1965], Paris, Gallimard, 1967 (quoted in 2nd edition, collection Folio Actuel, Paris, Gallimard, 1992). Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* Paris, Buchet-Chastel, 1967 — quoted in *uvres,* Paris, Gallimard, 2006. English translations of this two main texts can be found on the Internet: `http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm` `http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/pub contents/5`

Criticism of the separation between black and red

To begin with, it is important to keep in mind that the theoretical attempts of the situationnists during the 60's cannot be isolated from the context: according to me, it's the best way to avoid the temptation to worship them without any distance. I mentionned above Debord's participation to "Socialisme ou Barbarie": it's also interesting to show that some members of the Situationnist Internationale maintained links with libertarian or council communist groups, especially in Nanterre University. In addition, in the early 60's, the situationnists were close to the philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, until they argued, accusing each others of plagiarism. Keeping this relations in mind do not minimize the originality of the situationnist theories, but helps to understand them better, particularly the double criticism of marxism and anarchism.

This double criticism (of the bureaucratic drifts in the history of Marxism and of the historical inefficiencies of anarchism) does exist, although the main references used by situationnists seem to be more marxist than libertarian. For example, during the 1968 summer, they protested against the confusion between situationnists and anarchists in the newspapers like this: "Despite the obvious fact that the SI developed a historical view coming from Hegel and Marx, the press kept on mixing up situationnists and anarchism."[4] They claimed filiation with what they called "revolutionary marxism." As well as council communists, they may also appear more as marxists with libertarian trends than as anarchists integrating the marxism scientific contributions. Moreover, even when they are dealing with social and historical experiments they agree with, where anarchists have played the main role, they refuse to reduce this experiments to the expression of anarchism as a particular trend inside the workers movement. It is quite clear with the 1936 spanish revolution. In *The society of the spectacle*, Debord writes this in the §94: on one side "in 1936 anarchism did indeed initiate a social revolution, a revolution that was the most advanced expression of proletarian power ever realized"; but on the other side, anarchists did not have the initiative of the uprising (which was a defensive reaction against the military coup) and they were unable to defend efficiently the revolution against the bourgeois, the stalinians and fascism. Some of them even became government ministers.[5] In *The Revolution of Everyday Life,* Vaneigem seems to be closer than Debord to libertarian ideals,[6] but it clearly speaks only about the anarchists, and never about anarchism, as if individuals worth more than the political trend they belong to.

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[4] Rene Vienet, *Enrages et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations,* Paris, Gallimard, 1968, ch. I. Actually, the book was written by Rene Vienet, Guy Debord, Mustapha Kayati, Raoul Vaneigem and Rene Riesel.

[5] Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* in *Cuvres,* op. cit., p. 803. And again in 1980, the text *Aux libertaires* evokes "the 1936 proletarian revolution, the greatest which ever began in history until today, and so the one which also prefigures at the best the future. The only organized force which had the will and the ability to prepare and to do the revolution, and to defend it — although with less lucidity and consistence — was the anarchist movement [...]." (C*Cuvres, op. cit.,* p. 1515) Similarly, in *Enrages et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations (op cit.,* ch. IV, p. 73), when they speak about blag flags in the giant demonstration of Mai 13, 1968, situationnist refuse to see it as a sign of significance anarchist presence inside the demonstration: « More than a hundred of black flags were mixed to the many red flags, realizing for the first time this junction of the two flags which was about to become the sign of the most radical trend inside the occupations movement, not as an affirmation of an autonomous anarchist presence, but as a sign of the workers' democracy."

[6] Raoul Vaneigem, *Traite de savoir-vivre a l'usage desjeunesgenerations, op. cit.,* ch. VIII, §2, p. 100: "From now on, no revolution will be worthy of the name if it does not involve, at the very least, the radical elimination of all hierarchy." Marx is less quoted, and more critically. For example, ch. XVIII, §2 of the *Traite* speaks about "Marx's authoritarian positions in the First International."

Nevertheless, there is a real criticism of marxism in the situationnist texts, a criticism which not only attacks the progressive degeneration of Marxism, but also points in Marx work the germs of that degeneration. This criticism is developed in §84–90 of *The society of the spectacle*, known as the closest book to the revolutionary marxism. First, Debord gives the impression, as well as other French left wing maxists,[7] that he just criticizes the bad use of Marx by those who claimed filiation with him. But straight from the §84, Debord explains that in Marx thought, there is a "scientific-determinist aspect" which "made it vulnerable to ideologization."[8] This economism drift (for economics is "the historical science *par excellence*" always postpones the moment of revolutionary practice and the advent of the historical subject by claiming that objective conditions are not present. Marxism emphasizes a tendency which is already in Marx, a tendency which consists in separating the theory (especially the economics) from the revolutionary practice[9] — as well as Marx did isolate himself "by cloistered scholarly work in the British Museum."[10] According to Debord, that lack in marxian theory has its roots in the fact that this theory was the faithfull expression of the revolutionary movement at that time, and also of the insufficiencies of this movement. This movement missed something that could not come from the theory, that is the concrete form of organization which came after spontaneously from the proletarian struggles: the workers councils, the *soviets*.[11] When Marx elaborated his theory, the organization he promoted could be nothing else but the one which was in adequation with his separate theoretical work, and that form had two failures. First, it mimics the bourgeois revolutions, in that sense that the main task of the proletariat would be to take the power as it exists inside the bourgeois society: "The theoretical shortcomings of the *scientific* defense of proletarian revolution (both in its content and in its form of exposition) all ultimately result from identifying the proletariat with the bourgeoisie *with respect to the revolutionary seizure of power.*"[12] The self-criticism, contained in Marx's work about the Paris Commune, which corrects some fomulations of the *Manifest,*[13] is here clearly recognizable. The second failure in Marxism consists in a lack of a conception of the organization which would have been really revolutionary, without any similarities of statist or bourgeois patterns. To sum things up, marxism (and all the marxist groups) has failed in thinking what the revolutionary organization should be. This passage of *The society of the spectacle* deserves a long quote:

> "The proletarian class is formed into a subject in its process of organizing revolutionary struggles and in its reorganization of society at the *moment of revolution* [...]. But this crucial question of organization was virtually ignored by revolutionary theory during the period when the workers movement was first taking shape — the very period when that theory still possessed the *unitary* character it had inherited

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[7] The most famous is the editor of Marx's works in the prestigious collection "Bibliotheque de la Pleiade," Maximilien Rubel, *Marx critique du marxisme,* Paris, Payot, 2000. One of the chapters is titled « Marx, theoricien de l'anarchisme ».

[8] Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* op. cit., p. 797.

[9] In contrary of Anselm Jappe *(Guy Debord, op. cit.,* p. 37–38), I'm not sure that Debord substitutes for a liberation *by* economics a liberation *towards* economics. Debord criticizes less economics as such than its separation.

[10] *Ib.,* p. 798.

[11] Rene Vienet, *Considerationspreliminaires sur les conseils ouvriers,* in *Internationale Situationniste,* n° 12.

[12] Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* §86, op. cit., p. 798.

[13] In the *Manifest,* proletariat was suppose to seize the state machine as such to make it work at his profit. After the Paris Commune, Marx argues that proletariat cannot only seize that state machine, mais has to destroy it immediately, replacing it by the Commune, which is the right political form for proletarian power.

from historical thought (and which it had rightly vowed to develop into a unitary historical *practice).* Instead, the organizational question became the weakest aspect of radical theory, a confused terrain lending itself to the revival of hierarchical and statist tactics borrowed from the bourgeois revolution. The forms of organization of the workers movement that were developed on the basis of this theoretical negligence tended in turn to inhibit the maintenance of a unitary theory by breaking it up into various specialized and fragmented disciplines. This ideologically alienated theory was then no longer able to recognize the practical verifications of the unitary historical thought it had betrayed when such verifications emerged in spontaneous working-class struggles; instead, it contributed toward repressing every manifestation and memory of them."[14]

With this quotation, which describes the process of degeneration of marxism, we understand the relative legitimacy of the anarchist criticism for the situationnists. At its foundation (deeply rooted in a original relation with the hegelian stream, in Marx and in Bakunin as well), the revolutionary theory was ahead of the time of the revolutionary practice it infers. Initially, this theory was unitary, but because of the lateness of the revolutionary practice, a revolutionary conception of the organization as the junction of the practice and the theory has missed. Then, the revolutionary theory adopted bourgeois and statist patterns of organization. Obviously, Debord has in thought the political parties organizations, in which the different powers are separated as if the parties were states. This separation of the different powers influenced in return the theory, separating the theory from the practice, and the theory itself in different fields, so that the unitary character of the theory could not be maintained, giving way to specialization and bureaucratism. And finally, when in the historical practice arises of form of organization in adequation with the originally unitary theory, the latest, which is aliened in the division of activism labour, crystallized in bureaucratic organizations and sometimes submitted to a state, is unable to recognize this right form and prevents its manifestation.

In this context, one can understand the Debord's critical description in *The society of the spectacle* (§91–92) of the split between anarchism and marxism around this particular question of the organization's form. §91 comes back over the conflict between Marx and Bakunin inside the International Workingmen's Association and describes it as the opposition between two ideologies, "each containing a partially true critique, but each losing the unity of historical thought and setting itself up as an ideological *authority.*"[15] Those two criticisms are partially true because they apply on two different fields: the power inside a revolutionary society and the organization of the revolutionary movement. Bakunin and his friends are right when they see behind the idea of a temporary proletarian state the threat of a bureaucratic dictatorship, but Marx and his friends are also right when they denounce Bakunin's projects of conspiration. If we stand at this point, this double criticism could be qulified as libertarian as it denounces the authoritarian drifts in both theories. But this libertarian criticism is paired with a historical criticism which owes a lot to Marx but targets the two organizations which have followed these two main orientations, the spanish FAI and the SDP of Germany.

§92–94 of *The Society of the spectacle* are especially devoted to anarchism but must be refered to the tense relations between the Situationnist International and libertarian organizations since

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[14] Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* §90, op. cit., p. 800.
[15] Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* §91, op. cit., p. 801.

young members of the french anarchist federation have claimed their high interest for the situationnist thesis, around 1966.[16] The anarchist federation was obsessed at that time with the possible infiltration of marxist elements in its ranks, since it had already split a few years earlier with the departure of libertarian communists. The young libertarians were forced to quit the anarchist federation and *The society of the spectacle* perhaps echoes this episode, especially in §92 when Debord explains why anarchist criticism remains only partial. The criticism of the political struggle by the anarchists remained abstract as they promoted a purely economical struggle based on the pattern of the instantaneous general strike. According to Debord, anarchists only see struggle as the realization of an ideal, opposed to reality, without questioning the practical means of realization of this ideal, and in each struggle, they constantly repeat the same things, which gives a way to guardians of the temple and self-proclaimed specialists of freedom (§93).

The meaning of this criticism is clear: the theoretical basis of the libertarian organizations, theoretical anarchism, is an out-dated stage in the history of revolutionary theory, the stage of the ideological conflict with authoritarian socialism, which is also the stage of the separation between black and red and between proletariat and its representation. So the libertarian organizations (the french Anarchist Federation, and later the Italian one and the rebuild spanish CNT for Debord) are a remains of the past, small churches having no relation with contemporary revolutionary movement, in order to perpetuate themselves by repeating always the same ideological antithesis (that's why those who proclaimed their affinity with situationnist thesis were fired). On the contrary, workers councils, as they arised spontaneously (that is to say: apart from any theory) in revolutionary Russia and spreaded in Germany and Spain, as a unitary practice, are supposed to be in adequation with the unity of the revolutionary theory. And this theoretical unity is to be found before the separation between black and red, before the split which gave birth to marxism and anarchism as two partial truthes, that means in the revolutionary theory, as expressed in the 1840's.

Before black and red: situationnists and young hegelians

According to Debord, the unity of the revolutionary theory is to be found in an original critical relation with the hegelian thought amongst the young hegelians in the 1840's: "All the theoretical currents of the *revolutionary* working-class movement — Stirner and Bakunin as well as Marx — grew out of a critical confrontation with Hegelian thought."[17] The situationnists reactivate this critical confrontation which characterizes young hegelianism. It is difficult to determine precisely which knowledge the situationnists had from this movement, beyond the young Marx's writings. Nevertheless, we know that Debord published in 1973 in the editions Champ Libre a translation of August Cieskowski's *Prolegomena to a Historiosophy*[18] (1838) and ten years later even wrote a preface for a possible republishing of the book.[19] In this text, he considers the polish philosopher as "the dark point around which the whole historical thought knew its turn-

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[16] [Guy Bodson], *La FA et les situationnistes (1966–1967) ou Memoirepour discussion dans lesfamilles apres boire,* [Paris], [1973]

[17] Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* §78, op. cit., p. 794.

[18] August von Cieskowski, *Prolegomenes a l'historiosophie* [1838], traduction Michel Jacob, Paris, Champ Libre, 1973.

[19] Guy Debord, *Presentation inedite des* Prolegomenes a l'historiosophie *d'August von Cieskowski* [1983], in *uvres,* op. cit., p.1536–1537.

ing point since one and an half century." Moreover, in Debord and in Vaneigem, we can find hidden quotations of young hegelian texts — in particular of *Die Reaktion in Deutschland (The Reaction in Germany*, 1842), the seminal article of Michael Bakunin, which was not yet translated into french at that time. Situationnists keep from young hegelianism the fact that marxist communism and individualistic and collectivist variants of anarchism as well have their roots in an original confrontation with hegelian thought. I will briefly study three young hegelian themes, reactivated, updated and sometimes twisted by the situationnists: the connections between theory and practice, the primacy of the negative moment in the dialectical process, and finally the theme of alienation. I don't pretend to exhaust, in that way, the philosophical content of situationnist writings, neither the meaning of their relation with Marx. I'd just like to show what their conception of the unity of revolutionary theory implies concerning their relation with the history of philosophy.

Or, precisely, their conception of theory (and the postulation of its unity with a historical practice) is already the reactivation of a young hegelian theme. For example, when Debord in *The society of the spectacle*, characterizes Hegel as "the *philosophical* culmination of philosophy,"[20] he reactivates a theme that can be found in three main figures of young hegelianism. First in Cieskowski for who a thought of history, a philosophy of the practice (the "historiosophy") has to go beyond the split between being and thought, which characterizes the old philosophy: Hegel's philosophy of history is a philosophy of the past, when historiosophy is a philosophy of the future, which depends on a practice.[21] A similar conception can be found in *The Reaction in Germany*, Bakunin's first revolutionary writing: Hegel is claimed to have "already gone above theory, but inside the theory itself' and to have "postulated a new, practical world"[22] so that in Hegel, the theory itself, separated from the practice under the name of philosophy, finds its own limit. And last but not least, Marx's *Introduction* to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843) explains that it is time to "realize philosophy": the first task of philosophy was to criticize religion, which is "the prerequisite of all criticism,"[23] therefore a criticism in acts of social alienation, hence, the "transcendence of the proletariat," "dissolution of society as a particular estate."[24] In the situationnist theories, the aim of this postulated unity between theory and practice is to object to theoretical specialization as a germ of degeneration for Marxism, leading to autoritarian forms. This degeneration ends up in a relation of subordination between theory and practice, where the theory becomes unable to recognize the revolutionnary form of organization and ignores the rationality inherent to the practice.[25]

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[20] Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* §76, op. cit., p. 793.

[21] August von Cieskowski, *Prolegomenes a l'historiosophie,* op. cit., p. 116: "Philosophy must get down from the theory's highs to the field of the praxis. [...] Being the development of *truth* in the concrete activity, that's the destiny of philosophy in general."

[22] Bakounine, *La reaction en Allemagne,* in Jean-Christophe Angaut, *Bakounine jeune hegelien: laphilosophie et son dehors,* Lyon, ENS Editions, 2007, p. 123. See in the same book p. 91–95 and Paul McLaughlin, *Michael Bakunin: the Philosophical Basis of his Anarchism,* 2002, 1st part.

[23] Marx, *Critique du droit politique hegelien,* Paris, Editions sociales, 1975, p. 197

[24] *Ib,* p. 211–212.

[25] Raoul Vaneigem, *Traite de savoir-vivre a l'usage desjeunesgenerations,* ch. XXV, op. cit., p. 353: "revolutionarypraxis [...] shows a rapid corruption the moment it breaks with its own rationality. That rationality is not abstract but concrete supersession of that universal and empty form, the commodity — and is alone in allowing a non-alienating objectification: the realization of art and philosophy in the individual's daily life. »

Secondly, in Debord and in Vaneigem, the critical confrontation with the hegelian thought is reperformed by asserting the predominance of the negative in the dialectical process. Once again, situationnists get this theme from the young hegelians. Bakunin's article explains that the opposition (which is for him the center of hegelian philosophy) is "a preponderance of the Negative" on the Positive:[26] the negative, identified as the party of the revolution, is what the positive, identified as the reaction, tries to reject from itself, so that the positive is only the negation of the negative, the negation of the destructive movement. The assertion of the preponderance of the negative is a central theme in young hegelianism, as it also can be found in Bruno Bauer.[27] On the contrary, it is important, according to Bakunin, to recognize the positivity of the negative, that is to say the new world which is supposed to arise in the very process by which the old world perishes. In *The society of the spectacle*, Debord identifies in a similar way revolutionary proletariat as the negative party[28] and at the same time, he asserts the primacy of the negative in the hegelian dialectical process — and the style of the dialectical theory has to express this primacy.[29] Similarly, in *The Revolution of Everyday Life,* Vaneigem explains that the negative has to become positive.[30] This theme was brilliantly illustrated in Bakunin's article with the famous sentence: "The passion for destruction is a creative passion, too."[31] This sentence is quoted (without any mention of origin) inside a chapter of the book which relates the situationnists' contribution to the events of 1968 in France,[32] as it was in Vaneigem's book.[33] This reading of the hegelian dialectical process has a precise meaning in situationnists: revolutionary theory, unitary theory, expresses the global rejection of the actual world, and a new world can be born only from the global negation of this world.

Eventually, situationnists, as other marxists in the 60's, use to a large extend the concept of alienation. They owe this use to a particular reading of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* as a seminal work which contains Marx's philosophy, later developed in the rest of his writings. It's a reconstruction of marxism based on a philosophy of alienation, in which the theme of commodity fetichism has its place (in Debord particularly[34]). The theme of alienation is especially used in Vaneigem's book, without any mention of its marxian nor hegelian

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[26] Bakounine, *La reaction en Allemagne,* op. cit., p. 125.

[27] For a comparison of Bakunin's and Bauer's views on this point, see Paul McLaughlin, *Mikhail Bakunin — The Philosophical Basis of His Anarchism,* New York, Algora, 2002, p. 68–71.

[28] Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* §114, op. cit., p. 816: "The proletariat [...]consists of that vast majority of workers who have lost all power over their lives and who, *once they become aware of this,* redefine themselves as the proletariat, the force working to negate this society from within [le negatif a l'reuvre dans cette societe]."

[29] *Ib.,* §206, op. cit., p. 853: "This style which contains its own critique must express the domination of the present critique over its entire past. The very mode of exposition of dialectical theory displays the negative spirit within it."

[30] Raoul Vaneigem, *Traite de savoir-vivre a l'usage desjeunesgenerations,* op. cit., ch. XXI, p. 266 et ch. XXV, p. 352.

[31] Bakounine, *La reaction en Allemagne,* op. cit., p. 136.

[32] Rene Vienet, *Enrages et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations,* ch. III, op. cit., p. 57, about the "barricades night" (Mai 1a, 1968): "Never the passion of destruction had been so creative."

[33] Raoul Vaneigem, *Traite de savoir-vivre a l'usage desjeunes generations,* ch. XIII, op. cit., p. 152: "*People may be forced to swing back andforth across the narrow gap between the pleasure of creating and the pleasure of destroying, but this very oscillation suffices to bring Power to its knees.*"

[34] See Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord,* op. cit., p. 29–31. It is more difficult to agree with the author when he asserts that situationnists get here a lot from Lukacs, who had indeed emphasized the concept of commodity fetichism in Marx's *Capital* but could not knew the 1844 *Manuscripts,* which were published later (first in Russian in 1927, then in German in 1932), after the publishing of *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (1923). In Lukacs, reification is more important than alienation.

origin. In fact, the concept of alienation is transformed by the situationnists in two ways. In Marx, this concept (which translates two german words: *Entausserung* — giving something up by alienating it — and *Enfremdung* — when the alienated object has become stranger) is the result of a transfer from the field of religion criticism to the field of social and political criticism. Marx had read this transfer in Moses Hess's *On the essence of money.* In the same way that in Christianity (in Feuerbach) human essence is alienated, so that humanity is unable to recognize what she's oppressed by, the human being, in capitalist societies, alienates its vital activity in money, which is another form of oppression. In the situationnist appropriation of this theme, the first transformation is an historicization: in *The Revolution of Everyday Life,* Vaneigem explains that history is a "transformation of natural alienation into social alienation."[35] The second transformation is a widening. In Marx's *Manuscripts*, alienation applies to the process of production: the worker becomes slave of the machines and is dispossessed of the fruit of his labours. Situationnists expand this theme to the consumer's alienation. Alienation is commodity alienation: it happens in the commodity production (the workers lost the control of their labour and of the fruits of their labours) and also in the commodity consumption, particularly in the spectacle as the ultimate commodity, according to Debord.[36] Spectacle is alienation insofar as "the passive contemplation of images, which have been moreover chosen by someone else, substitutes for what is experienced and for the determination of the events by the individual itself"[37] and, eventually dominates the individual.

Conclusion: Beyond Black and Red today

Situationnist criticism is often reduced to its negative dimension and its attempt to go beyond outdated oppositions, such as black and red. This reduction gave the impression that situationnists theories were radically new and radically separated from the history of the workers movement. Yet, such a fascination has nothing to do with situationnist theories, although it happens amongst those who were denounced by Debord en 1972 as "*pro-situs.*" These ones tend to consider that situationnist thesis suddenly arise in history, completely out of the blue. Preventing the dominated ones to remember the history of their revolts is one of the powerful effects of the society of the spectacle. For that very reason, it is important to recall that situationnists attempted to go beyond the opposition between black and red for the sake of a revolutionary theory, which unity has to be restored, integrating the social and historical experiment of the workers councils and beyond the alienation of theory in bureaucratic economism. So here is the situationnist answer to the question that forms the matter of this conference: black is dead, red is dead, but the unification of both trends is still the manifestation of the workers democracy and has to be kept at the head of the agenda of history.

Yet situationnist concepts of unity and totality have to be questioned. The capitalist society is to be entirely rejected, and a unitary theory can be very useful, but a question remains: is there only one alternative to this society? Black and red today mean the multiplicity of the real social alternatives, avoiding hierarchy and the rule of commodity. Moreover, we have to recognize

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[35] Raoul Vaneigem, *Traite de savoir-vivre a l'usage desjeunesgenerations,* ch. VIII, op. cit., p. 96: *"History is the continuous transformation of natural alienation into social alienation."*

[36] Guy Debord, *La societe du spectacle,* §30, op. cit., p. 774, about "the alienation of the spectator to the profit of the contemplated object"

[37] Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord,* op. cit., p. 21.

which characters of our societies remain outside that rule, such as public services, which have to be self-managed by the workers and the users. These aspects of our society are a kind of collective inheritance which escapes partially from the rule of commodity but always risks to be caught up.

Constructing an alternative to Marxism-Leninism: British Communists and prefigurative politics

Jérémy Tranmer

I'd like to begin with a quotation from an article written by a former member of the Communist Party of Great Britain:

> The marxist and post-marxist left has an established view of anarchist politics. We half remember reading about the splits in the International between Marx and Bakunin, in which the self-centred anarchists, with their utopian and unrealistic proposals, were defeated by a combination of hard-hitting polemic and hard-nosed — and sometimes underhand — tactical manoeuvering. More recently, anarchism has been associated with ultra-leftist politics — adventurist solutions of individualist actions and strategies which are thought to have weakened the progressive forces and played into the hands of enemies. From alliances between anarchist mass organisations and Trotskyist parties in the Spanish Civil War, through to the terrorist stupidities of the half-dozen people in the '70s 'Angry Brigade' in England, it has seemed that anarchists point only towards dangerous, self-defeating dead ends.[1]

Although he was caricaturing the views of people from the Marxist tradition and went on to state that it was "time for a re-consideration," many Communists had probably expressed similar opinions about aanrchism thoughout the party's history. What he omitted to mention was that from the mid 1970s until the early 1990s some Communists had espoused prefigurative politics and advocated the complete rethinking of the party's theory and practice to take it into account. In 1991 the Communist Party ceased to exist and was 'transformed' into Democratic Left, which attempted to integrate prefigurative politics into its constitution and everyday activities. This paper aims to examine how anarchist-inspired ideas took root in the CPGB, how they were used by certain Communists and what impact they had on the party as well as on its successors.

1. CP and anarchism

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was founded in 1920 and was fully 'Bolshevized' by the end of the decade. The CP's constitution was based on Marxism- Leninism, a Stalinist combination of Marx's views on class relations under capitalism and Lenin's vision of the revolutionary party. In this paper I shall concentrate on the latter. At the heart of the CP's Leninism

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[1] Mike Waite, « Paths that were not taken », *New Times,* 5 July 1997, 8–9.

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was Democratic centralism: in very basic terms once a decision made democratically, it had to be implemented by all party members. Given the vertical organizational structures of the party (branch, district, Excecutive Committee, Political Committee, National Congress), the banning of horizontal communication between members and the dominant position of the leadership, decisions often taken in undemocratic manner in the upper echelons of the party and imposed on rank and file members. Unity and discipline was seen as necessary features of the revolutionary party.

The CP also considered itself as a vanguard party, leading the working classes and its allies towards revolutionary transformation of capitalist society and the construction of socialism and in time communism. Communists believed that their legitimation as a vanguard party came from the scientific understanding of politics and society that Marxism-Leninism gave them. Over the years changes in ideology and strategy took place, as the party moved away from orthodox Leninism and began to give greater importance to elections and creating broad alliances with other social and political forces, for example. Yet the CP remained offically committed to Marxism-Leninism and its basic structures and functioning remained unchanged, even after the truamatic events of 1956. But worth noting that the CP not homogenous, monolithic as CP leadership and opponents suggested

In CP publications very little about anarchism (more about dissident branches of Communist tradition eg Trotskyism (Hitler-Trotskyism, Trotskyist sects) and Maoism; partly due to the relatively marginal nature of anarchism in Britian. However, safe to assume that the CP's pro-Sovietism would have led it to see anarchists as enemies of the Soviet state and support the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion, Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine and anarchist activities in general in the USSR. It can also be assumed that the CP viewed anarchists as an irresponsible, disruptive nuisance who along with other sections of what it termed the 'ultra-left' prefered direct action to the creation of broad alliances.

Nevertheless, there were some historical links between British Communists and anarchists as well as some common ground between the two groups. The CP laid claim to William Morris as part of an indigenous radical tradition and a precurser of communism, allthough the it avoided mentioning that Morris had been opposed to the kind of 'State Socialism' that it advocated and had worked with anarchists in Socialist League. Syndicalists such as Tom Mann and AJ Cook were drawn to the CP in its early days. Communists and anarchists also cooperated in the peace movement, especially CND, during the Cold War. And they were obiously both opposed to capitalism and undertook extra-parliamentary activity, even though the kind of alternative societies they envisaged diverged markedly.

2. 1970s, CP — feminism,Gramsci

As mentioned above, the CP was never a homogeneous organization. During the 1970s in particular unoffical groupings began to appear in the party. One such grouping based on what historian of CP Geoff Andrews has called 'Gramscism,' in other words a particular interpretation of the writings of the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci. Using the work of one of the founders of British Cultural Studies Stuart Hall, they stressed the importance of the concept of hegemony, according to which in advanced western societies the ruling class managed to secure the consent of other sections of society as a result of its economic, political, cultural and intellectual

domination. The almost military Leninist type of party was deemed to be inappropriate by the Gramscians who favoured the creation of a kind of organization that would embody the society it hoped to create and would therefore enable the party to establish closer links with other sections of society.

Feminists also had a distinct presence in the CP. Women such as Bea Campbell and Sarah Benton were leading Communist feminists and helped attract other feminists towards the party. In 1976, for example, a public event organized by Communist feminists was attended by over 700 people. Communist feminists were also involved in the publication and distribution of the magazine Red Rag. Like the Gramscians to whom they were closely linked, feminists criticized the functioning of the party. In an article for the review Marxism Today, the Communist feminist Caroline Rowan underlined the contradiction between the party's hierarchical structures and its aim of creating relations between people not based on subordination. Other feminists and Gramscians criticized tactics such as caucusing, whereby Communists working in organizations such as trade unions or the peace movement would liaise before important meetings in order to work out a joint position and commit themselves to defending it together. By proceeding in this way, Communists were able to have their aims adopted as they were a disciplined and organized minority even though the majority might have rejected them. According to feminists and Gramscians, such methods might bring short term gains but they were the antithesis of open democratic politics and risked alienating noncommunists.

Feminists and Gramscians thus rejected Leninism in favour of prefigurative politics, which entailed, according to Benton, "making changes now that will prefigure the form of society you would like to live in [...], it resisted the idea that before there can be any fundamental social change before the revolutionary party must have state power. It had — and still has — all the attraction of direct action and a deeply moral purpose" (143). In other words, feminists and Gramscians emphasized change here and now rather than waiting for revolution and the importance of morality which replaced the traditional Communist emphasis on efficiency.

It's tempting to see the evolution of Communist feminists and Gramscians simply in terms of the adoption of anarchists positions. In the words of one historian of anarchism, the "creation of the elements of the new society within the framework of the old and particularly within the framework of the revolutionary movement itself is of course a straight anarchist concept" (p88/9). It was adopted by the First International in Sonvillier circular of 1871 and by Anarchist St Imier International in a resolution in 1872 was central to Anarchists such as Landauer. Moreover, anarchists had for decades advocated horizontal forms of organization, participatory democracy and direct action. In addition, in the 1960s British anarchists such as Colin Ward had elaborated the concept of 'permanent protest.' Believing that the chances of a revolution in a Western society were minimal, they concentrated on creating new relations and institutions in the shell of the old society and attempted to work out practical alternatives on specific issues within framework of existing society. In the 1970s they were involved in squatting, communes and cooperatives.

British Eurcommunists, as the reformers were often called, thus adopted positions previously held by Anarchists. Nevertheless, the situation of British Communists in the 1970s was more complex. Gramscian Communists believed that in a war of position against bourgeois hegemony classical revolutionary scenarios were no longer relevant and that revolutionary change would be a long, protracted affair — what they called 'revolution as a process.' The traditional difference between before and after revolution therefore became blurred and less significant. This had implications for a revolutionary party, its organization and tactics, suggesting that the Leninst

party was obsolete. The development of Gramscism must also be seen within the context of the evolution of the radical left in general and particularly that of the New Left. The ethical, moral approach of the New Left and its adoption of a broad conception of politics had led it away from orthodox Leninism. In 1970 Robin Blackburn, who was closely involved with the *New Left Review,* thus stated that the aim of the revolutionary left should be to "build a movement which already shows you in anticipation the sort of institutions that will characterize the best revolutionary society" (81). Gramscian Communists were thus part of a broader drift away from Leninism among forces to the left of the Labour Party.

Likewise Communist feminists were part of a broader movement. The British feminist movement of the late 1960s and 1970s developed in opposition to the centralized, hierarchical forms of organization of the traditional left, in its reformist and revolutionary forms and advocated independent direct action. The clearest expression of a critique of the traditional left came in the 1979 book *Beyond the Fragments* penned by Hilary Wainwright, Lynne Segal, and Sheila Rowbotham. In a chapter entitled "The women's movement and organizing for socialism," Sheila Rowbotham claimed that revolutionary organizations reproduced the power relationships and bureaucracy of capitalism and stated that, " we need to strengthen and give space to the positive understandings which come from all our experiences of resisting capitalism" (132). One of the most significant features of the feminist movement was the creation of consciousness-raising groups in which small numbers of women were able to exchange their experiences of oppression, create a sense of solidarity and undertake joint action. These groups were similar to the affinity groups that anarchists had created in Spain during the Civil War, leading one historian to claim that "feminists are the only existing protest group that can honestly be called practising anarchists" (Marshall, p 557). In fact, some feminists were attracted to anarchist analyses of power and hierarchies and mixed with anarcho-feminists whose avowed aim was the erosion of power and authority rather than its transfer to another group or class. These ideas spread from the feminist movement into other organizations in which women were active such as the International Socialists (the forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party), the International Marxist Group and the CP.

It would be simplistic to state that a section of British Communists had simply converted to anarchism. Their questioning of Leninism and search for an alternative to it occurred at a time when others were also questioning hierarchical forms of organization, leading to the circulation of ideas within this radical milieu. The conjuncture was therefore favourable to the propagation of new ideas. Gramscism and feminism moved towards the adoption of prefigurative forms as a result of their own momentum and their own development, although there was some anarchist influence on feminism. The similarities between some aspects of the Communism proposed by Gramscians and feminists (or Eurocommunists as they were often jointly called) and anarchism were not openly admitted. It was more politically expedient for Eurcommunists to refer back to Gramsci, who was part of the Communist tradition, and/or to feminism, which was a social movement struggling against oppression. In addition, most Communists were not well versed in anarchist theory and politics (eg nothing in Marxism Today) and were unaware of the similarities I've just mentioned. It must be noted that there were significant differences between Communist and anarchist conceptions of prefigurative politics, the latter being part of a project linked to a political party which contested elections and aimed to achieve state power.

The Eurocommunists managed to have some indirect references to Grasmci and some more direct references to feminism incorporated into the 1977 version of the party's programme, the British Road to Socialism. Nevertheless, there was nothing about prefigurative politics. A com-

mission was appointed to examine all aspects of inner-party democracy, but its composition was heavily weighted against the reformers, and unssurprisingly it rejected making any serious changes to the party's structures. The reformers were reduced to signing the offical report and submitting a list of more radical proposals. The rejection of their demands was part of a more general backlash against change as the centrist leadersip sought to reimpose its authority. Yet, by the mid-1980s the changing internal balance of forces forced the leadership to ally with the reformers, who, once in positions of power, used the very structures they had previously damned to marginalize and expel their rivals. It was only when it was confronted with its own terminal decline as ewll as the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe that the CP finally abandoned Marxism-Leninsm and democratic centralism.

Democratic Left, the new post-communist organization, was committed to implementing pre-figurative politics. The hierarchical structures of the CP were replaced by a horizontal organization with no intermediate levels between local groups and the Executive Committee. The meetings of the latter were open to all members. Members were encouraged to create horizontal issue-based networks within the organization as well as traditional geography-based groups. In its relations with others, Democratic Left did not seek a leading role but saw itself as a facilitator, bringing together people from different groups and organizations. However, members found it difficult to adapt to this new culture. Many still expected full-time party workers to organize activities and were reluctant to take initiatives themselves. As a result, the party' activities soon decreased rapidly. Others complained that they had to shackle their own political identity in order to act as facilitators, limiting the visibility of Democratic Left. A cycle of decline set in, and the the New Politics Network, the successor to Democratic Left, has merged with Charter 88 in the Unlocking Democracy campaign.

From the early 1970s the CP was caught up in a general drift away from Leninism and a search for a less authoritarian and less hierarchical alternative. This move was shaped very marginally by the influence of anarchism and more directly by feminism and Gramscism. In the same way that Eurocommunism was situated between traditional social democracy and orthodox Communism, it was also, in some ways, between Communism and Anarchism, a half-house position which disturbed some Communists and former Communists, contributing to the decline of this particular section of the left. The case of British Communism and postCommunism shows the difficulty of combining red and black when this involves changing ingrained political habits and attitudes.

Trotskysm and anarchism: possible coexistence in France?

Mathieu Le Tallec

Not available.

Black and Red — The Italian Experience

Collegamenti Wobbly: Beyond the anarchist/Marxist dichotomy?'

Steve Wright and Saku Pinta
    Not available.

Fabbri and the Marxists: A comparative analysis of Fabbri, Gramsci and Bordiga on the question of revolutionary organisation

Oisin Gilmore

Not available.

Antonio Gramsci, Anarchism, Syndicalism and *Sovversivismo*

Carl Levy

Abstract

Throughout his career Antonio Gramsci forged a complex relationship with strands of libertarian socialism. This chapter will disentangle this relationship. First it sets out an overview of Gramsci's unique form of socialism (Sorel, Gentile, Antonio Labriola) before and during the *Biennio Rosso* and the factory council movement. His early flirtation with syndicalism and Mussolinianism left marks, which positively and negatively affected a later engagement with the libertarian Left. Thus the key term *sovversivismo,* found in the *Quaderni,* is crucial to his discussions. In the conclusion, this paper examines the effects of Gramsci's assessment of the anarchists and syndicalists on Italian historiography in the post-war decades.

1. Introduction

The young Gramsci's unorthodox Marxism had many elective affinities with the libertarian socialist tradition. Gramsci's concept of industrial democracy during the era of the factory councils in Turin (1919–1920) was shaped through his encounters with anarchists who were self-educated workers and formally educated technicians employed by Fiat and other industries. This practical alliance in the campaign for factory councils championed by *L'Ordine Nuovo* has been noted elsewhere (Levy, 1999). But the relationship is far deeper than a tactical political ploy, which Lenin indulged in his anarchist-sounding pronouncements in revolutionary Russia during the spring and early summer of 1917.

Three aspects of the pre-Leninist Gramsci's Marxism serve as benchmarks to evaluate the interaction of libertarian thought and action with Gramsci's social thought before 1918–1919: voluntarism, pre-figuration and hegemony. The theoretical foundations of Gramsci's voluntarism are in sharp contrast to the determinism of Lenin's social thought. Lenin's political activism was informed by the problem of power, how to seize and conserve it (Service, 2000). But his social thought never left the straitjacket of the most rule-bound 'scientific socialism.' Indeed Lenin spent an inordinate amount of time throughout his life stamping out a bewildering variety of 'heresies' that threatened his love affair with 'scientific socialism': monists, 'God- builders' and infantile communists were all chosen targets (Read, 1979; Williams, 1986). Unorthodox and ruthless in seizing and holding power, his political thought was perhaps even more rule-bound and orthodox than his fallen idol, Karl Kautsky. It should be remembered that in 1916 and 1917 Lenin (and Bukharin) argued that time could be sped up precisely because of a new stage of

history: world war that flowed from the imperialist capitalist stage of historical development sanctioned his anarchist-like heretical political behaviour. But it did not sanction a rethinking of the orthodox Marxism he had mentally ingested before 1914. Karl Kautsky was a 'social traitor' because he had betrayed his political principles, not because his theory was incorrect.

Gramsci's introduction to Marxism could not be more different. Marxism was filtered through a political culture of voluntarism that permeated the Italian universities of antebellum Italy. The theme of voluntarism is directly connected to Gramsci's concept of pre-figuration (Boggs, 1975). Simply put, pre-figuration implies that the institutions of the future socialist society should be foreshadowed in the democratic institutions of the working class in civil society under capitalism. Not only does this solve the dilemma of how one gets from the capitalist to socialist stage of history, it also implies the libertarian potential of working-class self-organisation present in the young Gramsci's social theory as well as his political practice. In other words, unlike Lenin who saw Soviets as 'useful idiots' to undermine the Russian state in 1917, for Gramsci *theoretical* Marxist voluntarism is embodied in self-organisation in civil society. This explains why, when Gramsci first encounters Lenin in 1917 and early 1918 he presents him as a charismatic leader-champion of organs of selfgovernment in civil society. Gramsci read Lenin through his own synthesis of Italian neo-idealist voluntarism, which owes more to Giovanni Gentile and Georges Sorel than Kautskyite Marxism.

Gramsci repudiated the theoretical Marxism of the Second International in order to embrace Marxism in the first place when he was still a student at the University of Turin. If we imagine counterfactual history in which Gramsci had encountered Lenin's theoretical Marxist orthodoxy before he successfully had piloted the Bolsheviks to state power, he would have certainly had a dim if not sarcastic reaction to it. Therefore in 1917 and 1918 Lenin became the symbolic and political embodiment of Gramsci mistaken projections from unique cocktail of libertarian voluntarism and Marxism. The disjunction between his political thought and the model that proved successful in actually gaining power in the Soviet Union would threaten the coherence of his project for the rest of his life.

But Gramsci was no anarchist or syndicalist: anarchism and syndicalism served as foils to forge Gramscian social thought and political action. In his arguments with the libertarians before his encounters with Lenin and what become known as Leninism, Gramsci had already opened his thought to a ready acceptance of the authoritarian solutions proposed in Russia. The authoritarian aspects of the young Gramsci, however, paradoxically are derived from the voluntarism of his political thought.

As I have shown elsewhere, the origins of Gramsci's pre-figuration and his most famous term, hegemony, is illustrated nicely in a series of articles on the cooperative movement in Turin and Italy written in 1916 (Levy 1986; Levy 1999). These ideas were being developed as he simultaneously developed his evaluation of the role of Antonio Labriola in Marxism. The notions of pre-figuration and the conception of hegemony found in the articles on cooperatives, as well his engagement with Labriola, are tied to his attitude about the proper evaluation of anarchism and the limits of alliances with anti-war anarchists and syndicalists. But it is his form of pedagogical socialism, drenched in Gentilean assumptions, which demonstrate the theoretical gulf separating his apparent libertarian socialism from the positivist culture of the anarchists and syndicalists.

2. Pre-figuration and the 'Libertarian Gramsci': Gramsci, Antonio Labriola and the Anarchists

It has often been claimed that Gramsci's concept of hegemony arose from encounters with Leninism. Thus in a famous article Perry Anderson argued that the term and the concept were suggested to Gramsci during his sojourn in the Soviet Union in the early 1920s (Anderson, 1977). It has also been advanced that hegemony derives from his thinking about the Southern Question and this only emerges just previous to his arrest and imprisonment in the middle 1920s (Urbinati, 1998), or that hegemony emerges from the hierarchical relationship of nationally dominant languages and Received Pronunciation and minority languages or demotic pronunciation (Lo Piparo 1979; Ives, 2004). Others have argued that the concept of hegemony should be paired with the Gramscian 'passive revolution' and his rethinking of the Marxist tradition in his prison cell in the 1930s (Buci-Glucksmann, 1979).

As I have shown elsewhere, Gramsci employed the daily concerns of Turin's labour and cooperative movements as laboratories to develop and illustrate his more complex theoretical conceptions very early in his career. Rediscovered articles demonstrate how many of the themes of *L 'Ordine Nuovo,* which highlight the (admittedly exaggerated) pre-figurative power of the factory council, were originally developed during a discussion of that reformist institution, the cooperative, in 1916; one or two years before Gramsci began to promote the 'sovietist,' West European or incipient Turinese versions of council communism (Levy1986; Levy 1999).

It was precisely during his discussion of cooperative that Gramsci carries out a sustained analysis of Antonio Labriola. Gramsci's discussion of Labriola grew from his initial re-evaluation of the *Risorgimento.* And if any of the deceased are given decent eulogies, they are surely the intellectuals of the *'destra storica'* ('the historic right') (Piccone, 1977); whose emphasis on the pedagogical nature of the modern state's parliamentary system and its honest and efficient civil service, stimulating the active participation of citizens in its affairs, is assimilated into socialist theory. For Gramsci, Labriola was the intellectual link between the thinkers and writers of the 'historic right,' Spaventa and De Sanctis, and the modern socialist movement.

Labriola's Marxism has four aspects to it, which Gramsci found naturally congenial (Dal Pane, 1975; Jacobitti, 1981; Bellamy, 1987, pp. 54–71; Bellamy and Schecter, 1993). First, politics was conceived as culture and therefore intellectuals acted as *maestri,* the brains if not the public leadership behind socialist strategy. Secondly, Marxism promoted a universalizing philosophy that lent coherence to culture. Finally political organization helped realize this philosophy. And it has been suggested by several writers that Labriola's ideas helped Gramsci transform his earlier Gentilean philosophy into his more materialist Marxism of the war years and of the postwar early, the *biennio rosso* (1919–20) (Tronti, 1959; Garin, 1967, pp. 11933; Asor Rosa, 1975, p. 1040; Piccone, 1977–8, pp. 3–48, Catone, 1994).

Even though a generation separated the two men, the similarities between Labriola's and Gramsci's Marxism and their relationships with the anarchists are striking. Gramsci argued that cultural hegemony preceded every major revolution. It had been the inability and the unwillingness of Italian intellectuals to abandon their elitist cosmopolitanism, which left the masses, so to speak, headless. Labriola and Gramsci relied on working-class institutions immersed in daily life, not directly controlled by the socialist party, to raise popular beliefs to a universal scientific world-view. Labriola's support of the *Fasci Siciliani* (a social movement in Sicily in the

1890s) bears significant similarities with Gramsci's endorsement of rank-and-file movements in Turinese industry during and just after the First World War (Procacci, 1960, pp. 321–8; Berti, 1993, pp. 343–54). Both were able to work with proletarian anarchists. Just as Gramsci, Labriola differentiated between Jacobinical *'capi*, the *spostati della borghesia* (bourgeois dropouts), the intellectual proletariat, and the anarchist workers whom Labriola had helped during the Roman builders strike in the early 1890s. Although Labriola was capable of differentiating between the 'reasonable' anarchism of Errico Malatesta and terrorist bombers and assassins, he never took the intellectual premises of anarchism very seriously.

Gramsci's and Labriola's Marxism can be considered unorthodox because of their novel interpretation of praxis: both men based the superiority of Marxism over other forms of socialism on its ability to forge a world view that required little borrowing from other systems of philosophical thought. If this caused Labriola and Gramsci to fight against the marriage of positivism and Marxism and thereby earn the accolades of the late twentieth century university Marxists, both thinkers tended to deny the intellectual validity of other systems of socialism, particularly anarchism.

3. Cooperation and Pre-figuration: Gramsci, Sorel and the Anarchists

It is commonly assumed that the young Gramsci was hostile or indifferent to the traditional institutions of the working-class movement. For example, most accounts emphasize his sharp differentiation between the trade union, a reformist institution immersed in the logic of the capitalist marketplace and the factory council, representative of the rank and file, as well as reflecting the productivist and functionalist prerequisites of future socialized industry. But many of the *Ordinovisti* articles promoting the pre-figurative powers of the factory councils were developed early than thought. These early articles reveal Gramsci in the process of also developing key concepts such as hegemony and passive revolution and in the context of references to international theoretical syndicalism (Sorel) and debates with Italian syndicalists (Schecter, 1990). But the entire discussion is pitched at several levels: key theoretical breakthroughs arise within the context of the local concerns of the Turinese labour movement.

Gramsci's intervention in the debate on cooperatives reached its climax in an article, 'Socialism and Cooperation' (30 October 1916, published in the ACT's journal, *L'Alleanza Cooperativa*) (Gramsci, 1994, pp. 15–16).

Gramsci makes it abundantly clear that socialism must be productivist. Consumer cooperatives were not, nor could they be, central to these politics. Socialism, he wrote, 'is not simply to solve the problem of distribution of finished products. On the contrary, the moral justification of our struggle, and for the revolution this struggle will bring about, comes from the conviction, acquired by the proletariat through its critique of the existing means of production, that collectivism will serve to accelerate the rhythm of production itself, by eliminating all those artificial factors to productivity' (Gramsci, 1994, p. 15). Socialist cooperatives must, he wrote, arise from the free activity of the proletariat, outside the meddlesome and corrupting influences of bourgeois legislation or the state will blunt their purpose. Socialist cooperatives were socially useful to the lower classes, otherwise they were, Gramsci wrote, protectionist cooperatives, parasitical organizations that gave rise to a group of privileged workers, who were successful at freeing

themselves partially from capitalist exploitation, but whose actions were harmful to their class and costly to production generally (Gramsci, 1982, p. 677). In much the same way that syndicalists in Britain and diasporic anarchists, such as Errico Malatesta adapted H. Belloc's concept of the 'Servile State' to statist or forms of crony-statist-capitalism just before the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 (Levy, 1981; Levy, forthcoming).

Thus Gramsci's general tenor of discussion is linked to his earlier connections with free-trade socialists and syndicalists in Sardinia and Turin. Previously, Gaetano Salvemini had been a major influence, and during the war Gramsci organized an issue of *Il Grido del Popolo* devoted to free trade and socialism. Free trade, Gramsci believed would help to lessen the North/South divide but it was also central to the definition of his form of socialism. At the very end of the war Gramsci explained his free-tradism in rather defensive tones. Comparing his programme to President Wilson's (Tobia, 1974, pp. 275–303; Rossini, 2008), he explained that free trade was part of socialism's minimal programme, and his argument betrayed these 'Bellocian' echoes.

> Socialists are today free-traders because their doctrine recognizes that in the free development of capitalist society free trade as a revolutionary force against the outmoded form of production and exchange and that it establishes political structures more suitable for the development of its potential: without economic liberty, political liberty is a Giolittian swindle (Gramsci, 1984, p. 410).

This explains Gramsci's attraction to the English radical liberals who founded the Union for Democratic Control, and particularly Norman Angell, whose wartime writings, Gramsci claimed, showed that protectionist state socialism or state capitalism were universal evils arising from the inherent demands of the conflict itself. This pervasive 'Prussianism' (a Germanic Servile State), Gramsci felt, threatened democratic liberties won before the war (Gramsci, 1984, pp. 236–7). Free trade was not only the guarantor of civil rights, free trade also served as a metaphor for Gramsci's *maximalist programme*. Concurrently, Lenin, who appreciated the mechanics of power and production, was *praising* the wartime Prussian state as being a step closer to socialism: cartels, trusts and indeed state-assisted cartels and trusts preparing the way for socialism, these did not corrupt the workers, but trained them for the future socialist industrial society.

The previously mentioned 'Socialism and Cooperation' is one of the finer examples of Gramsci's 'free trade' anti-statism. Throughout the war years Gramsci's fears of Prussianism made him caution socialists against allying themselves with the interventionist war-time state, this became especially pronounced during the debate over whether or not socialists should join the government's Commission on Postwar Reconstruction, established by Prime Minister Orlando (Gramsci, 1984, pp. 169–70).

He believed that 'reform from above' or 'state socialism' had too long been uncritically accepted within prewar socialism and even within Marxist theory itself. This became evident in an article written on 8 April 1917 when Gramsci argued:

> Many of our comrades are still imbued with doctrines concerning the state that were fashionable in the writings of socialists twenty years ago. These doctrines were constructed in Germany, and perhaps in Germany might still have their justification. It is certain that in Italy, a country even less parliamentary than Germany, due to the prevailing political corruption and the lack of parliamentary consciousness, the

state is the greatest enemy of citizens (of the majority of citizens) and every growth of its powers, of its activity, of its functions, always equals a growth of corruption, of misery for citizens, of a general lowering of the level of public, economic and moral life (Gramsci, 1982, p. 118).

Gramsci's anti-statism is explained through his appropriation of Georges Sorel's notion of a schism, a separation of the working class from bourgeois culture and lifestyles, without fully accepting the Frenchman's entire message, even if Gramscian language is drenched with Sorelian key words (Bracco, 1974; Badaloni, 1975; Giosis, 1979; Roth, 1980; Malatesta, 1981; Schecter, 1990). Such similarities and differences with Sorel are evident in 'Socialism and Cooperation.'

Similarities in their shared belief in a non-Jacobinical transition to socialism based upon the daily experiences of workers in their own trade unions and cooperatives, with Gramsci alluding to Sorel's highly influential book, *I'Avenir socialiste des syndicats,* circulated by Italian left-wing socialist and syndicalist activists before the war (Furiozzi, 1976, pp. 50–2, 64, 79–80, 95–6; Onufrio, 1979, pp. 89–97, 113–21, 127, 139, 147, 154, 197; Roth, 1980, p. 10). This book is significant too, because it predates Sorel's departure into myth-making and the celebration of violence, and is firmly grounded in his encounters with Eduard Bernstein, Antonio Labriola and the former anarchist Francesco Saverio Merlino during the so-called revisionist debate at the turn of the century (Santarelli, 1964; Zagara, 1975; Morabito, 1979, pp. 744–55). All three thinkers were searching for institutions within civil society, which might temper or suppress state socialism. And to complete a very interesting circle of reciprocal influences, Gramsci was an enthusiastic reader of Sydney and Beatrice Webbs' *History of Trades Unions* and their other works: the very examples Sorel used to buttress his arguments in *L 'Avenir socialiste des syndicats* (Gramsci, 1976, p. 138). And the very books that Lenin from his Siberian exiles read with some guarded interest (Harrison)

Gramsci's 'Sorel' was perhaps different from the majority of prewar Italian syndicalists.' The Gramscian transition to socialism relied upon the conscious, reasoned intervention of social actors rather than myths; and Gramsci, needless to say, appreciated the role of education and self-education, even though, as we shall see, he had little time for the efforts of the *Universita Popolare* (Broccoli, 1972; Rosada, 1975; Entwistle, 1979). He did not share some of the syndicalist intellectuals' fascination with the imagery of the rude, uneducated workers as intellectual-bashers. Gramsci wrote a famous article in 1916- 'Socialism and Culture'- in direct response to Enrico Leone in which the syndicalist professor is taken to task and in this context explains the role of ideas in historical development and concurrently edges towards a concept of hegemony (For details see Gramsci, 1980, 99–103).

> The fact is that only by degrees, one stage at a time, has humanity acquired consciousness of it own value and won for itself the right to throw off the pattern of organization imposed on it by minorities at a previous period in history. And this consciousness was formed not under the brutal goad of physiological necessity but as a result of intelligent reflection, at first by just a few people and later by a whole class, and why certain conditions exist and how best to convert the facts of vassalage into the signals of rebellion and social reconstruction. This means that every revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism, by the diffusion of culture and the spread of culture and the spread of ideas amongst the masses of men who

are first resistant, think only of solving their own immediate economic and political problems for themselves, who have not ties of solidarity with others in the same conditions (Gramsci, 1977, pp. 11–12).

Thus, a series of articles about cooperation, the role of intellectuals in the socialist movement and other nods to Sorel, Proudhon, Labriola and the lessons of the French Revolution, the importance of pre-figuration and an analysis stressing the tensions between state and civil society, rather than the political economy of capitalism, will see Gramsci develop the master themes (hegemony, passive revolution etc), which will accompany him throughout his life. In an extraordinary passage, a critique of Marxist determinism, which should have found kindred spirits amongst the more critical anarchists, Gramsci seems to question even Engel's formulation that the base determines dialectical historical development in the last instance. Thus the transition from feudalism to capitalism is not a neat process of the capitalist mode of production displacing enervated feudalism. Events in the superstructure and political civil society (the society of lawyers and intellectuals) play an extraordinarily important role in this process in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary France.

> Besides, not even capitalism in its historical essence is bourgeois: in reality it is a bourgeois superstructure, it is the concrete form taken by economic development some time after the affirmation of the political power of the new class, so that this class planted its roots even more solidly in the world (Gramsci, 1994, p. 17).

Questions of theory and interpretation are played out and sparked by the influence of syndicalist or anarchist themes, representatives of anarchism and syndicalism or the tactical imperative to find common cause with anarchists and syndicalists. But later, of course in the *Notebooks,* this novel interpretation of the Marxist historical framework more fully developed and is cast in more pessimistic and Jacobinical light seems to have led Gramsci to qualified support, or at least sympathetic appreciation, for the Stalinist revolution from above. But in 1916, however, his targets were those positivist socialists *and* anarchists or syndicalists who were enslaved to a determinist evolutionary vision of history and the historical process.

Thus Gramscian praxis revolted against a passive acceptance of 'positivist facts' or the notion 'that what is customarily called external reality is something so finite, so rigid, so completely separate and independent from the idea; economic and political institutions are not outside of our will and influence' (Gramsci, 1984, p. 300). The conscious socialist should not behave as if he or she possessed a scientific formula, which passive followers need merely learn and obey. In this respect Gramsci's early libertarianism is not merely found in his 'free-trade socialism' as discussed previously but also an interpretation of Marxist praxis that undermined the Second Internationalist concept of scientific socialism, embraced by social democrats and Bolsheviks, or equally the alternative positivist determinism of Kropotkinite anarcho-communism. This led Gramsci to passionate denunciations of the division of socialism between a leadership caste imbued with the correct formulae and followers who were easily manipulated by their scientific magic tricks. So as he imbibed the ideas of the positivist Michaels with caution but with some effect, Gramsci sometimes could appear to advance anarchist-like critiques of the socialist party machine. Unlike Kautsky or Lenin, who separated knowledge from daily know-how, the young Gramsci, even if his political practice re-

jected a full-fledged socialist pluralism, could not easily stomach a dogmatic or dictatorial social movement.

> The proletariat is not an army; it does not have officers, subalterns, corporals and soldiers. Socialists are not officers of the proletarian army, they are part of the proletariat itself, perhaps they are its consciousness, but as the consciousness cannot be divided from an individual, so socialists are not placed in duality with the proletariat. They are one, always one and they do not command but live with the proletariat, just as blood circulates and moves in the veins of a body and it is not possible for it to live and move inside rubber tubes wrapped around a corpse. They live within the proletariat, their force is in the proletariat's and their power lay in this perfect adhesion (Gramsci, 1982, p. 332).

We have seen how libertarian themes permeated Gramsci's early thought. His socialist is anti-statist. He is suspicious and on guard against the creation of a socialist hierarchy: he is against Jacobincal socialism. He promotes socialism grounded in civil society and pre-figuration. But he is also ill at ease with syndicalist arguments that undermine the importance of education and learning for the socialist and working- class movements. The socialist leadership should not patronize or order about the rank and file, flaunting their well-developed consciousness over the less well read rank and file. However, that does not mean that conscious socialists do not have a duty to educate the movement. And it is over the question of education and the anarchist concept of 'free thought' and the 'free thinker,' which Gramsci engages in his most extended theoretical debate with the anarchists. And in this debate he develops the themes and theoretical tools he will use to criticize anarchism in political debate but also as devices employed in supposedly cooler historiographical arguments presented in the Notebooks.

4. Free Thought and Educated Thought: the Origins of the Gramscian concepts *Senso Comune* and *Senso Buono* (the Limits of Gramscian Libertarianism)

By second nature, Gramsci thought of socialist politics as an extension of cultural enlightenment. During the war, he made his mark and generated deep animosities within the Socialist Party through his unorthodox editorship of *Il Grido delPopolo.* But even before his assumption of a major responsibility, his one-off broadsheet, *La Citta Futura* had been aimed at a specific audience of highly skilled and motivated workers, who were ambitious enough to attend night school to further their fortunes (Gramsci, 1982, p. 105–06). But Turin, he argued, lacked a cultural organization controlled by and acting on behalf of workers. The *Universita Popolare* was, he felt, a purely bourgeois humanitarian venture. On the contrary, his proposed an Association of Culture would have the extra added advantaged of supplying trained intellectuals suitably socialized for adequate tasks within the socialist movement. Although he did not quote Robert Michels directly, he was certainly thinking of the German's prewar study of Italian socialism, particularly Michels's description of the ways in which rootless intellectuals became the object of an unhealthy hero worship within the movement (Gramsci, 1982, pp. 498; Levy, 1998, pp. 205–8; Levy forthcoming,). Gramsci equated the authoritarianism of the movement with the generally low level of education enjoyed by the rank and file of the Italian socialist movement.

An Italian socialist party filled with educated comrades would be more democratic and libertarian because it would function through the spontaneous rationality he detected in micro-institutions he was involved with in these first years of socialist activism. Gramsci's presence within the Turinese labour movement during wartime is found on three levels: firstly his journalistic impact already mentioned; secondly his lectures; finally his curious 'Club of Moral Life.' In all three cases Gramsci stresses a Socratic approach to politics: he was making socialists one by one, not addressing oceanic crowds. The 'Clubs of Moral Life' were, in fact, another incarnation of the third pillar of the socialist movement, which would supplement the trade union/cooperative and the party. *Il Grido del Popolo* and later *L 'Ordine Nuovo* were considered the organs of this third institution of the socialist movement. And it is in the opening rounds of his long debate over an association of workers' culture that we discover some of the intellectual prerequisites of Gramsci's Marxism that separated it from mainstream socialism *and* anarchism.

Gramsci's conception of socialist education and culture was democratic, participatory and libertarian, but it had little in common with the rationalist free thought that dominated socialist and anarchist political culture in Liberal Italy (For overviews see, Degl'Innocenti, 1983; Pivato, 1986; Audenino, 1991, Turi, 1993). During the debate over the founding of an Association of Culture in Turin, Gramsci's chief targets of criticism were anarchist and socialist pie-in-the-sky utopianism. Fuzzy-minded rationalist free thought played into the hands of the fickle and bombastic leadership of the prewar Italian Socialist Party, because it denied the rank and file critical faculties to control this leadership. An educated party would be more democratic and libertarian because it would function through a spontaneous 'Socratic' rationality acquired in such micro-institutions as the 'Clubs of Moral Life.' The educated middle classes and the intellectuals would have a specific role as specialists rather than a stump orators and demagogues. Thus if the educational needs of the working classes would be satisfied and channeled through micro-cultural institutions, the formally educated classes might find their vocation through an Italian version of the Fabian Society.

> A particularly well-known example, in England, is the Fabian Society, which is a member of the Second International. The task of the Society is that of debating exhaustively and in depth, all economic and moral problems which the proletariat has encountered or will encounter in the course of its life and it has succeeded in recruiting a very significant segment of the English intellectual and academic world to this task of civilization, of liberating minds (Gramsci, 1994, p. 38).

For Gramsci, however, the prewar leaders of the socialist movement — Enrico Ferri, Filippo Turati or Claudio Treves — were corrupted by positivist social thought and shared with working-class popular culture the misleading assumptions of 'free- thought.' During the war Gramsci drew these concerns together in his vitriolic attacks on the favourite shibboleth of prewar anarchism and socialism: Esperanto. Esperanto was prominent course at the *Universita Popolare* and amongst the anarchists. His attacks on Esperanto also, of course, highlight another aspect of Gramsci training as a very promising student of linguistics at the University of Turin (Ives, 2004).

Gramsci thought that Esperanto was stuff and nonsense. Even after he left the University for full-time journalism, Gramsci retained a deep fascination for linguistics and the study of dialects, and he remained in close contact with his linguistics professor, Umberto Cosmo. Cosmo

has taught him that languages were the unique representation of a national or regional culture (Fiori, 1970, pp. 74–5, 93, 104, 113; Bergami, 1977, pp. 70, 92). Attempts, therefore, to create artificial world languages, such as Esperanto, were less than pathetic; they were pernicious because they evinced an abstract cosmopolitanism characteristic of many socialist and anarchist militants. Italian socialism could only be grounded in Italian conditions; artificial cosmopolitanism retarded the emergence of a true and realistic socialist internationalism.

As a marginal Sardinian student Gramsci had developed an appreciation for the power and dignity that nation-building languages could supply to oppressed groups, and he was, therefore, a keen critic and historian of the linguistic history and pedagogical controversies surrounding the Italian language. He was sensitive to the tensions created between metropolitan languages and their country bumpkin dialect cousins. Language held the key to codes, and these codes translated into power. As a socialist and revolutionary he was exercised about how the ordinary people of Italy might come to share in, or totally displace, the oligarchy's monopoly on it. Gramsci savaged Esperanto, but Esperanto was just part and parcel of the broader syndrome known as 'free thought,' his chief target.

As a follower of both Croce and Sorel, who were well known for their attacks on Masonic free thought, it is not surprising that Gramsci would be extremely hostile to one of the Italian left's most long-cherished beliefs (Furiozzi, 1975; Bellamy, 2002, pp 244–42). In March 1918 Gramsci's ideal-typical free-thinker happened to be the anarchist editor of Milan's *L 'UniversitaPopolare,* Luigi Molinari, who had published in pamphlet form, a lecture he gave in 1917 on the Paris Commune *(Il dramma della Comune).* Gramsci dismissed Molinari's pamphlet as lacking any historical analysis, of being an historical romance, a mere pyrotechnical entertainment. Molinari had left his audience without any critical sense of cause and effect, without any educational value whatsoever. Molinari's lecture was a particularly depressing example of the intellectual weakness of 'free thought' (Gramsci, 1982, 751–2).

Just before his death Molinari responded personally to Gramsci and Gramsci also received a general drubbing in the anarchist press. In June 1918 Gramsci responded to the ongoing debate but tried to lift the argument above mere personalities. He summarized his criticism of free thought in an article entitled 'Libero Pensiero and Pensiero Libero' in which Crocean and Gentilean themes on the subject dominated (Gramsci, 1984, pp. 113–17). He directed the thrust of his article at the assumptions he believed lay behind Molinari's pamphlet. Molinari's ''worldview' was ''libero pensiero' (free thought), which was a philistine, bourgeois expression and was caused by Jacobin individualism: that is why we find grouped around it Freemasons, Radicals and…libertarians.' Free thought was therefore the mindset of old-fashioned prewar *bloccardismo* (the front that included the Socialists and the free thought radicals, liberals and libertarians). But his Marxist 'pensiero libero' instead was a form of libertarian historicism that had little in common with this tradition and looked to Croce and Antonio Labriola, as we have cause to remark, for its inspiration.

Indeed, Gramsci advanced the opinion that the anarchists, or at least their leaders and theoreticians, were less libertarian than the Marxist socialists of the historicist stamp. As there socialists were able to think 'freely' and 'historistically,' they were able to take on contradictory arguments and enrich their own thought by overcoming them. On the other hand 'in as much as the libertarians are intolerant dogmatists, slaves to their own particular opinions,' they 'sterilize' debate with their petty arguments, as Gramsci claimed the controversy over Molinari had demonstrated (Gramsci, 1984, pp. 113–14).

It is also important to point out, that just as the key Gramscian concept if not the actual term, hegemony, was already being employed by 1916 in his articles about pre-figuration and cooperation, the key binomial — *senso comune* (common sense as naive sense) and *senso buono* (educated and critical sense) is already present in the contrast between *pensiero libero* and *liberopensiero* (For an analysis of these terms see, Cirese, 1982). Thus, to repeat, much of the mental apparatus of the *Quarderni* is already fleshed out in the young Gramsci.

Gramsci's encounters with the free thinkers helped more clearly to define his unique position within Italian socialist political culture. In most respects he was outside its accepted boundaries. Gramsci was never prepared to accept the force- feeding of culture, ideology or language to the working class. Nor, for that matter, did he accept a naive populist celebration of the parochialism of the province or the vanishing small-scale community. He did not praise the 'childlike' simplicity of the common people, as he believed the more fortunate classes in Italy had for too long possessed a monopoly on 'real' Italian and its humanist code, which controlled secondary and tertiary education. He was critical of Molinari's efforts at vulgarization precisely because it they did not supply the lower classes with the mental equipment with which they could use to combat the dominance of the humanist middle-classes not only in society generally but within the PSI itself (Levy, 2001).

To assure that in a future socialist commonwealth the rank and file governed, therefore, educational reform was necessary. In a series of articles during the war, Gramsci analyzed the failure of the Italian education system: the dilution of the original meritocratic intent of the 1859 Casati Law and the ensuing dominance of the government by humanist graduates from the South (An excellent example is Gramsci, 1982, pp. 105–06). This in turn had led to an incompetent and anti-democratic corps of civil servants. Looking ahead, Gramsci's form of universal education would reinstate the meritocratic promise of Casati through consensual discipline that the highly trained and autonomous minds embraced. The products of free thought were incapable of this consensual discipline that underwrote Gramsci's 'libertarian historicism.'

Having said this, there is also more than a dose of authoritarian condescension in Gramsci's remedies. Gramsci dismissed Molinari's efforts at vulgarization, but his efforts in the fields of science and history for over twenty years had been enormously influential amongst the less educated socialists and trade unionists (Masini). It is true that Gramsci won a loyal following of amongst self-educated workers in confabs at the editorial offices of *II Grido delPopolo* and from his talks in the suburbs on Ibsen or Romain Rolland. There is much oral testimony to suggest he could earn the respect of workers, who were more than little suspicious of former university students (Levy, 1999, pp. 94–97). Witnesses concur that Gramsci was not a spellbinder and was therefore considered by conventional standards a poor speaker. But he in fact broke those conventions of socialist oratory in order to elicit discussion from his audience. His respect for his audience's intelligence appealed to small groups of skilled and/or self-educated workers. They appreciated his respect for their technical terms and their practical industrial knowledge; and they were particularly attracted to his productivist rhetoric and prose, to his identification of themselves as the producers. However, on the other hand it is difficult to see how they digested the digressions into Gentile or Croce found in his key texts such as the *La Citta Futura.* Many of the self-educated veterans of the cooperative and labour movements such as Maria Giudice and Francesco Barberis found him a tiresome pedant (Levy, 1999, p. 99). And it should be recalled that the Schools of Moral Life seemed to imply a pecking order of consciousness, with the assumption

that the lower middle class comrades were more prepared to imbibe in intellectual discussion than the suburban workers.

Perhaps Gramsci's Gentilean socialism was more libertarian than Lenin's type of scientific socialism, but it too assumed that an intellectual elite of trained socialists was needed to set the tone and parameters for effective politics. Furthermore, although Gramsci was prepared to work with and argue against the anarchists and syndicalists in more tolerant and engaging manner than Lenin had done, his attitude towards them did have some similarities with Lenin's vigilant guardianship of orthodoxy. Lenin's orthodoxy was his version of Second Internationalist gospel. Gramsci's odd mixture of Gentile, Croce, Sorel and Antonio Labriola may have made him appear wildly unorthodox to other Italian socialists, but this did not prevent Gramsci himself invoking orthodoxy when he discussed the potential for the formation of political alliances with the libertarians. In fact, in order to expose the muddleheaded nature of Italian positivist socialism, he argued that his approach was more Marxist and therefore more rigid in its conditions for accepting alliances with the libertarians. As we have seen, Gramsci argued that the culture of free thought had included the prewar socialists and the libertarians and his form of socialism, he argued transcended this murky embrace.

5. Gramsci and the Anarchists: the Barriers to Alliances

During the war a new international left arose from a fortuitous combination of mutually hostile groups: some were pacifist; some social democrat; some anarchists or syndicalist (For overviews see, Lindemann, 1974; Bertrand, 1977; Agosti, 1980, Sirianni, 1982, pp. 307–56; Kirby, 1986; Levy 2004). A network of reciprocal influences developed in which intellectuals and journalists such as Henri Barbusse, Romain Rolland. Jacques Mesnil or Max Eastman transmitted ideas from one pole of the network to another. Gramsci is an excellent example of how observant radicals could tap into a network that was at once magnified and than rapidly diminished by the effects of the Bolshevik Revolution and the founding of the Third International. During the war this network was sustained by reportage in *Avanti!, L 'Humanite,* the *Liberator* or the *Workers ' Dreadnought*; by private correspondence, but above all by the imagery and myths surrounding international conferences at Zimmerwald and Kienthal, as well as over the controversies stirred by the never convened Stockholm Congress, called by the Petrograd Soviet in 1917.

While politicians and intellectuals attempted to mould mass movements from the initial radicalization of 1916–1918, differences quickly reappeared. Gramsci's debate with the anarchists and syndicalists is symptomatic of a broader story played out in the backdrop of the unfolding Russian events. But his peculiar theoretical background presents an interesting variation on a continental, indeed, global theme.

When Gramsci visited the suburbs he discovered the essence of what he understood to be proletarian unity (Levy, 1999, pp. 94–9). Or rather when he saw the suburbs march on the city in June 1914, during the Red Week (For this see, Lotti, 1972), which witnessed socialists, anarchists, syndicalists and republicans on the same side of the barricades, he understood what an alliance through common action might mean. An early article written in January 1916, just when he was honing his concept of pre-figuration through his articles on cooperation, recalls the Red Week, which deeply impressed him when he was still an uncertain university student (Gramsci, 1980, pp. 76–7). The prose is purple and Sorelian; the message is unity through direct action.

Gramsci recalled the death of three demonstrators in the anarchist stronghold of Ancona, on a day 'mockingly consecrated to constitutional liberty' (it was the holiday that celebrated the constitution, which the House of Savoy had given Piedmont in 1848, and formed the basis of the constitution of the Kingdom of Italy). In Turin the reaction was immediate: 'our city made through military order and tradition,' a city centre of looming piles of aristocratic townhouses, arrayed 'like a regiment of the army of their old Savoyard Dukes,' witnessed the march past of well-ordered proletarian ranks. 'Coarse men descended on the city boulevards and marched in front of the closed shop shutters, past the pale little men of the city police who were consumed by anger and fear.'

Continually, these Sorelian images of the gruff, productive working class marching from its suburban strongholds to the challenge clerical or parasitical cafe society are present in Gramsci's writings. The examples include the banned May Day demonstrations of 1916, anti-clerical demonstrations at an unpopular priest's church in one of the suburbs, the anti-war demonstrations of young anarchists and socialists from September to November of 1916, and the national campaign to save the Ital- American anarcho-syndicalist (Wobbly) Carlo Tresca from the American electric chair.

But Gramsci opposed politically inspired united fronts of socialists and anarchists in Turin or nationally. Between 1916 and early 1918, Gramsci took part in a debate in the Italian socialist press on this subject, sparked off by the private and public exchanges of the anarchist Luigi Fabbri and the leading maximalist socialist Serrati (See summary in Levy, 1999, pp. 102–03). Indeed another maximalist socialist, Spartaco Lavagnini, proposed a syndicalist-style Third International to replace the discredited Second International. The railway worker Lavagnini was on very good terms with the anarchist leaders of the syndicalist *Unione SindacaleItaliana*, and its newspaper, *Guerra di Classe,* where, it should be recalled Enrico Leone had published an article that sparked off Gramsci discussion of cultural enlightenment and an early theoretical discussion of hegemony. The syndicalists' newspaper was published in Florence in 1917–18. Lavagnini and the legal counsel for the anarchist- tinged railway workers union, Mario Trozzi, both wrote for *Guerra di Classe.*

Trozzi's legal study was used for a meeting of socialist 'rigids' in November 1917, at which Gramsci was a participant.

Lavagnini's intervention is a good example of the international network of anti-war radicals at work. Inspired by a letter from Errico Malatesta, the greatest Italian anarchist and chief organizer of the Red Week, from his exile in London to Armando Borghi, Lavagnini endorsed Malatesta's proposal for a new international *(La Mondiale)* that would include anti-war socialist, anarchists and syndicalists. It would heal the schism caused by the expulsion of the libertarians from the Second International in 1896 but any case would have had little in common with the militarized disciplined organization that Lenin would found in 1919.

Gramsci's intervention in the debate was pitched at two levels. First, Gramsci wanted to contest the commonly held opinion in the Italian socialist left that anarchists or syndicalists were more revolutionary and 'purer' socialists than the socialist themselves. Recalling an earlier debate with Enrico Leone, revolutionary politics, he wrote, should not be equated with gladiatorial posturing or with 'violent language,' as the chequered history of Italian syndicalism had demonstrated the pitfalls of this approach (Gramsci, 1980, pp. 360–1). Gramsci also wanted to distance his socialism from Lavagnini's heterodoxy. Not only did the antiparliamentarianism of Malatesta and the anarchists pose an obstacle to formal unity, their mentality, recalling his argu-

ments against free thought, was ahistorical and doctrinaire. International organizations such as Malatesta's *La* Mondiale undermined Gramsci's conception of socialist politics. The concept of pre-figuration may have evolved in Gramsci's theory by 1917, before he encountered the Soviet model, but his type of pre-figuration, while not Leninist was still linked to the well-organized and distinctive socialist party. And external discipline through umbrella organizations such as Malatesta's *La Mondiale* undermined this key tenet of Gramsci's conception of politics.

Only an internal discipline would fuse *en masse* the members of the party, and that was the result of agreement between 'thought and action' and by the coherence between 'general principles and the interpretations of particular contingencies' (Gramsci, 1982, pp. 467–7). But this was a party not founded on the culture of free thought or positivist socialism: rather the consensual discipline of a party founded on the educational principles of Gramsci's 'clubs of moral life,' linked to the creativity of pre-figurative institutions such as the cooperatives, would produce a distinctive socialist politics.

Joint agreements with the anarchists and syndicalists were based on the exigencies of the moment and they were, in short, the type of working-class action expressed in the Red Week of 1914, that touchstone of Gramsci's radicalism before the Turinese rising of 1917 and the Bolshevik Revolution supplanted it.

6. The Early Gramsci and the Gramsci of the *Biennio Rosso*

I have argued that just as Gramsci's key conceptions were already operating in his mind before 1918, his attitudes towards the anarchists and syndicalists were already operationalised before he worked closely with them on *L 'Ordine nuovo.* Thus, as I have shown elsewhere, anarchist 'organic intellectuals' were cultivated but anarchist 'traditional intellectuals,' the friends and colleagues of Molinari, were denounced as muddled, pernicious demagogues. Just as the Sorelian and productivist legacy were so important to catalyze Gramsci pre-figurative and civil-society based type of socialism of pre-1917/18, his council communism of 1919–1920 was merely a variation on this theme reinforced by international examples. The libertarian productivist Taylorism of the anarchist engineer, Pietro Mosso, was the lynchpin, which held together the council communism of 1919–1920, and anarchist metalworkers in FIOM were absolutely essential to propagate the ideas of *L 'Ordine Nuovo* throughout the movement in its Turinese industrial heartland. When Gramsci fell out with his colleagues, Tasca, and then Togliatti in 1920, over the boundaries between union and factory council, his only remaining allies were the anarchists (Clark, 1977). The arguments Gramsci advanced in the early war years were merely repeated and placed in a more super-charged and propitious atmosphere, the vehicle of pre-figuration, the factory council came into its own, even if the theory was fleshed out in his discussion of cooperatives in 1916.

One benchmark did change, however, and is a clue to his uncritical acceptance of Lenin's way, even after his earlier misinterpretation of Lenin (temporary, necessary charismatic *capo* of a system of Soviets and workers' councils), rather than the dictator of a monopoly party-state. And this is linked to his criticism of Masonic Free Thought, which reformist socialists, most maximalist socialists and the anarchists all suffered from. Gramsci's evaluation of Jacobinism changed drastically from the war years to 1920. Jacobinism is a key conceptual benchmark, which measures how Gramsci's politics grew increasingly authoritarian in the years following the Bolshevik Revolution (Galli). But at first Jacobinism was not used in the context of Russian

politics, but that of prewar Italian political culture. He used it in the same breath as his invocation of Sorel's, and Croce's attacks on the culture of Masonic free thought. Jacobinism 'is a messianic vision of history: it always responds in abstractions, evil, good, oppression, liberty, light, shade, which exist absolutely, generically and not in historical forms (Gramsci, 1984, p.149).' In other words like free thought, Jacobinism lacked grounding in historicism.

But by 1920 Jacobinism was associated with revolutionary Paris heroically seeing off the internal and external enemies of the Revolution, just as the Bolsheviks fought a civil and external war against the myriad enemies of their new state (Tognarini, 1976). Jacobinism took on a different valence when Gramsci approached the question of city and the countryside in Italy (in various and indeed contradictory forms appearing in his essay on the *Mezzogiorno* or his approach to the NEP and even war communism and later forced collectivization). Jacobins were therefore pitiless against the enemies of the Revolution but also strengthened by forming alliances with those elements in the countryside open to accepting the political hegemony of the Bolsheviks as the representatives of the urban working class. Similarly, Gramsci argued for the hegemony of the PCdI over peasant, syndicalist or autonomist movements in the South, not for an open-ended support for competitors in the rural Left: he was not a pluralist. His early mistaken praise of Cernov is replaced by venomous attacks on the SRs and Makhno's 'anarchist experiment' in Civil-War Ukraine. He endorsed Bukharin's NEP and as a manifestation of alliance of city and countryside based on the hegemony of the Soviet Communist party and as far we can tell Stalin's war on the countryside using these same first premises (Paggi; Levy, forthcoming). The anti-Jacobinical socialism of pre-1918, the negative interpretation of the Jacobins he learnt from Croce, Salvemini or Sorel, is replaced by a praise of their rigour and their successful linkage to the 'healthy' forces in the countryside. No longer socially divorced pedants, arid ideological fanatics or the imbibers of shallow anti-clerical positivist nostrums, Jacobins represent the creative but implacable Bolshevik elite, which Gramsci never abandoned, even if he probably agreed that Stalin has become a cruel tyrant, a Genghis Khan with a telephone, as his former ally in the 1920s, Bukharin, described him.

As Gramsci endorsed all things Bolshevik, particularly the *Twenty-One Points*, he became increasingly militantly anti-anarchist. However, throughout the early 1920s, he was placed in a dilemma tactically. Before the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion, the suppression of all factions in the Russian Communist Party, and the failure of negotiations between various syndicalist trade unions and the Comintern, Gramsci had to tread carefully. While he mercilessly criticized the leadership of *Unione Sindacle Italiana*, he could not burn all his bridges, since the Russians saw merit in cultivating the Italian anarchists and syndicalists, especially when a pro-Comintern faction was formed in the USI itself. In Turin his anarchist allies were marginalized in FIOM after the occupation of the factories and some were murdered by the Fascists in late 1922, but before the March on Rome and indeed until 1925/1926, Gramsci saw merit in keeping feelers open to the social interventionist Left, D'Annunzio and even briefly with the suspiciously libertarian *Arditi del* Popolo, the only anti-fascist militia in these years which caused Mussolini and the Fascists some concern (Levy, 1999). But while Gramsci and his comrades maintained a none- stop tirade against the 'child-like' antics of Malatesta and Borghi, Zinoviev and even Lenin, recognized in Malatesta a revolutionary, and in Borghi a man to be wooed in Moscow (Antonioli and other references on anarchists and Russia). Gramsci reverted to the same twin-track approach he used in 1916: organic intellectual anarchists good: 'traditional' intellectual anarchists bad, and chose to finesse the tactical cunning of the Russians as much as possible.

7. Anarchism as the Highest Form of *Sovversivismo* (Levy, 2007)

In the Notebooks, Gramsci engages in historical and comparative sociological examination of the modern world and particularly the collapse of Liberal Italy and the destruction of the Left within it. Thus the nature of Italian Fascism and its enduring success is the red thread, which runs throughout his notes. The failure of the Left *and* the triumph of Fascism and its transformation of the Italian State are understood through the term *sovversivismo*. This term may be taken as a tool of historical and sociological analysis, but it is drenched with highly partisan political first premises that assume that the Gramsci's historicist Marxism offers a master-key for unlocking the secrets of the past as well as the solutions for the Left in the future. He may have been writing the notes for eternity, and it is unlikely he would have sanctioned their publication in the form they were produced, but he certainly had not left his politics at the cell door. Even if there was good deal of frustration and perhaps justifiable paranoia about party comrades and the murderous ways of the Georgian tyrant, he was still a militant Marxist who wrote in such a spirit. The troubling aspect of Gramsci's historicizing Marxism is that mere empiricism and 'information' is looked upon as the greatest of mortal sins. In short, unlike the rather inelegant, plodding notes of Angelo Tasca on utopian socialism and anarchism that are deposited in Milan's *BibliotecaFeltrinelli*, for example, Gramsci did not yet facts get in the way of theory (For Angelo Tasca).

The *Prison Notebooks* contain startling recollections of entire passages or their essence from journalism of twenty years previously. Naturally these recollections were reinforced by his university training, and his prison reading, which was on the one hand rather rigorous, but on the other due naturally to the obvious constraints, hit and miss. For instance, there has been much written about Gramsci's analysis of the Southern Question. But this essay is a brilliant revisiting of Salvemini's arguments (very little new empirical evidence is presented to back it up), laced with a party political message, and coupled with a lament for Italy's missed revolution (s). Similarly when he addressed the history of Italian anarchism and syndicalism, he had to rely on the dubious Michels and Italian positivists and some echoes of the sounder Nello Rosselli (Gramsci citations in Q).

Gramsci was less concerned with an in-depth account of the anarchists and syndicalists so much to use them in his construction of the all-purpose analytical term *sovvervisimo*. But this had been honed from his debates with the anarchists and syndicalists before 1921, and bore all the traces of a political term of art or possibly an artifice of historicist metaphysics. Just as detailed knowledge of the factory councils and Soviets and the Bolsheviks did not prevent Gramsci from creating a fantastically libertarian Lenin in the early years of the Russian regime, lack of detailed analysis of the anarchists and syndicalists before 1926 in Italy, did not prevent him from shoehorning them in his neat and political charged term, *sovverisivismo*. This is frustrating, because the term certainly has its uses as a tool to interrogate that anarchist past, but as a provisional probe, an ideal-type, not as a form of political abuse.

An interest in the history of anarchism is apparent in the pages of *L 'Ordine nuovo,* however the journal's chief historian was not Gramsci, but Angelo Tasca, who demonstrated an in-depth if rather unsympathetic understanding of the utopian socialists and the anarchists. A series of pedantic debates over the interpretation of the history of schools of libertarian socialism saw Tasca take on a variety of anarchists in the pages of the journal (Levy, 1999). Gramsci's interest throughout his life was to contrast the political and intellectual poverty of anarchism to that of

historicist Marxism, not dig deeply into its history. In this respect both Gramsci and the young Togliatti, had less grounding and 'feel' for the culture or the social movement in which Tasca and his self-educated anarchist adversaries were born into.

Whereas Tasca was the son of a railway worker, who cut his teeth within the positivism socialist, free-thinking sub-culture of ante-bellum Northern Italy, Gramsci and Togliatti hailed from the vast and variegated lower to middle-middle classes (See biographies of Tasca cited above). There was a certain inherent snobbishness in Gramsci's criticism of the *UniversitaPopolare* or Togliatti dismissal of the 'red baronies' of the Po Valley (ironic, indeed, because those plodding baronies would be inherited by the PCI after 1945 and retain a presence as a pale after-glow in the postpost communist left today) (Agosti). Gramsci and Togliatti were impatient and embarrassed by the socialist and anarchist culture of free-thought and self-education. Of course there were many weaknesses in this culture, and Gramsci made acute and painfully accurate, sarcastic remarks about these throughout his career, but he lacked empathy for this culture, which makes him a hostile witness when he reflects on the failure of the Left in general and the 'subversive' Left in particular in the *Notebooks.* Unlike Edward Thompson, Gramsci did not want to save the anarchists and syndicalists from the condescension of historians! Later Togliatti thinking of formidable anarchist competition in the newly born Spanish Second Republic, realized that the anarchists were close to the heart and soul of pre-Fascist socialism, so when Malatesta died in 1932, Togliatti's obituary during the height of Stalinist Third Period sectarianism, was balanced and thoughtful (Obit). And the communists cultivated the next likely generation of anarchists from their heartlands of Tuscany, Liguria, Rome etc, when Fascism undermined the continuity of anarchism and victories of the Red Army in the East lent the Russian model great prestige (Levy 1989).

For Gramsci the Italian concept of the subversive and *sovversivismo* were based on a populist positioning, of the people pitched against an ill-defined *signori.* This *sovversivismo* was a product of Italy's bastard modernity. Subversives could come from the Left and Right, and there even was a *sovversivismo* from above, and subversives could be reversible, as was the case of the social interventionists, who interested Gramsci when he was an editor in Turin. Thus a lack of modern political institutions, a weak ethical political culture and an incorrect reading of Marxism or social theory, especially amongst the anarchist and syndicalist subversives characterized these currents. The touchstone of his early radicalism, the Red Week of 1914, and Malatesta, became symbolic of this type of Italian radicalism. But the ghost at this banquet was his gaoler, and Gramsci felt this personally, for had been drawn into politics partially by the socialist and Stirnerite Mussolini, and as is well known, almost spoiled his copy book, by his torturous flirtations with Mussolini's war interventionism.

Sovversivismo, Gramsci argued, fed off the role of volunteers, since Garibaldi toppled the Bourbon Kingdom and set in train the Piedmont conquest of the peninsula. The anarchists were merely one variation on this theme, which included the republicans but also of course the fascist militia of the early 1920s. The state was nourished by reformed *sovversivi* from Crispi to Mussolini. The dependence on charismatic politics, reflected in the anarchist and socialist leaders of pre-Fascist Italy, demonstrated the low level of education of the Italian people and weakly constructed institutions of the socialist and labour movement.

But anarchists, such as Errico Malatesta, were well aware of the dangers of hero worship (Levy 1998; Levy forthcoming). Malatesta preached organization, organization and more organization. Anarchism, Malatesta argued was not about the lack of organization, which was essential if

anarchists were serious about dealing with the exigencies of the modern industrial city. He may have been naive, but Malatesta pleaded with the factory occupiers in 1920 to recommence trade with other factories without the capitalist state. For the Gramsci, the lesson one learnt from the factory occupations was that 'the spontaneity in the factory council movement was not neglected, even less despised. It was *educated,* directed, purged of extraneous contamination; the aim was to bring it into line with modern theory.' (Q) But nowhere in Gramsci do we find an open acknowledgement of the authoritarianism of Communism and possibility that socialism had failed to take another more libertarian path in the way the tarnished Tasca did in the preface to his post-war edition of his wonderful history of the rise of Fascism, where he invoked the libertarian potential of the pre-Fascist Chambers of Labour (1950 Italian edition of book). When Gramsci recalled another exemplar of Italian grassroots socialism, the factory councils, their most important contribution was not their inherent democracy, but their contribution to 'modern theory.'

One can reconstruct a Gramscian critique of the Stalinist Soviet Union but he never questioned the Marxist monopoly on thought and action and he never granted the anarchists the title of gadflies of the revolution, their warnings about the untrammeled powers of the new Soviet state were never accepted by Gramsci even in his deepest pessimistic moments, because their way of thinking was alien to his very being (Pons).

8. After 1945

There is an epilogue to this story. It is the many seasons of Gramsci, which followed the defrosting of the Italian left after Stalin's death and it is mainly centred on the increasingly open-minded nature of Italian communist labour and socialist historiography (cite overviews). But there is another story, which needs more evacuation. This involves dissident socialists engaging Togliatti in the wake of Khrushchev's revelations and the Hungarian Revolution, where the factory councils of 1919–1920 were rediscovered, and their libertarian nature reevaluated. This had followed the anarchist historian Pier Carlo Masini's short pamphlet on the role of the anarchists in the Turinese movement of 1919–1920, and the pioneering study of the historiography of Italian anarchism and syndicalism by the veteran *Azionista,* Leo Valiani (Cite Masini and Valiani). Much of this debate was forgotten in 1968–69, as forty-nine varieties of Marxism, Trotskyism, Maoism and *Operaismo* (which was densely Marxist and involved few if any workers in its intellectual leadership) (Wright) and my review of it), criticized the PCI for its timid reformism and its remnant Stalinism, but certainly did not repudiate Marxist-Leninist core values. The Communists may have been too timid or too national populist but they shared a common authoritarian and sectarian inheritance with these youngsters. It was only in the 1970s and 1980s, with the emergence of new generation of historians, not directly linked to the Communists or Christian Democrats or traditional liberal area, that anarchists and syndicalists received their own historians in the shape of Maurizio Antonioli and the contributors to *Rivista storica dell'anarchismo* and later in the 1990s and to the present, an even more recent generation, which has embraced a much less politicized form of social history.

But it is interesting to note that one can detect a change in tone amongst the chief Communist experts on anarchism as the party traveled towards it more liberal Eurocommunist public persona. An instructive essay could be written, for instance, on the transformation of Enzo Santarelli, a

Communist historian of the Marches and of Errico Malatesta, and the author of a small but influential history of anarchism that was the Communist alternative to the works of Pier Carlo Masini. Whereas Masini was Tasca reborn, very empirical and rather tolerant of the pre-war positivist free thinking culture, Santarelli's impressive archival work in the 1950s and 1960s was always distorted by conclusions dictated by Gramscian Leninist orthodoxy. Although, for instance, he clearly demonstrated the popularity and dexterity of Malatesta in Ancona in 1897–1898, he could not end his account without a ritual dismissal of the child-like 'subversiveness' of the anarchist's politics (Cite his article on Malatesta). But this approach changes in the 1973 edition of his history of Italian anarchism originally published in 1959 where a levelheaded evaluation prevails (Cite two editions of Santarelli). By the 1970s, leading Communist historians (notably Giovanni Procacci) were prepared to agree that Gramsci's characterization of Italian syndicalism, as largely a Southern movement, was empirically misleading and distorted by political considerations. Indeed, two conferences under the auspices of party historians were important turning points for a balanced study of Italian syndicalism (Levy 2000). If the era of the *compromesso storico* left little of tangible benefit, it certainly did free Italian historians from the constraints imposed by a ritual acceptance of Gramsci's formulaic term *sovversivismo*.

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The Philosophy of a Schism

When Anarchism meets Critical Marxism: Paths and Paradoxes of "Socialisme ou Barbarie" (and of Trotskyism)

Benoît Challand

1. Introduction

This paper deals with the intersections between anarchism and a specific strand of Marxism, namely Trotskyism in the middle of last century in France. It presents a brief overview of the trajectory of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (S ou B) under the influence of political theorist/economist/ psychoanalyst Cornelius Castoriadis (1922–1997). It also deals with previous work done on what were then unexplored archives of a small Trotskyite party in Switzerland *(Ligue Marxiste Revolutionnaire)* in the period 19691980, combined with oral history conducted with about thirty (former) militants. The paper would like to interweave some of the lessons from both cases (adding at times few elements from the general history of the Fourth International) to come up with broader (possibly contemporary) conclusions about the limits of black and red intersecting and analyze prospects for a return of possible red-black synergies.

The main contribution of *Socialisme ou Barbarisme* (the name of the group's journal) at its inception was its slightly altered Trotskyite critique of the USSR as a form of state bureaucratic capitalism. It later developed its own critical voice against traditional Marxism for its ideological stiffness in its reading of advanced capitalist and bureaucratic societies. This unorthodox anti-authoritarian Marxist critique (sustaining at times a view close to council communism) developed by the journal exercised a deep influence on the French intellectual scene but also on the various social movements active around and after May 1968 in France. The influence of Castoriadis as a political theorist has boomed over the last years, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, hinting at a lasting influence of the ideas of *S ou B.*

The hypothesis of this paper is that ideas and people that gathered around the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* represent a good platform for thinking about the entanglement and convergence of Marxism and anarchism — but also their limits. Thinkers such as Cornelius Castoriadis, Claude Lefort (1924-...), and to a lesser extent Jean-Fran9ois Lyotard (1924–1998) have to a large extent merged ideals and suggestions taken from both traditions of thoughts. This paper historically re-assess their contribution as well as the aporias and paradoxes that they have left us. Let us go back to the period of foundation of this small political group.

2. Trotskyism cuts both ways: Lessons from the period 1945 to now

The reigning atmosphere in the immediate post-WW2 was pitch-dark: the Cold War in the making quickly erased the entente between Western countries and the Soviet Union and from 1947 onwards many predicted the outbreak of the Third World War. Doomsday visions were even more possible since the Soviet Union quickly acquired nuclear armament in 1949. In this context Trotskyite critique towards the Soviet Union, as in the early 1930s when it rightly stigmatized Stalin's false approach towards fascism and Nazism as the ultimate stage of imperialism, regained prominence as people, in this difficult context of the late 1940s, had to take a radical stance towards the Soviet Union: either support 'progressive' forces in the name of Marxism or criticize Stalin's autocratic style of governing. This was a difficult question for many left-wing activists and intellectuals and also a central one for American anti-communism masterminds who precisely targeted the non-communist left in its battle for the minds at the beginning of the so-called cultural and intellectual Cold War (Gremion 1997; Saunders 2001: Berghahn 2002).

With this world tension as a backdrop, we would like to reflect on a historical and institutional paradox of Trotzkyism, a paradox that could be encapsulated by the phrase: 'Trotskyism cuts both ways.' One the one hand, Trotskyism emerged as a powerful critique of Stalinism and of the bureaucratic degenerescence of the Soviet Union, providing an immense appeal for radical leftists unhappy with the path that the leader of 'socialism in one country' was showing, while one the other hand, Trotskyism never managed to liberate itself from the Leninist pedigree, one that favours avant-garde type of organization premised on harsh democratic centralism a la Kronstadt which eventually hinder individual autonomy and blossoming of ideological debates (Ali and Evans 1980). *Socialisme ou Barbarie* perfectly illustrates this, even though it rapidly detached itself from a Trotskyite etiquette.

When related to post-1945 anticommunist struggle, it is striking to see how Trotskyism also cut both ways, historically speaking. Arendt introduced the analytical distinction between 'ex-communists' and 'former communists' to illustrate different life trajectories. 'Former communists' are people who usually did not have a leading position in a communist party and who were mostly fellow travellers, like Picasso or Sartre. When they left the orbit of a communist party, their life moved on, so to say and was not centrally determined by this previous affiliation. 'Ex-communists' instead were much more engaged in formal hierarchies of communist party and once they left it, "communism has remained the chief issue of their life" (Arendt 1953: 595). Communism remained central because they have decided to fight communist ideology thanks to their insider's knowledge. James Burnham (1905–1987) author of the *Managerial Revolution* and influential conservative intellectuals during the Cold War (Kelly 2008) or Arthur Koestler (1905–1983) as an ex-leader of the KPD and later authors of bestselling novels against the totalitarian Gulag are two prime examples of the trajectories of 'excommunists' a la Arendt.

That is where Trotskyism comes as a distinctive marker of anticommunism (a marker that Arendt does not thematize) because of their dual knowledge of communism. Put differently, amongst the ex-communists, ex-Trotskyites feature prominently for two reasons. First, many Trotskyites were originally members of orthodox communist parties (before adhering to Trotsky's ideology) and know in full the vulgate that Moscow, from the Third International onwards, managed to impose onto national Communist parties. Leo Trotsky (1879–1940) is the paragon of

this gradual distanciation from the Soviet Communist Party, but many others turned Trotskyites either because of the disillusion in the 1930s of the Moscow trials, Stalin's inaction towards fascisms, or because of the post-WW2 silence of communist parties in front of the Soviet crushing popular uprisings of East Germany in June 1953, of Budapest in 1956, or the Czechoslovak Spring in 1968. Secondly, their intellectual equipment as Trotskyites is precisely built around the criticism of the Soviet Union, with a deep knowledge of the nature of bureaucratic degenerescence. It is therefore no surprise that many ex-Trotskyites were therefore courted in the anti-Soviet battle of the post-WW2 period.

It comes maybe more as a surprise to see that many ex- and former Trotskyites *voluntarily* embraced anti-communism as way of life. There, the list abounds: in the USA in particular the list of 'transfuges' is impressive and significant for the battle of anticommunism: Irving Kristol, Sidney Hook, Sol Levitas, Melvin Lasky, James Burnham who turned most active in the powerful secretly funded CIA-outlet Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) (Scott-Smith 2000, 2002: Saunders 2001), but also former Trotskyites sympathisers include prominent figures of the neoconservative group such as Richard Perle,[1] or Joshua Muravchik (Judis 1995) or influential political scientists such as Martin Seymour Lipset (Guilhot 2005). In Europe, it is more ex-communists that feature on the list of important anti-communist ideologies: people like Arthur Koestler, David Rousset and Boris Souvarine, Igniazio Silone all had a formal role in their respective communist parties (Germany, France and Italy respectively) but none of them were Trostkyites, while people like Raymond Aron, Francois Furet (to quote two influential French intellectuals in the battle against communists) were only 'former communists' in Arendt's classification and remained critical of too blunt external manipulations of social theory by the CIA or US-funded agencies active in anti-communist activities.

Trotskyism thus seems less important in Europe in terms of anti-communism than it has been in the USA. Another difference between US and European Trotskyisms is that in the USA it was *one* influential party (the Socialist Workers Party) that carried the flag of the Fourth International (although it was decimated by various legal measures against socialist movements (in particular the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947) culminating with the hysteria of McCarthyism in the 1950s). In Europe, instead, a large number of small Trotskyite formations have grown over the post-1945 period. Arguably, these formations have had a lasting impact on political and intellectual debates in Europe. Surely, they never managed to come close to power and always remain very tiny groups (with a maximum of 100 to 200 members in small countries such as Switzerland or Belgium (Challand 2000) and a maximum of 1000 up to 2500 members in large countries such as France or England (and in Italy, in front of the hegemony of the PCI, Trotskyism never made significant inroads on the national level) (Pina 2005). Trotskyist parties, despite the dissolution of communist block in 1989–1991 heralded by many as the end of history, remain serious contenders within the left block up to now: one just needs to look at the five to eight per cent that Trotskyist parties regularly manage to obtain in French elections in the last fifteen years to realize how suited Trotskyism remains to understand current political developments (the internationalist take of Trotskyist ideology is certainly an important asset).

To come back to the idea that Trotskyism cuts both ways,' one could sustain that while US ex-Trotskyites adhered to the anti-communist battle (Scott-Smith 2000, 2002), the foison of dozens

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[1] `http://www.historycommons.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=neoconinfluence&neoconinfluence prominent neoconservatives=neoconinfluence_irving_kristol` (accessed 18 August 2009)

of small splitering groups inspired by Trotskyism might have been an *indirect* contribution to anticommunism: by always splitting the far-left vote (anarchists being out of the discussion here), all these small Trotskyite factions have also contributed to hindering communist parties and/or broad left alliances to emerge since their declared enemies is less the bourgeois camp than orthodox communist factions and reformist socialist parties.

One could wonder (with great caution, obviously) whether there has never been an external instrumentalization in all these splitings inside Trotskyite movements. How can it be that in each European countries, there have been always two or three different Trotskyite movments, not mot mentioned other hybrid ultra-left parties such as Maoists, Spontaneisits, and Anarcho-syndicalists? It takes resources and financial means to produce leaflets and party organs and one can seriously wonder whether there was never any US monies supporting the foundation of new Trotskyites sub-groupings, which eventually contributed in an effective manner to the dismay of orthodox communist parties and also hindered the emergence of a radical anti-authoritarian left since, as many acknowledge this fact, Trotskyism remains a sort of *passage oblige* in radical left thinking (but a stage of which one ought to liberate her-himself, as we shall argue later).

As any students of the Fourth International know, charting the history and transformation of all Trotskyite movements is literally impossible as people did and undid new factions on a yearly basis, old parties transformed into two or three new movements overnight (e.g. Candar et al. 2004). The usual Trotskyite joke 'three Trotskyites, four opinions' could not be truer. The example of Swiss Trotskyism is quite speaking: out of one rather 'successful' party in the 1970s (Challand 2000), the movement survived the early difficult years of the early 1990s but regained momentum in the late 1990s (in part due to the globalization and the emergence of ATTAC in which (former) Trotskyites featured prominently, albeit in an undeclared manner (entrism still at play!)) to fall into the same splitting tendency in the 2000s with now three (!) different formations existing in the French speaking cantons of Switzerland with *SolidaritéS*[2], *Mouvement pour le Socialisme*[3] and *Gauche Anticapitaliste*'[4] splitting thus the radical left allegiances into even tinier portions.

3. The contribution of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. When Anarchy (partially) meets Marxism

Coming to the main case-study of this paper, Socialisme ou Barbarie, it has to be underlined that formations close to the Fourth International (founded in 1938 in Paris) went through difficult times during WW2, foremost with the assassination of Trotsky in 1940 and with the repression of communist formations of all pedigrees by fascist regimes. With the end of WW2 and the coming to power (most of the time in a shared manner) of orthodox Communist Parties (in particular in France and Italy), ultra-left formations were also targeted by communist parties themselves (and in Italy, the Justice Ministry Togliatti proved to have a heavy hand against anarchists and Trotskyites/Bordiguistes).[5] The emergence of ultra-left formations was therefore extremely dif-

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[2] http://www.solidarites.ch/common/index.php/ (accessed 16 August 2009).

[3] http://www.labreche.ch/mps/presMPS.htm (accessed 16 August 2009).

[4] http://www.gauche-anticapitaliste.ch/?page id=2 (accessed 16 August 2009).

[5] See the case of Belgrado Pedrini, an anarchist from Carrara, (and many of his partisan feloows) as 'flagship' example of the anarchist persecutions at that time.

ficult but the burning questions we mentioned in the introduction (to support or not the USSR around 1947–1950) led to the emergence of various radical left groups. In France, the most important group of Trotskyite inspiration was the PCi (Parti communiste internationaliste), founded in February 1944 and which rapidly managed to recruit new militants first and foremost thanks of its anti-chauvinist interpretation of politics.

On top of the question of support or not to the Soviet Union in these troubled period, came a very important question, that of the nature of the USSR. While the Fourth International gave a qualified support to the USSR in the second half of 1940s, a small dissident group emerged inside the PCI refusing to support the USSR based on a different reading of the nature of the Soviet Union. This minority group, called 'tendance Chaulieu-Montal' along the name of two of its leaders (Chaulieu being the militant name of Cornelius Castoriadis and Montal that of Claude Lefort), crystallized in 1946 and 1947 and, after the support given by the PCI to Yugoslavia in August 1948, the tendency will turn into a new movement called after its organ *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (a phrase taken from Rosa Luxemburg's writings) whose number 1 was published in March 1949 (Gottraux 1997: 21–23). Chaulieu and Montal described the USSR as a country ruled by a bureaucratic class exploiting proletariat and leading to a new perverted form of capitalism, that of State capitalism. The first issue of the organ *Socialisme Barbarie* set the tone of an ambitious group:

> « En nous présentant aujourd'hui, par le moyen de cette revue, devant l'avant-garde des ouvriers manuels et intellectuels, nous savons être les seuls à répondre d'une manière systématique aux problèmes fondamentaux du mouvement révolutionnaire contemporain : nous pensons être les seuls à reprendre et à continuer l'analyse marxiste de l'économie moderne, à poser sur une base scientifique le problème du développement historique du mouvement ouvrier et de sa signification, à définir le stalinisme, et en général la bureaucratie 'ouvrière,' à caractériser la Troisième Guerre Mondiale, à poser enfin de nouveau, en tenant compte des éléments originaux créés par notre époque, la perspective révolutionnaire. » (quoted in Gottraux 1997: 23)

We have here all the main battling theme of this emerging faction encapsulated in this short paragraph. While the tone is still imbued with Trotskyite overtones (avant-garde, political economy, bureaucratie ouvriere, internationalist concerns, etc), the movement will gradually become always more and more anti-Leninist and abandon Trotsky's fixed and rigid interpretation grid to move towards a more fluid and libertarian model of thinking politics (less of doing politics, as we will see). Yet, as we will see, some Trotskyite scoria will remain engrained in the faction's machinery up to the point of becoming a true stumbling block for militants leading to internal splits and weakening of the movement.

To understand this distanciation from Trotskyism and formal Marxism, one needs to look at the two main different generations of militants involved in *S ou B.* The first generation, that of Chaulieu-Montal, can be identified on the basis of what French historian Jean-Fran9ois Sirinelli termed the *element fondateur,* (Sirinelli 1986, 2005). In the case of this first generation of S ou B, this founding event was clearly WW2. The second generation of militants (J-F Lyotard, Pierre Souyri (1925–1979), Guy Debord (1931–1994), just to quote the more famous ones) will join *S ou B* because of a second founding event, namely the East German 1953 rebellion (that *S ou B* interprets as further evidence that working classes are resisting a bureaucratic class in crisis

(see Gottraux 1997: 58), the series of strikes in France in the Summer 1955 (heralding the need of worker self-management), and possibly also the Budapest uprising of 1956, all events which gave further credits to S ou B's interpretation (Gottraux 1997: 58ff).

This second founding event will then usher in a more libertarian approach, increasingly critical to Leninism (despite its plea to remain a revolutionary movement) in which workers' council will gradually emerged as a new original cornerstone of *S ou* B's ideas that moves towards a more libertarian brand of thinking. As a matter of fact, these various rebellions and strikes contribute to S ou B's rebuke of Lenin's *Que Faire* view that posits the "workers' inability to reach political consciousness without the external and decisive action of the Party" (Gottraux 1997: 31 transl. mine). To the Leninist idea of a "consciousness inculcated from outside," *S ou B* sustains that revolutionary ideals and self-organization should stem instead from within the workers community. Castoriadis will famously take up this idea in his 'Source Hongroise' (Castoriadis 1976, 1977), a vitriolic text against, a.o., Fourth International (Secretariat Unifie)'s leader Ernest Mandel and classical Trotskyism,[6] in which he elaborates out of past political militancy (the text was published only twenty years later than the actual Budapest uprising) a more elaborate political theory in which autonomy becomes paramount in his elaboration of social consciousness, developed in later philosophical work of Castoriadis in the 1980s (e.g. Castoriadis 1986).

Castoriadis defines autonomy of a society as its capacity of auto-institution, and not just in terms of giving its own laws (Castoriadis 1986: 518). The process of autoinstitution implies the capacity for societies to openly "call into question their own institution, their representation of the world, their social imaginary significations" (Castoriadis 1997: 17). Closure and open-ness are key for Castoriadis's understanding of autonomy (envisaged as a radical project): closure means here the fact that a given society does not have the possibilities to chose the ways and means in which they reflect about themselves. Closure implies therefore a form of heteronomy, that is the law of others imposed on this society. On the contrary, openness is important not only in terms of choosing its institutional setting but also on an "informational and cognitive" level (Castoriadis 1986: 513).[7] Certainly this theoretical re-elaboration *ex post* and away from the turbulences of political militancy can be an important contribution to current attempts to fuse Black and Red thinking back together.

In any case, from 1953 onwards the theme of workers' council features prominently in *S ou* B's articles and internal debates. It is also well known that Anton Pannekoek (1873–1960) was exchanging letters with Castoriadis as de facto leader of *S ou B,* parts of which was also published in *S ou B.*[8] Pannekoek was an influential Dutch theorician of the workers' councils who had written extensively on the topic, and this well before *S ou B.* His main book on the topic published in 1943 under the pseudonym of P. Aartsz *(De Arbeitsraden)* was very influential for councilism but also for his reading of modern capitalism not determinically meant to come to its auto destruction, as orthodox stage-based Marxism claims, but, in an interpretation reminiscent

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[6] Mandel is openly quoted in many places (Castoriadis 1977: 54–55), but some indirect criticism against Mandel's thinking can also be found throughout the text (e.g., *ibid.* 62, 64).

[7] I am fully aware that Castoriadis believes that such a process of auto-institution is not possible in what he terms archaic and traditional societies, precisely because they are, in his view, closed (Castoriadis 1986: 514). However, I believe that, along the lines of Houston 2004, there is too much of determinism in defining a society 'traditional' or 'archaic,' and in particular by defining it so because of the heteronomy imposed by religion.

[8] E.g. see Pannekoek correspondance with S ou B at the end of 1953 at http://www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoe/1953/socialisme-ou-barbarisme.htm (accessed 19 August 2009).

of Boltanski and Chiapello's *Nouvel esprit du capitalisme* (1999), Pannekoek saw in capitalism an innate capacity of continuous adaptation (even in difficult times), allowing it to survive and transform itself into an always stronger ideology (Bourseiller 2003[9]: 140).

An in-depth analysis of modern capitalism was also a *cheval de bataille* of *S ou B,* especially from the late 1950s onwards. Castoriadis published thus two influential articles in 1960–1961 on the topic of 'Le mouvement revolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne.'[10] Castoriadis treats of the classical Marxist theme of political alienation but attributes western societies' depoliticisation as a "co-substantial part of modernization" and an increasing bureaucratization of social life (Gottraux 1997: 135f), which in turns destroys the political dimension of the socialization processes. Castoriadis comes to the conclusion that mainstream Marxism fails to fully grasp social change when it concentrates its attention to economic factors (a la Ricardo), overlooking thus the political transformation of advanced capitalist societies, the irrationality of bureaucratic managements (ibid. 137–38), and the increasing role of so-called 'technocrats' and 'experts' leading to the gradual apathy of western societies living now in abundance (Castoriadis 1960: 63). These transformations and the false trail taken by mainstream Marxist makes it, so Castoriadis argues, even more difficult for a revolutionary movement to exist and perform its task.

All these are themes that will certainly influence the next generation of militants, in particular the one that emerges with 1968 and in the 1970s, a generation keen to hammer down libertarian slogans, to dispute political apathy and alienation of capitalist society, and to suggest more libertarian strategies to pervert the dominant bourgeois order. The proletariat does not exist anymore as it did in the nineteenth century and is increasingly part of a transformed society of the spectacle. It is not by coincidence that Guy Debord milted in the ranks of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* for a short time in 1960–1961, precisely when Castoriadis posed its diagnosis on working class and revolutionary movements at a time of full employment and booming economy. Debord will certainly take these themes on another level, that of the spontaneist theory, but the intellectual filiations of Debord's ideas as part of this ultra-left milieu that becomes also gradually anti-Marxist, is undisputed, in our view. This encounter between *S ou B* and Debord (who had also different influences such as Surrealism, Spontaneism, not to mention the influence of Henri Lefebvre) is also an interesting lesson in terms of cross-fertilizations between different Marxist(-Leninist) dogmas. Debord's new critique of the *societe du spectacle* remains a frame of analysis that proves most useful in our current epoch saturated with globalized images and manipulated pixels and whose premises can provide food for thoughts for Red and Black intersecting ideas. As in the line of Castoriadis' 1960 and 1961 reflexions, Marxist thinking should not limit to economic and too sheer political features, but also explores the imaginary dimension of capitalist domination (a la Debord) and the role that the irrational is meant to play in our society (Bottici 2007).

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[9] Bourseiller's book on the ultra-left has been criticized by many actors of the different movements under scrutiny in his book. There are many factual errors (people interchanged), yet, I have decided to use some of this information as it provides interesting links between different movements.

[10] Part 1, in S ou B, num 31, 1960–61, pp. 51–81 and part 2 in SouB, num 32, 1961, pp.84–111

4. When Anarchy fails to meet Marxism

Socialisme ou Barbarie surely gradually evolved from a quasi-Trotskyite movement (in which the Leninist model of revolutionary movements was central for the first years of the movement) into an ultra-left anti-Marxist movement spearheaded by Castoriadis (Gottraux 1997: 360). Its influence, overall, is certainly more important on the intellectual and academic scene since many prominent French intellectuals transited in its orbit at one point or another, than on the political level where its impact has remained very low—but this is true for all organisations of the ultra-left camp. This conclusion is corroborated by the simple fact that *S ou B* had a very low number of militants, ranging between 20 members in 1951 and 87 a decade later (Gottraux 1997: 40, 104). However, its publications will certainly be influential beyond this small groups and Gottraux has suggested that the ideas of *S ou B* have influenced the work of many other French periodicals reaching out therefore much more than the only militancy basis of *S ou B* (Gottraux 1997: 255–314).

One of the possible reasons for this hiatus between a very small, quasi intimate, group and a arguably rather broad influence owes both to its internal organization and to the centralistic role played by Castoriadis. For the former reason, one can quote the fact that recruitment took place only by cooptation, limiting therefore the capacity of expansion of the movement. For the second factor, Gottraux, out of interviews and internal documents analyzed, demonstrates that Castoriadis was a 'control freak' and that he was constantly steering the course of the debates and imposing, more than once, his personal will onto the rest of the group. Before giving examples of the control imposed by Castoriadis on the life of *S ou B,* one should not forget to underline the paradox of the promoter of the idea of 'autonomy' as a central feature of democratic society and his tendency to kill in the egg any new dissenting ideas within *S ou B.* Here again, the influence of Trotskyism (and of its stark view on the Leninist organisation of the party based on democratic centralism) could probably explain Castoriadis' modus operandi and give further ground to the idea that Trotskyism cuts both ways in its lasting influence.

The most prominent example of Castoriadis' central role comes from the internal scission in 1958. In the tormented context of the dying days of the IV Republique, strong disagreements emerged inside *S ouB* on the nature of De Gaulle's intervention and which interpretation to give to the PCF ambiguous stance in what has been dubbed 'the permanent Coup of De Gaulle.' Castoriadis, and with him the majority group, argues for the need of a more structured *S ou B*, while the minority, led by Montal (Lefort) was against such transformation of the organisation, fearing "derapages bureaucratiques." Castoriadis, invoking "collective discipline," manages to silence the minority. Lefort saw in this attitude of Castoriadis an "avatar of democratic centralism" and decided to leave the organisations in September 1958 (Gottraux 1997: 89.-91).

In this context, Gottraux also reveals that the minority had taken contact with Pannekoek and the Dutch council movement (ibid 92), which means that the minority felt at odds and unease with the ways that Castoriadis wanted to reform the organisation. Castoriadis' reluctance to seriously engage the anarchist road of workers' council or that suggested by Pannekoek antedated this troubled period for *S ou B.* Already in 1954 when Pannekoek and Castoriadis exchanged correspondence, Castoriadis seemed to have had intentions not to fully enter in a dialogue. Bourseiller suggests that Castoriadis did not respond diligently to the letters, expressing a will to procrastinate and not communicate the content of the letters to the rest of the militants of *S ou B* (Bourseiller 2003: 246). Bourseiller goes on wondering whether Castoriadis felt his intellec-

tual and ideological primacy threatened by the content of Pannekoek's message, but one could also think that the content of the message could have served militants of S ou B in their argument to have a less centrally structured movement and promote thus a more anarchist model of self-organisation.

The fact is that some of the functioning of S ou B was premised on councilist ideas, with, in theory at least, the possibility to revoke some of the rotating representation in leading committees (like the Comite Responsable) (Gottraux 1997: 34). The problem is that the substance and influences of Pannekoek and from workers' council's ideas have not trickled down into the organizational life of S ou B. In theory, Castoriadis promotes autonomy and criticized the bureaucratic degenerescence of many Marxist organizations, but in reality, the rhythm of life and spans of ideas discussed inside S ou B were pulsated almost uniquely by Castoriadis. For example, this quote of Castoriadis during the strikes in the Renault factory in 1955 and 1956 seems more the injunction of a Trotskyite leader than an anarchist one: " Il faut s'accrocher, preciser quels camarades doivent aller au reunions de TO [Tribune Ouvriere]; ces camarades doivent decider a l'avance des critiques a faire et fournir des textes a TO." Not by coincidence, most of those who were militants and have become influential intellectuals (Lefort, Debord and Lyotard) have all decided to leave the organizations because of disagreements with Castoriadis. There can be only one boss in *S ou B*, so it seems.

This problem is also one shared by many Trotskyite organizations. Looking at the experience of the Swiss branch of the Fourth International, the *Ligue Marxiste Revolutionnaire,* its history shows that personal in-fights all resulted in the demission of minority leaders and the historical leader (Charles-Andre Udry) remained the only boss in town, so to say (Challand 2000[11]). The decade long Trotskyite divisions between Lambertistes, Laguillier and Krivine can also be seen as a bataille des chefs, more than an ideological one. Beyond the personal motives, there are other basic and shared factors for resignations and withdrawals from Trotskyite movements: stiffness of the organization, weight of the democratic centralism principles, need to over-commit to the organizations and generational tensions (Challand 2000: Chapters 8 and 9). The fact is that some of these factors are also found in the ebbs and flows of *S ou B*, although it was meant to have emancipated itself from its Trotskyite origins.

5. Conclusions: The limits of collective autonomy

The paper has explored the life and evolution of an influential movement that drew inspirations both from Trotskyism and from Anarchism. There the encounter between anarchism and Marxism was lived in discussions and articles, less in concrete daily life of the movement. The paper has also noted how Trotskyism in general has serious problems despite parts of its ideological accuracy (need of internationalization of political struggle, reading of the Soviet Union as a bureaucratic degenerescence). It has cut both ways on many occasions, in part opening new avenues for political participation on the far left, at times splitting even more this part of the political spectrum.

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[11] This conclusion which was reached for the period 1968–1980 certainly remains valid for current Swiss Trotskyite groups, as part of the current three-way division discussed above seems also to stem from personal animosities and refusal to acknowledge a shared form of political leadership, on top of classical divisions on the course to adopt in day-to-day politics.

Historically, there is no doubt that such ultra-left movements have evolved and expanded in historical moments of critical junctures. WW2 was a founding events for the first founding generations of new (filo-)Trotskyite movements (PCI, *S ou* B), as much as the 1956 crisis and later 1968 Czech Spring brought to militancy new generations. In our society of spectacle in which reigns political apathy, it is difficult to imagine that new events of these types could generate renewed militancy. The economic crisis could be such a triggering factor bringing new militants to reflect on the need of Black and Red programmes. But this is not sure.

Conclusion to be expanded (in particular more on why and how the paradoxes of
S ou B could be overcome today)

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Anarchism, Marxism and "Humanism"

Thomas Swann
  Not available.

Bakunin and Marx on the Paris Commune: Grounds for a synthesis between Anarchism and Marxism?

Philip O'Sullivan

Introduction

In this paper I will examine one critical element of the contested relationship between anarchism and Marxism. Among others, I am chiefly concerned with arguments by two writers, Paul Thomas and Daniel Guerin, who have focused specifically on this topic and whose work in this area presents a clear axis from which to examine again these historically hostile ideologies (Thomas, 1980; Guerin, 1970, 1988 and 1989). Thomas critiqued anarchism from Marx's perspective and denies that anarchism and Marxism merge and while he produces an extremely thorough analysis of their relationship, he comes down strongly in favour of Marx. Thomas argues that any similarities between Marxism and Anarchism are, in his metaphor of light and shadows, not an overlap or convergence, but merely a penumbra. For Thomas while they are related, these are two intrinsically separate and distinct political thought systems (Thomas, 1980, p.2). Adopting a contrary position, Guerin has ambitiously tried to create a synthesis from the more libertarian elements of Marxism with anarchism. Guerin is much more sympathetic to the anarchists, especially Proudhon and Bakunin. Driven by the possibilities of a libertarian communism which he considers could result from such a synthesis, Guerin bases his argument on the historical Paris Commune of 1871 and the works by Bakunin and Marx directly inspired by that event, Bakunin's *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State* and Marx's *The Civil War in France.* While Guerin considers Bakunin's *The Paris Commune* is consistent with his earlier work and represents what he calls the distillation of libertarian socialism, Guerin claims that *The Civil War in France* differs significantly from Marx's earlier work and 'compares exceptionally well to Bakunin's writings' (Guerin, 1988, p.167).

In support of Guerin, Noam Chomsky argues there remains the potential for anarchism to shape Marxist theory positively – that in many ways anarchism is the key to a more libertarian Marx. Chomsky has argued that 'the constructive ideas of anarchism retain their vitality, that they may, when re-examined and sifted, assist contemporary socialist thought to undertake a new departure ... [and] ... contribute to enriching Marxism' (Guerin, cited by Chomsky, 1970, p.xviii). Chomsky approvingly quotes the anarchist historian Rudolf Rocker who says that anarchism insists that '*socialism will be free or it will not be at all.* In its recognition of this lies the genuine and profound justification for the existence of anarchism' (Chomsky, 1970, p.xii). From this point of view, adds Chomsky, anarchism may be regarded as the libertarian wing of socialism. This

potentially enriching role for anarchism as suggested by Chomsky represents an appropriate point of departure to further examine the relationship between anarchism and Marxism.

1. The Case for a Synthesis: Some Common ground

Firstly, the obvious needs stating, though neither Marx or Bakunin were involved in the Paris Commune itself, nor directly influenced its events or leading protagonists, yet the Commune is 'claimed' by both sides.

We must bear in mind when we invest so much store and import in the history and theories of Marxism and anarchism, that as Cole has pointed out, 'the Commune arose, not because a compact body of revolutionary Socialists had planned it in advance, as the model organisation for a new Socialist society, but because events dictated its circumstances' (Cole, 1954, p. 148). Cole provides a useful, sober historical account, noting that 'there had been no clear idea of the Commune as a new kind of workers' State, resting on proletarian dictatorship or on any other bass other than that of free, equal and universal manhood [male] suffrage' and that as the commune was the traditional unit of local administration, indeed 'France was made up of local communes; and every opponent of centralized State power naturally thought of the commune as the point of focus for a rival power emanating directly from the people. The Paris Commune because a body primarily representing the working classes only because the respectable classes either fled from Paris or elected representatives who, hostile to the Revolution, refused to serve' (Cole, 1954, p. 148).[1]

Yet it nevertheless remains a shared touchstone and we do not have to accept Guerin's case for synthesis to concede that, in broad terms, anarchists and Marxists do indeed hold much in common. Even Thomas concedes Bakunin and Marx had much in common and lists five similarities as both: believed in the primacy of economic 'base' over political 'superstructure'; wished to overthrow capitalism and were engaged upon working as active revolutionaries to this end; were socialists and collectivists, opposed to bourgeois individualism; were bitterly at odds with religion, and finally, both had a veneration for natural science (Thomas, 1980, p. 297).

David Miller also noted that both were severely critical of the capitalist economy, bourgeois society, and the liberal state. Indeed, anarchists and Marxists 'willingly borrowed from each other, anarchists absorbing the Marxian critique of capitalism and Marxists the anarchist exposure of liberal politics (Miller, 1984, pp. 78–9). As Guerin has shown, Marxists and anarchists share a common origin drawing inspiration first of all from the French Revolution and then specifically from the efforts of French workers in 1840 who started to organise themselves and struggle against capitalist exploitation (Guerin, 1989, pp. 118–119). There was a general strike of building trades in Paris in 1840 and soon workers were producing their newspapers such as *L'Atelier.* In 1840 Proudhon published *What Is Property?* and in 1844 Marx wrote his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* which were partly a result of his visit to the Paris workers and the

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[1] One further health warning from Cole should be heeded before the contested accounts are outlined. 'From so heterogeneous a gathering, so filled with ready talkers and leaders, no coherent theory of government or of socialism could have emerged, even if there had been time to make one. Such theoretical lessons as can be got from the Paris Commune have to be read into it: non are to be found in it ready-made… But the plain truth is that the Communards had no common theory, and were, during the few months of the Commune's existence, much too busy to make one. This, of course, meant that each group, and each individual, did his best to make the Commune fit the pattern of ideas conceived before it began…' (Cole, 1954, p.172).

impression they made on him. 'Thus anarchism and Marxism, at the start, drank from the same proletarian spring' (Guerin, 1989, p. 119). Under the pressure of the newly born working class Guerin maintains that they assigned to themselves the same final aim, that of overthrowing the capitalist state and giving the wealth of society, that is the means of production, to the workers themselves.

Citing David Apter, Thomas asserts that anarchism 'combines a socialist critique of capitalism with a liberal critique of socialism.' For Thomas however, such a combination is bound to be tense and 'it is not surprising that anarchism, which emerged as a movement in the nineteenth century alongside socialism and Marxism, was not always ...in tandem with socialism and Marxism.' Many of its doctrinal features point further back, through the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century into the liberal tradition (Thomas, 1980, p.7). I will develop this link to Enlightenment thought further below.

2. Why Compare and the Dangers of Comparative Analysis

This common origin meant that anarchism and Marxism developed in contrast to and alongside each other. Miller argues that the point of comparing anarchism with Marxism is not merely to discover interesting contrasts. He maintains that anarchist ideas cannot be properly understood unless seen as shaped in direct opposition to the ideas of Marx and his followers (Miller, 1984, p. 78). However, we must be careful with comparisons, generalizations and universalizing. April Carter properly warns that, while the vision of what an anarchist society would be like has been indicated by Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin – who all defined their positions in opposition to Marx's socialism – any comparison with Marxism is full of difficulties because of the diversity of the anarchist tradition and the complexity of Marxism as it has evolved. But I also agree with Carter and take it as read when she adds that, as anarchism has been engaged in a conscious critique of Marxism for over 150 years, such comparison is relevant (Carter, 1971, p. 60).

This critique started when Proudhon first wrote to Marx over one hundred and sixty years ago. Yet it has not been a one-sided debate but clearly a dialogue – Marx wrote *The Poverty of Philosophy* in direct response to Proudhon and his marginal comments made while reading Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy* have survived. Anarchism has remained a constantly critical of Marxism, ever since. Indeed, only since the bloody battles in Spain in 1936 can the fight between anarchists and Marxists be in any sense considered 'academic.'

Whilst acknowledging that these two theories had a common origin it is also important we do not accept that the only thing that separated them was disagreement over practical method. Such disagreements were manifestations of fundamental theoretical differences (Miller, 1984, p.79). They had, for example: different philosophies of history; different views of the role of the State; different analysis of class; different views of the nation state and nationalism; different views on the relationship between rural and city life and lastly, (but this list is not intended to be exhaustive) they differed fundamentally on the legitimacy of forms of political participation, on voting and representation.

It is generally held that such theoretical differences led necessarily, therefore, to disputes over the use of *political* methods to bring about a *social* revolution. This debate is usually reduced to the mantra that while anarchists and Marxists had the same goals their means for achieving those goals were different, this is what I call the 'shared goals thesis.'

From a Marxist perspective, Thomas disagrees with the argument that Marx and his anarchist critics shared the same ends – opposition to the state – and only disagreed on the means, or the tactics. For Thomas, neither Marx nor the anarchists, particularly in the First International, were inclined to separate means from ends in so absolute a fashion. Both sides acknowledged the very real stakes involved in any seeming 'tactical' resolution about organisation; they were the shape of future society. Thomas argues that both Marx and Bakunin saw the International, and I would add here by extension, the Paris Commune, not only as the embodiment of the revolutionary movement as it then existed, but also a presentiment – quite possibly *the* presentiment – of future society which would be stamped by its origins. This joint perception was not a measure of their agreement, but the source of an increasingly bitter hostility, as they themselves were at pains to point out (Thomas, 1980, pp.13- 14).

While I will contend that this 'shared goals' analysis simplifies the anarchist position and does not reflect the force and full range of their critique, Miller is correct when he says that the anarchists demand that 'the stateless society must be pre-figured in the revolutionary strategy used to attain it,' that 'means and ends have to be congruent' (Miller, 1984, p.79). Arthur Lehning similarly paraphrases Bakunin's doubts that the dictatorship of the proletariat would lead to socialism: 'He advocated socialist (i.e., libertarian) means in order to achieve a socialist (i.e., libertarian) society' (Lehning, 1973, p. 27). It is this element which primarily divides anarchists from Marxists. This explains Bakunin's oft-repeated phrase that freedom can only be created by freedom. (In Rocker's words: 'Socialism must be free or it must not be at all.') For Bakunin, the revolutionary end cannot be justified by the means; both ends and means must be congruent.

3. Possible synthesis between Marxism and Anarchism?

The possibility of a synthesis is not a new idea and the similarities are obvious to many commentators. For example, Sam Dolgoff notes that like Marx, Bakunin emphasised the importance of the economic factor in social revolution and that some of Marx's own earlier writings concerning freedom, alienation, and the State 'could well have been produced by an anarchist; and many "Marxist humanists" have tried to use these writings to show that Marx really was a libertarian. Typical in this regard is Herbert Marcuse's assertion that "Once the humanistic idea is seen... as the very substance of Marx's theory, the deep-rooted libertarian and anarchistic elements of Marxian theory come to life' (Dolgoff, 2002 [1972], pp. 5–6).

Guerin has argued that the aftermath the Paris Commune can possibly show how a merging might be possible when we compare Bakunin's *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State* with Marx's *The Civil War in France* (Guerin, 1988, pp.167–170). Guerin says Bakunin's text contains nothing unusual and is quite consistent with his earlier writings. In it we find what Guerin calls the distillation of libertarian socialism. By contrast, his argument is that there is more to surprise us in the Address drafted by Marx on behalf of the General Council of the Workers' International to which both followers of Marx and Bakunin belonged at the time. 'It differs noticeably from Marx's writings of before and after 1871, and compares exceptionally well to Bakunin's writings. We can look at it as one of the very few bridges established between Marxism and anarchism, as one of the very few attempts at a synthesis of 'authoritarian' with libertarian thought' (Guerin, 1988, p.167).

The basis of this argument is straightforwardly textual. Guerin tells us that in *The Civil War in France* Marx overhauled certain passages of the 1848 *Communist Manifesto* in which he and Engels had set out their ideal of proletarian revolution in stages. The first stage would be the capture of political power thanks to which, "little by little," the means of production, the means of transportation and credit would be centralised in the hands of the State. Only at the end of a protracted evolution, once class conflicts would have vanished and public authority been rid of its political character, would the whole of production be concentrated, not in State hands now, but in the hands of "associated individuals": in this libertarian style of association, the unfettered development of each would be the precondition for the free development of all.

But Bakunin was conversant with the *Communist Manifesto* in the German original since 1848 and had not missed an opportunity to criticise the splitting of the revolution into two stages, the first of which would still be emphatically statist. Under the pressure of events and Bakunin's criticisms, argues Guerin, Marx and Engels felt a need to amend their overly statist thinking of 1848. Thus, in a foreword (June 24, 1872) to a new edition of the *Manifesto,* they conceded that 'in many respects,' they would now 'rephrase' the passage in question from the 1848 text. Remarkably, in support of any such redrafting they cited 'the practical experiences, first of the February [1848] revolution, then, to a much greater extent, of the Paris Commune, when, for the first time, the proletariat held political power in its hands over a two-month period' concluding 'All of which means that, in places, this program is no longer up to the minute. The Commune in particular has supplied proof that the working class cannot rest content with taking possession of existing machinery of the State in order to place it in the service of its own aims.' The 1871 Address also announces that the Commune has 'discovered at last, the political formula whereby the economic emancipation of labour can be brought about' (Guerin, 1988, p.168).

In support of his argument, Guerin cites Lehning who stressed the contradiction between the ideas in the Address and all of Marx's other writings: 'The essential principle of the Commune, according to Marx, was that political centralisation of the State had to be replaced by self-government of the producers, by a federation of autonomous communes to which had to be afforded... the initiative hitherto devolved to the State' (Guerin, 1988, p.169). The significance of Marx's writing of *The Civil War* is transparent: 'The *Civil War* fully contradicts the other Marxist writings where the withering away of the State is concerned. The Paris Commune did not centralise the means of production into State hands. The goal of the Paris Commune was not to let the State 'wither away' but rather to banish it immediately ... The annihilation of the State was not the inevitable conclusion to a dialectical historical process, of a higher stage of society, itself shaped by a higher form of production.'

For Guerin, Marx has conceded everything Bakunin argued for on the issue of the role of the State after a revolution 'The Paris Commune obliterated the State, without fulfilling a single one of the conditions which Marx had previously stipulated as prefacing its abrogation ... The Commune's defeat of the bourgeois State had not been designed to install another State in its place... Its aim was not to found some new State machinery, but rather to replace the State by organising society on economic and federalist foundations ... In the *Civil War* [the Address], there is no mention of "withering away," but rather of immediate and utter extirpation of the State"' (Guerin, 1988, p.170). In a similar vein Michael Levin admits that in third part of the *Address* Marx 'seemed to moving the way of his opponents Proudhon and Bakunin' and 'that Marx was attempting the delicate balancing act of opposing the state without favouring anarchism' (Levin, 1989, p.115).

But Guerin accepts there is nevertheless disagreement between the scholars of the two camps, much depends on what interpretation of Marx this form of anarchism or libertarian socialism is compared against. Lehning, who regards Marx as 'authoritarian,' alleges that the Address is a 'foreign body' in Marxist socialism, whereas someone else, on the other hand, eager to discover a 'libertarian' in Marx, contends that Marxian thought found in the *Address* its 'definitive form.' So depending on your point of view, this work by Marx is either explained due to pressing historical and tactical necessity (not forgetting the real pressure of publishing quickly), or in actual fact, a clear glimpse of the true libertarian Marx.

Even allowing for interpretations of an 'authoritarian' or 'libertarian' Marx, it is difficult to deny that after the Paris Commune Marx and Engels changed position on the theory of revolution in their preface to the *Communist Manifesto*, and that Bakunin was aware of this change. Perhaps the best defenders of Marx can do is actually agree with Lehning, who for his own reason does not want to admit to the idea of a more libertarian Marx, that, in the *Address* Marx temporarily and uncharacteristically let his heart rule his head, and then later back tracked from this position. However, I have some sympathy with Guerin when he says that in striving to work out some theoretical synthesis between anarchism and Marxism, 'the Address of 1871 has to be regarded as a starting-point, a prime facie demonstration that it is feasible to reconcile fruitfully the two strands of thought, the authoritarian and the libertarian' (Guerin, 1988, p.170). This project however, is not without its critics on both sides.

4. Marxists Against a Synthesis

For Thomas all anarchist convictions can be summed up under the rubric of 'the *removal of obstacles* from some vision of the good life. It is this imperative that links anarchism to the liberal tradition, and most particularly to the Enlightenment — the more so since the obstacle in question are seen, first and foremost, as *political* obstructions that need to be overthrown' (Thomas, 1980, p. 8).

Intriguingly, Thomas' description of the lineage of anarchist thought is strikingly similar to Chomsky's account. Chomsky says that if one were to seek a single leading idea in the anarchist tradition, he believes it to be that expressed by Bakunin's description of liberty in *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State.* Chomsky argues that these ideas grew out of the Enlightenment; their roots are in Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, Humboldt's *Limits of State Action*, Kant's insistence, in his defence of the French Revolution, that freedom is the precondition for acquiring the maturity for freedom, not a gift to be granted when such maturity is achieved. He claims that with the development of industrial capitalism, a new and unanticipated system of injustice, 'it is libertarian socialism that has preserved and extended the radical humanist message of the Enlightenment and the classical liberal ideals that were perverted into an ideology to sustain the emerging social order' (Chomsky, 2005, [1970] p.122).

Chomsky always places great value on Humboldt's, *The Limits of State Action*, which he claims anticipated and perhaps inspired Mill. Completed in 1792 and profoundly, though prematurely, anti-capitalist, Chomsky maintains that this vision by Humboldt of a society in which social fetters are replaced by social bonds and labour is freely undertaken also suggests the early Marx, with his discussion of the 'alienation of labour ...depriving man of his 'species character' of 'free conscious activity'' and 'productive life.' Similarly, continues Chomsky, Marx conceives of 'a new

type of human being who *needs* his fellow men ... [The workers' association becomes] the real constructive effort to create the social texture of future human relations.' Classical libertarian thought is opposed to state intervention in social life, as a consequence of deeper assumptions about the human need for liberty, diversity, and free association. Therefore, capitalist relations of production, wage labour, competitiveness, the ideology of 'possessive individualism'' all must be regarded as fundamentally antihuman. This leads Chomsky to conclude that 'Libertarian socialism is properly to be regarded as the inheritor of the liberal ideals of the Enlightenment.'

Yet, for Thomas, Enlightenment speculation about politics is not all the same, the aspect it turns towards anarchism, that of negative liberty and of a certain disdain for power is not the only face it has to present. Basing his argument on a completely different reading of Rousseau than Chomsky's Rousseau of the *Discourse on Inequality*, Thomas draws on Rousseau's positive view of liberty and whose desire was not to minimise power but to admit *the need for power legitimised as authority. Once legitimised, power is a promise, not a threat.* [My emphasis]. Thomas argues it is important to that we [must] 'recognise at the outset that it is Rousseau's perception of the problem to which Marx, following Hegel, subscribes; and that:

> [T]here is a divide, a watershed in Enlightenment thinking about power, authority and politics. Marx is one side of it, the anarchists on the other. The difference is not simply genealogical but programmatic; it means that while the distinction between Marxism and anarchism is in a sense incomplete — this area of agreement is in the nature of a penumbra, an overlap, that is to say, and not a convergence. It is for this reason that what on the face of it might appear to be a broad area of agreement has done nothing to bring Marxism and anarchism closer together, in Marx's lifetime or since (Thomas, 1980, p. 11.)

Thomas argues Marx's legacy from Hegel is of crucial importance, and in short, for Thomas, unlike the anarchists, Marx does not wish to dispense with politics. He approvingly Marx 'this ass cannot even understand that any class movement, as such is necessarily ... a political movement.' We may suppose, says Thomas, (in a massive and deliberate understatement!), that Marx understood by the word 'political' something quite different from the anarchist definition.

5. Anarchists against Synthesis

It would be a serous error however, to think that it is only defenders of Marx like Thomas who object to the idea that Marxism and anarchism are perhaps compatible. The idea of a synthesis of these two rival ideologies is also anathema to the majority of anarchists who similarly implicitly or explicitly reject the Guerin and Chomsky synthesis line.

Paul McLaughlin persuasively argues that although Marx and Engels anticipated the eventual demise of politics and political power, the future communist society they envisaged was, for all the talk of the abolition or withering away of the state, in no sense an anarchist one (McLaughlin, 2002, pp. 76–82). Rather, the State was to be the post-revolutionary society's sole indispensable institution. McLaughlin agues that the Marxist sublation of the state wilfully misrepresents Marxian socialism as the true anarchism. McLaughlin quotes Marx: 'What all socialists understand by anarchism is this: as soon as the goal of the proletarian movement, the abolition of classes, is attained, the power of the State ... will disappear and governmental functions will be transformed

into simple administrative functions.' Similarly, Engels wrote in the same year (1872) 'All social- ists are agreed that the political state, and with it political authority, will disappear as a result of the coming social revolution, that is, that public functions will lose their political character and be transformed in to simple administrative functions of watching over the true interests of society...' (Cited in McLaughlin, 2002, p. 76).

Despite a formal non-political nature, this post-revolutionary dictatorship can have, for Bakunin, no other objective than to perpetuate itself as a political State. So when Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* about raising the proletariat to the position of ruling class, McLaughlin argues that, 'for Bakunin, this is the first and last step of Marxian revolution...' (McLaughlin, 2002, p. 77). For McLaughlin's, Marx's State can never achieve 'non-political' status as the transition required is impossible. Moreover, even if this transition were possible, the 'non-political' status would be a myth as every State, including the nominal 'administrative' ones, would necessarily be class-ridden and therefore a political and coercive entity. The State, for Bakunin, must be political by definition, and the state administered society can never be classless. There must always be two classes at least, the administering and the administered — 'the spectre of bureaucracy haunting the spectre of communism' in Marx and Engels. According to McLaughlin, this is the context in which Bakunin rejects the Marxist 'political' state and why he maintains such a State can never be anything other than the 'highly despotic government of the masses by a new and small aristocracy of real or pretended scholars.'

McLaughlin thus argues against the ultimate convergence of Marxian and anarchist ends. This apparent 'shared goal' theory is illusory and part of a specious anarchist façade adroitly con- structed by Marx and Engels 'to ward off the successive threats from their more radical rivals, the Anarchists.' Many writers on anarchism, while acknowledging the influence of anarchism on Marxism in the formulation of apparent revolutionary ends, have failed to acknowledge 'that the Marxist end is not anarchist at all' and to acknowledge that Marxism and Bakuninian anarchism differ with respect to revolutionary ends as well as revolutionary means' (Mclaughlin, 2002, p. 79).[2] Contrary to the 'shared goal or ends' thesis, McLaughlin stresses that what is in question is the theoretical debate about the State, and he maintains that the Marxian theory is Statist and therefore in no way anarchist on the grounds that '*it embraces the state as a pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary means, and the post-revolutionary, post-transitional end.*' [Emphasis in original]. It is this notion of Marxism masquerading as anarchism that McLaughlin interprets as the motive force behind Bakunin's critique of Marx's statism. Because Marx's economic egal- itarianism lacks all sense of freedom, McLaughlin argues, Marx's socialism cannot be properly considered anarchist.

For different reasons and from a different perspective, two other anarchist thinkers – George Woodcock and Alan Ritter also both reject the specific Guerin/Chomsky line. Woodcock, as Ruth Kinna noted, accused Guerin and Chomsky of 'selecting from anarchism the elements that may serve to diminish the contradictions in Marxist doctrines' and 'abandoning the elements which do not serve their purpose. Their work enriched Marxism but impoverished anarchism' (Kinna, 2005. p. 25). For Ritter, the error of those who claim that anarchists are socialists at

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[2] McLaughlin quotes Miller 'speaking of anarchism and Marxism "Sharing the same ultimate goal" and of their "disagreement over revolutionary methods." Similarly in error for McLaughlin is Woodcock, who states that 'The Marxists paid tribute to the anarchist ideal by agreeing that the ultimate end of socialism and communism must be the withering away of the State, but they contended that during the period of transition the state must remain in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.'

heart stems from blindness toward their disagreement about the causal efficacy of the state *qua* state. Anarchism is not to be identified with socialism *simplicitier* as many socialists rely on legal government. Ritter notes that Chomsky cites socialists like Anton Pannekoek and William Paul who are at one with anarchists in finding the state antipathetic. Chomsky's claim that anarchism should be classed as part of this 'libertarian wing of socialism' would only be correct Ritter argues, if the antipathy to legal government from libertarian socialists came from alarm about the effects of the state's inherent attributes. But they are alarmed mainly by the effects of the state's changeable characteristics, such as its organisation or policies. The difference in the causal perspective from which they view the state puts socialists, however libertarian, a great distance away from anarchists. What libertarian socialists fear in the state is not the perpetuation of an unredeemable institution but its continued use as an oppressive instrument by a bureaucracy or a vanguard party. And what they envisage as a successor to the existing state is not a society freed of legal government but a society organised in Chomsky's words 'on truly democratic lines, with democratic control in the workplace and in the community.'

So for Ritter libertarian socialists are not anarchists but democrats. 'Hence any theory such as libertarian socialism which, far from excluding democratic institutions from its vision of the good society, regard them as indispensable, cannot possibly be called anarchist' (Ritter, 1981, p. 131). Even between anarchists and socialists whose affinities are closest, there is a clear dividing line. When libertarian socialists denounce the present state as a tool of capitalism, call for workers' councils, or attack elitism or bureaucracy, they may sound like anarchists, but the theory they depend on for reaching these conclusions is no form of anarchism at all.

6. Bakunin's critique of Marx

Thus far, I have outlined Guerin's argument for synthesis, based on his textual exegesis of *The Civil War in France* I have looked at the common ground between Marxism and anarchism, and also covered some of those key issues and ideas which separate them. I have considered the rival interpretations of those who, again, in both the Marxist and anarchist camps, reject the synthesis or convergence line to which Guerin aspires. While I applaud Guerin's non- sectarian, nuanced and imaginative attempt, ultimately the textual foundation on which he bases his case is simply too narrow. I consider Bakunin's wider critique of Marxism, while not regrettably free of some caricature, exaggeration and polemic (he was responding in kind to Marx), nevertheless still too broad, deep and convincing overall to put aside and construct or accept a synthesis on the basis of one text. It is to that broader critique of Marx by Bakunin, made principally between 1870 and 1872 to which I now turn.

Bakunin completely rejected the political road to revolution and criticised Marx's 'fatal preoccupation with making the political question a plank of the International, and a binding principle.' He called on the workers of Germany, not their leaders, to join his side of the International 'to raze those people's prisons which are called States and to pass sentence on politics, which is in fact nothing but the art of subduing and fleecing the masses' (Bakunin, 1973 [1872], p .239). The main issue between Bakunin and Marx and Engels was '*the seizure of political power by the working class*' (Bakunin, 1973 [1872], p. 253). Bakunin sarcastically commented that it is understandable that 'indispensable men like Herren Marx and Engels' should support a programme whose retention and advocacy of political power is an open invitation to ambition. The implica-

tions of this are clear for Bakunin. Since there is to be political power there will inevitably be subjects, albeit called citizens in a republic, but subjects all the same, and as such compelled to obey. This is important in Bakunin's analysis as without obedience no power is possible. Such obedience for Bakunin 'never means anything except submission to some custodial and governmental minority, in other words freedom to be slaves' (Bakunin, 1973 [1872], p. 253).

Considerations of revolution do not end with just the act of revolt. There will still be an enormous task having survived the revolution 'to make sure, the day after the people's victory, that there is no establishment of any sort of State control over the people, even one that appears to be revolutionary itself, even yours – because all domination, whatever it might be called, would inevitably inflict the old slavery on the people in a new form.' But having warned us what form the revolutionary organisation must not take, what form it should it assume? Bakunin states that the chief aim and purpose of this organisation should be to help the people towards self determination on the lines of the most complete equality and the fullest human freedom in every direction, but crucially adds the qualifier 'without the least interference from any sort of domination, even if it be temporary or transitional, that is without any sort of governmental control' (Bakunin, 1973 [1870], p. 191). Thus even the transitory State is rejected.

There is to be no waiting for the State to wither away; it must not be allowed to establish itself even temporarily, in case it is abused, prolonged and turned against the people. Bakunin proclaims anarchists 'the most pronounced enemies of every sort of *official power* – even if it is an ultra-revolutionary power. We are the enemies of any sort of publicly declared dictatorship, we are social revolutionary anarchists.' In Bakunin's own terms this is the essence of his critique of Marxism:

> We do not accept, even in the process of revolutionary transition, either constituent assemblies, provisional governments or so-called evolutionary dictatorships; because we are convinced that revolution is only sincere, honest and real in the hands of the masses, and that when it is concentrated into the those of a few ruling individuals it inevitably and immediately becomes reaction...The Marxists profess quite different ideas. They are worshippers of State power, and necessarily also prophets of political and social discipline and champions of order established from the top downwards, always in the name of universal suffrage and the sovereignty of the masses, for whom they save the honour and privilege of obeying leaders, elected masters...between the Marxists and ourselves there is a chasm. They are for government, we, for our part, are anarchists (Bakunin, 1973 [1872], pp. 237–8).

Bakunin considers the Marxist rejoinder that such a State would be transitory, temporary and short-lived, that its sole objective will be to educate the people and raise them both economically and politically to such a level that government of any kind will soon become unnecessary. He dismisses the idea that the state, having lost its political, that is, ruling, character, will transform itself into a totally free organisation of economic interests and communities. If their state is truly to be a people's state, Bakunin asks, then why abolish it? If its abolition is essential for the real liberation of the people, then how do they dare call it a people's state? (Bakunin, 1990 [1873] p. 179).

As Lehning has noted, the most disastrous alliance imaginable for Bakunin would 'combine socialism with absolutism, combining the aspirations of the people for economic liberation and

material prosperity with dictatorship and the concentration of all political and social forces in the State.' Bakunin pleaded to be saved from the benevolence of despotism 'and the damaging and stultifying consequences of authoritarian, doctrinaire or institutional socialism.' He was adamant that socialism and freedom were both necessary conditions for overcoming oppression and creating a new social order and that neither alone was sufficient: '...we are convinced that freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice, and that Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality' (Bakunin, 1953 [1867], p. 269). In a passage clearly distinguishing 'libertarian' from 'authoritarian' socialism he implored:

> Let us be socialists, but let us never become sheep. Let us seek justice, complete political, economic and social justice, but without any sacrifice of liberty. There can be no life, no humanity, without liberty, and a form of socialism which excluded liberty, or did not accept it as a basis and as the only creative principle, would lead us straight back to slavery and bestiality (Cited by Lehning, 1973, p. 15).

Alan Carter is even more critical of Marx. While accepting that his 'glowing comments on the Paris Commune show that he was not opposed to some elements of workers' power,' he argues that 'since Marx vigorously opposed Bakunin's efforts to ensure that only libertarian and decentralist means were employed by revolutionaries so as to facilitate the revolution remaining in the hands of the workers, he 'must accept a fair measure of culpability for the authoritarian outcome of the Russian revolution' (Alan Carter, 1988, p. 218).

Carter accuses Marx, claiming that because he argued against the anarchists who attempted to preclude what was to become the Leninist form of revolutionary strategy, Marx tacitly condoned the Leninist development. In short Carter boldly argues that 'Lenin did not build his theories on air: they arose on the basis of serious inadequacies in Marx's conception of the state and political power' (Alan Carter, 1988, p. 218). Carter claims Marx was indifferent to the revolutionary forms thrown up by the workers in the Paris Commune. If they threw up libertarian and egalitarian forms, all well and good, if they did not, then this doesn't ultimately matter for Marx, according to Carter, as 'history would vindicate those revolutionary forms with the ultimate withering away of the 'transitional' state.' Quoting from *The Civil War* directly Carter says that 'whatever revolutionary forms spring up are given explicit sanction by Marx, as "They [the working class] have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant"' (Alan Carter, 1988, p. 219).

Of course, Marx rejected Bakunin's analysis of revolution, most clearly in notes from his reading of Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy*. His chief criticism was that Bakunin did not pay enough attention to the economic preconditions of revolution and Thomas approvingly quotes Marx retort to Bakunin that he understood nothing about the social revolution, that its economic conditions do not exist for him and that he believes that a radical revolution is possible in any circumstances: 'The will, and not economic conditions, is the foundation of his social revolution' (Marx, 1977 [1874], p. 562). Marshall Shatz has pointed out however, what Marx did not perceive so clearly was that precisely the opposite criticism might be levelled against *him*. His only response to Bakunin's warning that socialism might produce a new ruling elite was to reiterate confidently that once economic conditions were changed and class rule came to an end, the state and all relations of political authority would necessarily disappear. He would not entertain the possibility that political domination was a product of will, and not solely of economic conditions,

and that the former might persist even after the latter had been transformed (Shatz, 1990, pp. xxxi- xxxii). It is also wrong to accept that Bakunin did little else but agitate for and proclaim revolutions regardless of the prevailing social and economic conditions as Bakunin held 'It is impossible to bring about such a revolution artificially. It is not even possible to speed it up at all significantly … There are some periods in history when revolutions are quite simply impossible; there are other periods when they are inevitable' (Bakunin, 1973 [1870], p. 183).

Thomas readily admits however, that Bakunin's criticism of Marx signified more than the primacy of will, yet Thomas argues it also signified an indifference to all matters political as a guiding conception for the revolutionary movement. For Thomas, abstention from any revolutionary activity that could be called political was opposed bitterly by Marx, who remained untroubled by what his anarchist rivals saw as an unbearable paradox: that of using political means to transcend what now passes for politics. According to Thomas, Marx saw no reason why the proletariat should not 'use means for its liberation which become superfluous after its liberation,' the important point is not to abjure political action across the board, lest it contaminate the actor, but to be able to distinguish among different kinds of political action, the better to be able to use those that were appropriate to furthering the revolutionary cause. 'Politics, after all, does not just stop just because some people think it unimportant or distasteful' (Thomas, 1980, p. 343).

For Thomas, Marx makes a crucial distinction about the State, a distinction that meant little to the anarchists to whom *any* State was the main enemy and politics an unconditional evil; but to Marx, who regarded the category 'the state' as an abstraction, it meant a great deal. Far from denigrating the positive accomplishments brought about by the modern, liberal-bourgeois State that had emerged, Marx insisted that political reforms making the State more liberal and more democratic were laudable and worthy of support. What he had termed 'political emancipation' earlier in *On the Jewish Question* – the freedom signified by the French and other bourgeois revolutions, which consisted in liberal democracy, formal freedoms and parliamentarism – marks a radically unsubstantiated stage of freedom in its true notion, of real, 'human emancipation,' the need for which it cannot satisfy, and the outlines of which it can but dimly discern. Yet it is a stage, and the gains denoted by 'political emancipation' are no less real by virtue of their incomplete character; they are not to be despised or ignored but recognised and, where appropriate, put to good use by those having an interest in revolutionary emancipation in its more substantiated form (Thomas, 1980, p. 344). Supporting this argument on how politics can be put to good use Thomas cites Marx's willingness to quote the 'Ten Hours Bill' or 'Factory Act' passed in 1846. Marx called the passing of this act 'a great practical success; it was the victory of a principle; it was the first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle class succumbed to the political economy of the working class' (Marx, 1977 [1864], p.535).

Writing on the Paris Commune, Bakunin explained the divide between revolutionary socialists (or collectivists) from the authoritarian communists. While both factions equally desire the creation of a new social order based on the organisation of collective work, on equality and the collective appropriation of the instruments of labour, only the communists imagined they could attain this by the organisation of the political power of the working classes, principally of the urban proletariat. In contrast the revolutionary socialists think that 'they will not be able to attain this goal except by the development and organisation, *not of the political, but of the social power* [emphasis added] of the working masses as much as in the towns as in the countryside...' (Bakunin, 1973 [1871], pp. 1–2). The revolution is not restricted to the urban proletariat or even

rural workers, but is open to all people of good will, including those formerly from the upper classes, who wished to join and accept the revolutionary programme with sincerity. By making this appeal Bakunin hopes to show how a non-authoritarian revolutionary socialist movement genuinely aims for a spontaneous mass uprising, not restricting its appeal to one economic class with a specific relationship to the prevailing mode of production. For Bakunin, Marx put too much faith in the inevitable progress of science, and could only see the struggle against capital as confined to the narrow arena of the urban factory floor. This was representative of a broader city/country divide between anarchism and Marxism.[3]

The distinction made by Bakunin here between the terms political and social is significant. Several commentators, (for example, Lehning, Saltman and McLaughlin) have all noted the fact that Bakunin's theory of revolution was a *social* theory more than a *political* theory and of course, by definition, a pure form of anarchism without the structure and bureaucracy of a state apparatus is avowedly 'non-political.' No imposed social organisation for Bakunin can satisfy the needs of everybody, such an organisation 'will never be anything but a Procrustean bed which the more or less obvious violence of the State will be able to force unhappy society to lie down on' (Bakunin, 1973 [1871], p. 4). He argues that this is what has always happened until now in history, and it is exactly this old system of organisation by force that the social revolution must stop. The social revolution does this by giving back their complete freedom to the masses, groups, communes, associations, and individuals and by destroying for once and for all the historic cause of all the violent acts – the state.

Conclusion — Penumbra or convergence?

Thomas claims that while Marx may have got the better of his anarchist rivals, he paid a heavy price for his success and the final reckoning awaits settlement. I would suggest however, that Marx's 'success' against the anarchist the Hague Congress in 1872 was at most, a Pyrrhic victory. Thomas correctly predicted though that the last had not been heard from the anarchists as they have outlived the historical context in which their doctrine first appeared:

> This context overlaps significantly with that of the growth of Marxist doctrine; but such an overlap does not suggest a convergence, unless we assume, against all the evidence, a homogeneity of outlook within the Left, or an equally unlikely willingness to compromise of the type that neither Marxists nor anarchists have yet been eager to reveal' (Thomas, 1980, p. 2).

Thomas holds the belief 'that in the last analysis Marxism expresses more intellectual and human content, and has greater political sense, than its anarchist rivals have generally displayed.' But he concedes that this last analysis has yet to be reached and the final word about these issues has yet to be written (Thomas, 1980, p. 4). This conference is testament to that fact.

While I retain sympathy with Guerin's intention in attempting to work out some theoretical synthesis between anarchism and Marxism based on the Address of 1871, it is too ambitious a project as I think I have shown that the differences run too deep. 'When libertarian Marxists try to distinguish themselves from authoritarian Marxists, they adopt a stance forbidden by Marx's

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[3] See April Carter, *The Political Theory of Anarchism*, pp. 70–71, for a fuller discussion of this issue.

political theory' (Alan Carter, 1988, p. 219). Bakunin's uncompromising consistency in demanding that freedom and equality be realised both in any social revolution and post-revolutionary society distinguished anarchism from Marxist socialism. In discerning that the imposition of socialism without freedom would lead not only to failure, but worse, to injustices and inequalities no better than the capitalist system they purported to transcend, Bakunin subjected Marxian socialism to a perceptive and critical judgement. The Marxist revolution and State fail on their own terms, they cannot enable the very liberation they profess to effect because they are by nature incompatible with socialism *and* freedom, with socialism *and* equality. This is not hindsight on the part of Bakunin and anarchists, Proudhon warned of it as early as 1844 and Bakunin from *before* 1871–2 and the acrimonious split in the First International. The connected and sustained critique of Marxism continued with Kropotkin and came full circle with Goldman's evaluation of the Bolshevik regime after the Russian Revolution. Many defenders of Bakunin justifiably highlight his astute comments on the dangers of authoritarian socialism in practice, and rightly so as his critical analysis of Marx are lucid and even at this distance still impressive in their prescience.

I also reject Thomas' contention that the disputes between Marx and the anarchists have vindicated the former, in fact the opposite seems much more plausibly to be the case, the strength, breadth and timing of anarchist critique actually vindicates them. This critique – summarised by 'Socialism will be free or it will not be at all' is a key or indication of a more libertarian Marx, but that is all it is. It represents the possibility of developing on common ground but requires the specific and narrowly held version of each ideology (Marx of the Paris Commune, a libertarian socialist version of anarchism) as to be widely adopted or accepted either by Marxists or certainly the even more diverse anarchist movement. So while I agree with Thomas that the more apt metaphor for the inter-relationship between anarchism and Marxism is a penumbra and not a convergence, he is right on this for the wrong reasons.

While Guerin's comparison of the two strands of thought (the authoritarian and the libertarian) alone is not enough to reconcile anarchism and Marxism, I still think this form of analysis, as articulated in slightly broader terms by Chomsky remains the more fruitful way to initially approach a possible reconciliation between anarchism and Marxism. Chomsky sympathises with the argument that popular revolutions, seeking to replace 'a feudal or centralised authority ruling by force' with some form of communal system which 'implies the destruction and disappearance of the old form of the State,' will either be socialist or an 'extreme form of democracy ... [which is] ... the preliminary condition for socialism inasmuch as Socialism can only be realised in a world enjoying the highest measure of personal freedom.' This is at least the spirit in which to approach the continuing dialogue and while Guerin was right in so far as the Paris Commune is the place to start, it alone cannot bear the weight of the hopes for a unified future.

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Individual Reconciliations 1: The Anglo-Americans

C.L.R. James' Black Bloc: The Anti-Racist Roots of Contemporary Anarchism

Andrew Cornell

Not available.

Chris Pallis (aka Maurice Brinton) and Solidarity

David Goodway
Not available.

Towards a synthesis of anarchism and Marxism

Ruth Kinna
Not available.

A 'Bohemian freelancer'? C.L.R. James, his early relationship to anarchism and the intellectual origins of autonomism[1]

Christian Høgsbjerg

That the mature Marxism of the late Trinidadian intellectual and activist C.L.R. James (1901–1989), one of the twentieth century's most original contributors to what Hal Draper has termed the revolutionary democratic tradition of 'socialism from below,' seemed to have some sort of relationship to anarchism has often been alluded to, though James's actual relationship to anarchism and anarchists remains relatively unknown, and sadly not a matter which is discussed at length in the existing literature of James-scholarship.[2] In 1981, Paul Berman, in probably what still stands as the most extended discussion of James and anarchism, thought James ultimately had come up with 'a version of socialism that wittingly or unwittingly incorporates elements of anarchism within a larger Marxist framework.'[3] In 1987, James D Young, subsequently author of *The World of C.L.R. James,* noted 'James was always a dissident with a touch of anarchist disaffection.'[4] In 1989, in an obituary of James, Robin Blackburn declared James's highly original interpretation of Leninism meant James was an 'Anarcho-Bolshevik,' while E.P. Thompson apparently went as far as to speak of James's writing not just being 'infused with a libertarian tendency' but of James's 'instinctive, unarticulated anarchism.'[5]

Yet there is a problem here, as if James was in some way an anarchist, his 'anarchism' was not simply 'unarticulated' — rather, James was about as explicit as he could get in articulating outright opposition. In 1948, in *Notes on Dialectics* for example, James casually noted in passing that 'the Proudhonists and Bakuninists represented the petty-bourgeois capitalistic influences in the proletariat' at the time of the First International which lost out to Marxism 'because of the decline of the petty- bourgeois individualism in capitalism as a whole,' while he also commented on the failings of anarchism in the Spanish civil war.[6] As Berman admitted, James

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'has always called himself, in spite of everything, a Leninist…as to anarchism, in all of his writings he condemns it forcefully. But I must say, James's forcefulness on this point reminds me of nothing so much as Rosa Luxemburg's similar forcefulness in the opening pages of *The Mass Strike* — an instance of protesting too much.'[7]

Yet Paul Buhle is surely closer to the mark when he describes any reference to James's politics as 'anarchist' in 'its treatment of party and state' as a 'sincere but mistaken' position.[8]

This paper will not explore why that is the case in detail, which would require a systematic exposition of how James together with his comrades in the 'Johnson- Forest Tendency' inside American Trotskyism, above all Raya Dunayevskaya and Grace Lee Boggs, tried to, in James's own words, 'work through Leninism' during and after the Second World War in order to try to come to terms with the crisis that had overcome not just Marxism but the wider working class movement in a period dominated by Stalinism and Fascism.[9] So for example, just as the exiled Lenin in 1914 turned in despair to the library and a serious study of the Hegelian dialectics to produce his 'Philosophical Notebooks,' so the Johnson-Forest Tendency now spent hours engaged in serious study of the German philosopher Hegel. This 'working through' Leninism necessitated a break with the theory and practise of 'orthodox Trotskyism,' a movement James had been committed to since becoming an organised revolutionary in 1934 but this break was conceived as a conscious attempt to not only return to classical Marxism as understood by Marx and Lenin — but also to develop that tradition so it fitted with the new realities of the post war world, to as he put it, make 'our own leap from the heights of Leninism.'[10] Leon Trotsky during the 1930s in the context of the historic collapse of the Third International as any kind of revolutionary force — something confirmed after the greatest defeat suffered by the international working class in world history, the victory of Hitler's Nazis in 1933 — had argued for the critical importance of founding the Fourth International which for Trotsky represented the solution to what he called the historic 'crisis of revolutionary leadership' gripping the official political organisations of the working class movement. Against this perspective, the Johnson-Forest Tendency during the 1940s felt the critical crisis of the age was instead what they called the 'crisis of the selfmobilisation of the proletariat,' and so argued for a greater stress and focus on what James called 'free creative activity' and 'disciplined spontaneity,' the self-activity of the working class itself autonomous of official political parties and trade union bureaucracies.[11] Yet as James put it in *Notes on Dialectics,*

'we have arrived, are arriving at Marxist ideas for our time out of Trotskyism. We would not come out of Stalinism, or social democracy, or anarchism. Despite every

racy and Stalinism as an ideology of 'counter-revolution within the revolution.' 'The proletariat, like every organism, must from itself and its conditions develop its own organisations and its own means of overcoming them. One of the most urgent tasks is to trace the evolution of the counter-revolution within the revolution, from liberalism through anarchism, Social Democracy, Noske, counter-revolutionary Menshevism, to Stalinism, its economic and social roots at each stage, its political manifestations, its contradictions and antagonisms.' See C.L.R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya, and Grace Lee, *State Capitalism and World Revolution,* (Chicago, 1986), p. 132.

[7] Berman, 'Facing Reality,' p. 208.

[8] Paul Buhle, 'Marxism in the USA,' in Scott McLemee and Paul Le Blanc (eds.), *C.L.R. James and Revolutionary Marxism; Selected writings of C.L.R. James, 1939–49,* (New Jersey, 1994), p. 56.

[9] James, *Notes on Dialectics,* p. 135. James was 'J.R. Johnson,' Dunayevskaya 'F. Forest.'

[10] James, *Notes on Dialectics,* p. 150.

[11] James et al, *State Capitalism and World Revolution,* pp. 58–9. James, *Notes on Dialectics,* p. 118.

blunder, and we have not spared them, Trotskyism was and remains in the truly dialectical sense, the only theoretical revolutionary current since Leninism...we came from there and could have only come from there.'[12]

However, because attention on James and anarchism remains so underexplored in the literature, this paper will first explore James's early relationship to anarchism — which may throw some light on why Leon Trotsky would refer to his erstwhile loyal lieutenant from Trinidad C.L.R. James in a private letter in 1940 as a 'Bohemian freelancer' — before making some tentative comments about how and why James's mature Marxism came to be an intellectual influence for those who would later develop what we now call autonomism, above all in Italy.[13]

Rather than being an 'instinctive anarchist,' the early politics of James, such as they were while a young teacher, journalist and writer in the British Crown Colony of Trinidad were distinctly of the gradual, practical, statist, reformist variety. He was a democrat in a country without any meaningful democracy, a parliamentary socialist in a country without a meaningful parliament. James's hero at the time, and the subject of his first book in 1932, was Captain Andre Cipriani, the former Commanding Officer of the British West India Regiment in the First World War and then leader of the mass social democratic nationalist Trinidad Workingmen's Association (T.W.A.). Inspired in part also by Gandhi and Marcus Garvey, James became a campaigner for 'West Indian self-government,' but at this stage he was very far from the revolutionary Marxist and 'class struggle Pan-Africanist' he would become. If 'Conservatism unprodded hardens into tyranny, radicalism unchecked degenerates into chaos,' he wrote in one 1931 article.[14] If anything, James was a liberal humanist who aspired to live by the tenets of Matthew Arnold, but his attempt to sincerely follow Arnoldian ideals led him to first implicitly and then explicitly critique British colonial rule. He joined up with other writers around two literary journals, *Trinidad* and then *The Beacon,* the latter of which the editor Albert Gomes recalled:

> 'became the focus of a movement of enlightenment spearheaded by Trinidad's angry young men of the Thirties. It was the torpor, the smugness and the hypocrisy of the Trinidad of the period that provoked the response which produced both the magazine and the defiant bohemianism of the movement that was built around it.'[15]

If perhaps not therefore quite an 'instinctive anarchist,' James seems to have been something of an 'instinctive Bohemian freelancer.'[16] Arriving in Britain in 1932, witnessing the Lancashire cotton textile workers strike while up in Nelson, and then reading Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* amidst the conditions of the Great Depression and the triumph of Hitler's Nazis in 1933 led James to politically radicalise while working as the *Manchester Guardian's* cricket correspondent. In 1934, James left the British Labour Party which he had joined in solidarity with Ciprani's T.W.A. and joined the tiny British Trotskyist movement, in particular the section of it inside the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.), the Marxist Group.

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[12] James, *Notes on Dialectics,* p. 151,

[13] Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism,* (New York, 1976), pp. 103, 164.

[14] C.L.R. James, 'Michel Maxwell Philip: 1829–1888 [1931]' in Selwyn R. Cudjoe (ed.), *Michael Maxwell Philip; A Trinidad Patriot of the 19th Century,* (Wellesley, 1999), pp. 102–3.

[15] Quoted in Reinhard W. Sander, 'Introduction: *The Beacon* and the Emergence of West Indian Literature' in Brinsley Samaroo (ed.), *The Beacon, Volumes I-IV, 1931–1939,* (New York, 1977), p. xvii.

[16] The American labour historian George Rawick thought James a 'Victorian hippy.' Personal information from Marcus Rediker, 6 November 2007.

James orientated to Trotskyism largely through his own critical independent reading, but it was while searching out Marxist classics in London in 1933 that he happened to visit a bookshop on 68 Red Lion Street, quite near where James lived during most of the 1930s, called *Lahr,* owned by an anarchist from Germany, Charlie Lahr. Lahr was, according to David Goodway, 'very probably the last' in the line, 'stretching back to the late eighteenth-century,' of 'great London radical booksellers- cum-publishers.'[17] His bookshop, according to Jonathan Rose during the 1930s was 'a mecca for down and out Nietzscheans and scruffy poets.'[18] James remembers Lahr soon 'got interested in what I was doing and would put aside a book or pamphlet for me he knew or thought would interest me.'[19] The two soon formed what James describes as 'a curious partnership,' with Lahr helping James become acquainted with knowledge of the reactionary nature of individual Labour leaders and British trade union bureaucrats — and James learnt much particularly about contemporary Germany and Hitler's rise from power.[20] One might surmise that it was Lahr who also recommended James read Peter Kropotkin's *The Great French Revolution* (1909) as part of his ongoing research on the Haitian Revolution, a work which James in his 1938 classic *The Black Jacobins* described as having a 'more instinctive understanding of revolution than any well-known book on this subject' and in 1963 would even describe as 'the best general book in English' on the French Revolution.[21]

Yet as well as James's sense of fair play and critical thinking abilities which led him to read widely, of more significance in my opinion in the making of James into a creative and distinctly anti-statist Marxist was the whole environment of far-left politics in 1930s Britain, and the eclectic milieu around the I.L.P., with its various traditions including council communism and diverse other forms of non-Leninist socialisms.[22] For us it is particularly interesting here to note that James, fast emerging as the intellectual driving force of British Trotskyism during the 1930s, was on reasonably good terms with some of the leading anarchists in Britain during this period, including the veteran Guy Aldred who he met in Glasgow.[23] Also almost by accident James crossed paths with Vernon Richards, a young anarchist from Italy who was editor of *Spain and the World,* the main British anarchist paper of the day (previously and subsequently called *Freedom*) which Richards had launched in London in late 1936 while only 21 years old.[24] As the editor of the Trotskyist journal *Fight* (launched in October 1936), James met Richards on one of his regular visits to the printers at Narod Press in 129/131 Bedford Street, Whitechapel, which was run by a team of Jewish apprentices under 'Papa Naroditsky' and his three sons. As Richards remembered, 'apart from the boys themselves…one had the opportunity to meet other editors supervising their

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[17] David Goodway, 'Charles Lahr,' *London Magazine,* June/July 1977.

[18] Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes,* (London, 2001), p. 303.

[19] C.L.R. James, 'Charlie Lahr' [1975], unpublished manuscript in the possession of David Goodway, pp. 2–3.

[20] James, 'Charlie Lahr,' pp. 3–4, 7. James's chapter on the rise of the Nazis in Germany in his 1937 pioneering anti-Stalinist Marxist history of 'the rise and fall of the Communist International,' *World Revolution,* would owe much to Lahr's influence and would depart somewhat from Trotsky's analysis. See C.L.R. James, 'Discussions with Trotsky,' in C.L.R. James, *At the Rendezvous of Victory; Selected Writings,* Vol. 3, (London, 1984), and also James, *Notes on Dialectics,* pp. 38, 149.

[21] See C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins; Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution,* (London, 1938), p. 320, and C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins; Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution,* (London, 2001), p. 332.

[22] Gidon Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream; The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II,* (London, 2007), p. 111.

[23] Young, *The World of C.L.R. James,* pp. 82–3.

[24] Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow,* p. 126.

journals,' including 'the gentle-speaking West Indian Marxist CLR James who was producing his *Fight!* No punch-ups, political or otherwise.'[25] Indeed, James would on occasion rally to the side of the tiny British anarchist movement against the I.L.P. and Communist Party in *Fight*.[26]

Indeed, Richards's publication *Spain and the World* suggests something about the wider connection between anarchists and the Pan-Africanist movement in Britain in the 1930s. In May 1937, James with his compatriot and boyhood friend, George Padmore, launched the International African Service Bureau (I.A.S.B.) in London, and the title at least of the I.A.S.B.'s 1937 newsletter, *Africa and the World,* seems inspired by the anarchist *Spain and the World.* The presence among the patrons of the I.A.S.B. of F.A. Ridley, a libertarian socialist intellectual and member of the I.L.P., who called for an 'anarcho-Marxist alliance' in 1938, is perhaps significant.[27] There are tantalising glimpses in Ethel Mannin's satirical 1945 novel *Comrade O ' Comrade* of one key Pan-Africanist in Britain during this period, the Barbadian veteran organiser of colonial seamen — Chris Braithewaite — better known under his pseudonym Chris Jones — speaking alongside Emma Goldman on meetings on the Spanish Revolution in London during this period. Mannin notes that Braithewaite took the opportunity 'to put the anti-Imperialist case, with special reference to Africa,' something Mannin makes light of given the meeting was theoretically on Spain, but actually not to be passed over lightly given the critical question of the Moroccan troops who fought for General Franco on the vague promise of colonial liberation, a promise the Spanish Republic was unwilling to make.[28] George Padmore would later recall the period 'immediately before the outbreak of the Second World War...was one of the most stimulating and constructive in the history of Pan-Africanism,' noting that black intellectuals made what he called a 'detailed and systematic study of European political theories and systems' among which he included Anarchism.[29]

That said, of critical importance in sowing the seeds of James's later break with orthodox Trotskyism during the 1930s was the impact of two external events which revealed the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism — the Moscow Trials and the Spanish Civil War. These were also to be critical for the political evolution of James's key intellectual collaborator during the 1940s, Raya Dunayevskaya. As Peter Hudis has noted, the Spanish Civil War in particular

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[25] Vernon Richards, 'Printers We Have Known: 1936–1986,' in *Freedom; Anarchist Magazine, Centenary Edition,* Vol. 47, No. 9, (October, 1986). *Freedom,* the main British anarchist publication, then called *Spain and the World* used the Narod Press from October 1936-December 1936 and then from June 1937-September 1938. On Richards, see David Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward,* (Liverpool, 2006), p. 126.

[26] In November 1937, James would take issue with Fenner Brockway in *Fight* for forbidding I.L.P. speakers to stand on the Anarchist platform during the May Day celebrations in Britain in 1937 in order to appease the C.P.G.B. 'The Trotskyists and the Anarchists are small. The Stalinists have money, press, incredible brazeness. True they are kicking the I.L.P. in the front and rear, digging them in the eye and spitting on them. All that Brockway can do is to complain querulously and allow them to terrorise him from standing up for the Anarchists and the Trotskyists. The moral cowardice of these men!' *Fight,* Vol. 1, No. 11, (November, 1937).

[27] F.A. Ridley, 'Anarchism and Marxism,' *Controversy,* Vol. 2, No. 23, (August 1938). On Ridley, see Robert Morrell, *The Gentle Revolutionary; The Life and Work of Frank Ridley, Socialist and Secularist,* (London, 2003).

[28] Ethel Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade, Comrade O Comrade; or, Low-Down on the Left,* (London, 1947), p. 118. On Braithewaite, see Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance; Africa and Britain, 1919–1945,* (London, 1999), p. 222. On Mannin, see Andy Croft, 'Ethel Mannin: The Red Rose of Love and the Red Flower of Liberty,' in Angela Ingram and Daphne Patai (eds.), *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals; British Women Writers, 1889–1939,* (London, 1993).

[29] George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism? The Coming Struggle for Africa,* (London, 1956), p. 151.

'presented revolutionaries with what Dunayevskaya was later to call the "absolute contradiction" of our age — the emergence of counter-revolution from *within* revolution. It was not only the Stalinists, however, whose role was compromised by these events. For the various anti-Stalinist tendencies, be they Trotskyist, anarchist or independent, failed to successfully combat the new phenomenon of counter-revolution emerging from with revolution.'

Trotsky's Russian language secretary from 1937–38, Dunayevskaya later recalled how she first became critical of Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union as a 'degenerated workers' state' during this tumultuous period. 'Out of the Spanish Civil War there emerged a new kind of revolutionary who posed questions, not only against Stalinism, but against Trotskyism, indeed against all *established* Marxisms.'[30]

James similarly began to ask questions of Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union in *The Revolution Betrayed* — a work which Trotsky had completed in June 1936 — so before the Moscow Trials and the Stalinist suppression of the P.O.U.M. and anarchists in Barcelona. Indeed, by the time he wrote his pioneering anti-Stalinist Marxist history of 'the rise and fall of the Communist International,' *World Revolution,* published in April 1937, James while still formerly accepting Trotsky's analysis was already taking a harder line on Stalinism and showing an openness to those arguing that Stalinist Russia had become a state capitalist society. According to Special Branch operatives, when James spoke in London in defence of Trotsky after the first Moscow Trial on 9 September 1936, 'he compared the conditions of the British and Russian workers, adding that a form of capitalism was creeping into the Soviet State.'[31] In the course of researching *World Revolution,* James read the works of a number of people who felt Stalinist Russia was now state-capitalist including two former leading German Communists, Arthur Rosenberg and Karl Korsch — the latter James apparently met in 1936 — and also the former leading French Communist Boris Souvraine whose 1935 biography of Stalin maintained that 'the Federation of Socialist Soviet Republics, the very name a four fold contradiction of the reality, has long ago ceased to exist,' and 'Soviet state capitalism,' 'so-called Soviet society' rests 'on its own method of exploitation of man by man.'[32] James seems to have met up with Souvraine in Paris in 1938 and would translate Souvraine's *Staline* into English in 1939, generously describing it as 'a book with an anarchist bias against the dictatorship of the proletariat but irreproachably documented, very fair, and full of insight.'[33] Indeed, James himself in *World Revolution* presented much evidence that Stalinist Russia, while certainly a dictatorship, could not in any way be described as a 'workers' state.' As James noted, 'the fiction of workers' control, after twenty years of the revolution, is dead. But the bureaucracy fears the proletariat. It knows, none better, the temper of the people it so mercilessly cheats and

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[30] Raya Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism,* (Chicago, 1992), pp. x-xi.

[31] The National Archives, London: KV/2/1824/1z. 'Stalin, he said, was striving for National Socialism, while Trotsky was upholding International Socialism.'

[32] C.L.R. James, *World Revolution 1917–1936; The Rise and Fall of the Communist International,* (New Jersey, 1994), pp. 168, 175, 178, 185. Arthur Rosenberg, *A History of Bolshevism; From Marx to the First Five Years' Plan,* (London, 1934), pp. viii, 236–7. James's meeting with Korsch is recorded by Kent Worcester, from an interview in 1981 with American historian George Rawick. Kent Worcester, *C.L.R. James, C.L.R. James; A Political Biography,* (New York, 1996). p. 30. Boris Souvarine, *Stalin: A Critical Survey of Bolshevism,* (London, 1940), pp. 564, 570. See also Christopher Phelps, 'C.L.R. James and the Theory of State Capitalism,' ' in Nelson Lichtenstein (ed.), *American Capitalism; Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century,* (Philadelphia, 2006), p.165.

[33] James, *World Revolution,* p. 140, and Worcester, *C.L.R. James,* p. 45.

exploits.'[34] For Trotsky, the bureaucracy was a brutal oppressor, but was not actually exploiting the working class.[35] Yet for James, the first Five Year Plan meant that 'the remnants of workers control were wiped away.'[36] 'The Russian proletariat, after its Herculean efforts, seems to have exchanged one set of masters for another, while the very basis of the proletarian state is being undermined beneath its feet.' James declared the methods of Stalin's industrialisation drive seemed to be just 'discovering what the capitalists knew hundreds of years ago...where will all this end?'[37]

Such ideas were in the air on the far-left during the 1930s.[38] After writing *World Revolution,* James would in 1937 write an introduction for *Red Spanish Notebook* an eyewitness account of revolutionary Spain through the eyes of two surrealist poets who had gone to fight for the P.O.U.M., Mary Low and the Cuban Trotskyist Juan Brea, who had concluded by pondering the motives of the Soviet Union with respect to revolutionary Spain, noting 'let us suppose that Russia is no longer a proletarian state but is making her first steps towards capitalism.'[39] One witness to Stalinist counter-revolution in Spain, George Orwell, who seems to have met up with James in the summer of 1937 after returning to Britain and who once described *World Revolution* as a 'very able book,' in his 1938 work *Homage to Catalonia* described the 'socialism in one country' being built in Russia by Stalin as little more than 'a planned state-capitalism with the grab-motive left intact.'[40]

On 3 September 1938, at the founding conference of the Fourth International, James intervened forcefully in the debate challenging the orthodox position that Trotskyists should call for the defence of the U.S.S.R. in case of war.[41] A month later, James would travel to America for a lecture tour, during which time he would meet Trotsky himself for discussions on black liberation in the US.[42] Trotsky's 1940 comment on James as a 'bohemian freelancer' has to be seen in the context of the split in American Trotskyism over the class nature of the Soviet Union and were made in part because of James's growing openness to and sympathies for state capitalist theories to explain Stalinist Russia but also because James had increasingly also come into conflict with

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[34] James, *World Revolution,* p. 371.

[35] Trotsky felt the Stalinist bureaucracy was a 'temporary' phenomenon, and in 1939 argued 'Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we fixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall?' See Alex Callinicos, *Trotskyism,* (Minneapolis, 1990), p. 21.

[36] James, *World Revolution,* p. 296.

[37] See James, *World Revolution,* pp. 17, 415.

[38] One former comrade of James's from the Marxist Group, Dr. Ryan L. Worrall in 1939 would put forward a substantial and sophisticated state capitalist analysis in the I.L.P. journal *Left.* Phelps, 'C.L.R. James and the Theory of State Capitalism,' pp. 165–6, 331–2.

[39] Mary Low and Juan Brea, *Red Spanish Notebook; The First Six Months of the Revolution and the Civil War,* (London, 1937), pp. 254–5.

[40] Peter Davison (ed.), *The Complete Works of George Orwell,* vol. 11, (London, 1998), p. 87. Louise Cripps, Louise, *C.L.R. James; Memories and Commentaries,* (London, 1997), p. 21. George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia,* (London, 1989), p. 83. As Orwell noted of the Soviet Union in 1939, 'Is it Socialism, or is it a peculiarly vicious form of state capitalism? All the political controversies... for two years past really circle round this question.' Quoted in John Newsinger, 'Destroying the Myth: George Orwell and Soviet Communism' in Paul Flewers (ed.), *George Orwell: Enigmatic Socialist,* (London, 2005), p. 138.

[41] Socialist Platform, *C.L.R. James and British Trotskyism; An Interview,* (London, 1987), p. 10. See also Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast; Trotsky: 1929–1940,* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 419–21.

[42] For my take on these discussions, see Christian H0gsbjerg, 'The prophet and Black Power: Trotsky on race in the US,' *International Socialism,* 121, (2008).

the official bureaucratic apparatus of the Fourth International and its International Secretariat over a number of tactical questions — differences he had tentatively tried to raise in a theoretical manner in his discussion of 'democratic centralism' in *World Revolution.*

James and the Intellectual Origins of Autonomism

Though as Steve Wright suggests, 'the core premises of autonomist Marxism were first developed in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s' when militants first sought to confront Marx's *Capital* with 'the real study of a real factory' in 1960s Italy, the intellectual origins date back earlier, and include the work of James and the Johnson- Forest Tendency more generally during the 1940s. As Wright, and others including Harry Cleaver have noted, the likes of Romano Alquati's pioneering 1961 'Report of the new forces' at F.I.A.T . was not totally unprecedented. During the momentous year of 1956 and for two years subsequently, for example, Daniel Mothe, a member of Socialisme ou Barbarie around Cornelius Castoriadis and a milling machine operator at the Renault Billancourt vehicle factory kept a diary, which was published as *Journald'un Ouvrier, 1956–58,* and translated into Italian in 1960. Even earlier, in 1954, Danilo Montaldi had published in *Battaglia Communista* a translation of a 1947 work entitled *The American Worker* by a member of the Johnson-Forest Tendency Phil Singer (who used the pseudonym Paul Romano). This work had first been translated into French by the comrades of Socialisme ou Barbarie who published it in their journal in parts from 1949 onwards, before being translated from the French by Montaldi.[43] Singer was an American car worker at a General Motors plant who in his late twenties had kept a diary which with the help of Grace Lee Boggs he had written up in order to portray 'Life in the Factory,' 'what the workers are thinking and doing while actually at work on the bench or on the line.' The work was published alongside a lengthy piece of commentary entitled 'The Reconstruction of Society' by Grace Lee Boggs. As Singer put it,

> 'This pamphlet is directed to the rank and file worker and its intention is to express those innermost thoughts which the worker rarely talks about even to his fellow workers. In keeping a diary, so to speak, of the day to day reactions to factory life, I hoped to uncover the reasons for the workers deep dissatisfaction which has reached a peak in recent years and has expressed itself in the latest strikes and spontaneous walkouts.'[44]

Yet what I want to do is to examine briefly James's contribution to the making of *The American Worker* — which was essentially how some of his ideas came to indirectly influence early Italian autonomism. As Grace Lee Boggs, who under her pseudonym Ria Stone wrote a lengthy piece of commentary entitled 'The Reconstruction of Society' as an afterword to Singer's commentary in *The American Worker,* recalled of the Johnson-Forest Tendency,

> 'because CLR could not be publicly active, we acted as his transmission belt to the larger American community...one of CLR's great gifts was that he could detect the

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[43] Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven; Class composition and struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, (London, 2002), pp. 1,3. Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically,* (Brighton, 1979), pp. 50, 53, 183. On Mothe, see Ian Birchall, 'Nineteen Fifty-Six and the French Left,' *Revolutionary History,* Vol. 9, No. 3, (2006).

[44] [Phil Singer], *The American Worker (Part 1: Life in the Factory),* online at 'www.prole.info,' p. 1

special abilities and interests of individuals and encourage them to en-
rich the movement and at the same time enlarge themselves...Phil Singer, a young
GM worker, was always talking about the frustrations of the rank-and-file worker
in the plant. CLR proposed that he keep a journal of his experiences. These were
subsequently published in *The American Worker.*'[45]

In a sense this does not sound that original, as attempting to understand society from the
standpoint of working class experience at the point of production had ever since Marx's own
Workers Inquiry of 1880 if not before at least had been nominally at the heart of classical Marxism.
As James had noted in his discussion of 'Lenin and Socialism' back in 1937 in *World Revolution,*

'The creative capacity of the masses — he [Lenin] believed in it as no other leader
of the workers ever did. That creative capacity had hitherto been seen only in rev-
olution. The Soviet system based on the masses in the factories was to organise
this creativeness not only for purpose of government but also for production, link-
ing the two closer and closer together until ultimately the all-embracing nature of
production by the whole of society rendered the State superfluous.'[46]

Indeed, the British Trotskyist journal *Fight* which James had edited in the 1930s had carried
a regular series entitled 'On the Job' in 1937, featuring for example 'The Building Worker' by a
young member of the Marxist Group who was a carpenter, Arthur Alexander Ballard, and then
'From the Engineer's Bench' by a member of the engineers union, the A.E.U.[47] Trotsky himself
in 1939 famously criticised another Trotskyist paper, *Socialist Appeal*, on the grounds that

'is a paper for the workers' and not a workers paper...You do not hear at all how the
workers' live, fight, clash with the police or drink whisky...the task is not to make
a paper through the joint forces of a skilled editorial board but to encourage the
workers to speak for themselves.'[48]

Yet in a sense James's encouraging of a fellow member of the Johnson-Forest Tendency to keep
a diary detailing his experience at work was quite original — as the group's distinctive perspec-
tives profoundly shaped what became *The American Worker.* As the leaders of the Johnson-Forest
Tendency put it themselves in 1947,

'the Russian question is only a part of the world crisis. The decisive stage of eco-
nomic development is statification of production. Statification of production is not
a phrase or a description. It marks the capitulation of anarchic capitalist society
to the planning of the invading socialist society. The planning, however, torn by
class contradictions, repeats the fundamental features of capitalist antagonisms in
their most barbarous form. Statification carries in itself the most profound social
awareness of the proletariat, and its social structure repeatedly propels the prole-
tariat on the road to the complete transformation of society...The barbarism of cap-
italism was concretely demonstrated in Russia. But it was the American proletariat

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[45] Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography,* (Minneapolis, 1998), p. 62.

[46] James, *World Revolution,* p. 123.

[47] *Fight,* Vol. 1, No. 3, (January, 1937) and *Fight,* Vol. 1, No. 4, (February, 1937).

[48] Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism,* p. 112.

which concretised for us the necessarily abstract conception of the creative power of the proletariat in industry as a force for the social regeneration of society. The work of American industrial psychologists and the observations of proletarian comrades whom we had developed opened this door to us. The Johnson-Forest Tendency will soon publish a pamphlet by Phil Romano and Ria Stone which will deal fully with this question from both a practical and a theoretical point of view.'[49]

The American Worker then was about demonstrating the Johnson-Forest Tendency's 'conception of the creative power of the proletariat in industry as a force for the social regeneration of society.'[50] In particular, James's individual contribution to developing this conception should be noted. As the American Trotskyist Stanley Weir recalled,

> 'James was the first and only leader in the entire Trotskyist movement, from which I heard discussion of the special form of workers' control which develops in every workplace naturally and informally. He knew of the existence of informal cultures and that they were the basis from which to broach the entire question of workers' control...For me, he introduced the ideas which demonstrated the value of what is done socially from below on the job to get out production and to survive.'[51]

We can now tentatively assess the impact of the Johnson-Forest Tendency as expressed through *The American Worker* on Italian workerism. As Danilo Montaldi noted, *The American Worker* expressed

> 'with great force and profundity, the idea — practically forgotten by the Marxist movement after the publication of *Capital* Volume 1 — that before being the adherent of a party, a militant of the revolution or the subject of a future socialist power, the worker is a being who lives above all in capitalist production and the factory; and that it is in production that the revolt against exploitation, the capacity to construct a superior type of society, along with class solidarity of other workers and hatred for exploitation and exploiters — both the classic bosses of yesterday and the impersonal bureaucrats of today and tomorrow — are formed.'[52]

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[49] J.R. Johnson, F. Forest, Martin Harvey, *Trotskyism in the United States, 1940–47:Balance Sheet; The Workers Party and the Johnson-Forest Tendency* (Detroit, 1947), pp. 8–9. As Grace Lee Boggs wrote in her piece 'The Reconstruction of Society,' 'to read Romano's [Singer's] description of the life in the factory is to realise with shocking clarity how deeply the alienation of labour pervades the very foundations of our society. All the preoccupation of the intellectuals with their own souls and with economic programmes for "full employment" and a higher standard of living, fade into insignificance in the face of the oppressive reality of the lifetime of every worker.' Quoted in Worcester, *CLR James,* p. 89. See also Rosengarten, *Urbane Revolutionary,* p. 71 and Paul Buhle, *CLR James, The Artist as Revolutionary,* (London, 1993), p. 70.

[50] The work was heralded as being highly original at the time. As Castoriadis later recalled, 'for the first time there was something that was absent totally from the entire Marxist tradition and from Karl Marx himself except in the *Economic and Philosophical manuscripts* of 1844: that is the acknowledgement that being a worker does not mean that one is just working or that one is just being exploited. Being a worker means living with workers, being in solidarity with other workers, living in working class quarters of the city, having women who are either workers themselves or, if they are not, their predicament is the same or even worse than that of the men.' Cornelius Castoriadis, 'C.L.R. James and the fate of Marxism' in Selwyn R. Cudjoe and William E. Cain (eds.), *C.L.R. James; His Intellectual Legacies,* (Amherst, 1995), p. 283.

[51] Stanley Weir, 'Revolutionary Artist,' in Paul Buhle (ed.), *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work,* (London, 1986), pp. 183–4.

[52] Quoted in Wright, *Storming Heaven,* pp. 23–4.

Moreover, for those on the anti-Stalinist far-left in France and especially Italy during the 1950s, *The American Worker* was even more remarkable given the anti- Americanism of the Communist dominated official Left in the context of the Cold War. As Ferrucio Gambino, a sociologist from the University of Padua and cofounder of two 1960s Italian workerist journals *Quaderni Rossi* — *Red Notebooks* — and *Potero Operaio* — 'Workers Power' — recalls, after the Hungarian Revolution,

> 'tiny groups and individuals in Southern Europe discovered and read "the American comrades" — two words that at long last it was possible to put together again — "the American comrades" who contributed to *Socialisme ou Barbarie.*The conditions of the working class looked strikingly similar throughout the so-called First World — and, we argued at that time, it could not be dissimilar in the Second World. State capitalism was a living category whereby we could relate in solidarity to the people who were bearing the brunt of the opposition to "actuated socialism."'[53]

In the 1960s, Gambino and another historian of American labour, Bruno Cartosio from Milan — would eventually establish relations with James and his loyal disciple Martin Glaberman, and the publishing of James himself into Italian began with *The Black Jacobins* in 1968 — and continued subsequently.[54] Links were established with the Jamesians in Detroit at the heart of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers while the translation of other American Jamesians followed in the 1970s.[55] As Cleaver noted in 1979, 'works by C.L.R. James, James Boggs, George Rawick, and Martin Glaberman, among others, have been translated into Italian and probably received wider circulation and discussion in Italy than in the United States.'[56]

Overall, though it has not been possible here to fully examine James's influence on Italian autonomism, it might still be possible to make a few speculative conclusions. In one sense it is a pity that after helping to provide a critical focus on the self-activity of the working class at the point of production, a stress on the possibilities which flowed from wildcat strikes and other unofficial industrial action, that more of James's writings were not translated into Italian during the 1960s as they might have ensured less of a subsequent retreat from revolutionary Marxism

[53] Ferruccio Gambino, 'Only Connect,' in Paul Buhle (ed.), *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work,* (London, 1986), pp. 197–8.

[54] Martin Glaberman (ed.), *Marxism for Our Times; C.L.R. James on Revolutionary Organisation,* (Jackson, 1999), p. xxii. Paul Buhle, 'Political Styles of C.L.R. James: An Introduction,' in Paul Buhle (ed.), *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work,* (London, 1986), p. 26. Gambino was especially inspired by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit — a Jamesian group whose first interview abroad was with Potere Operaio around the same time as *The Black Jacobins* — which had inspired the League of Revolutionary Black Workers — appeared in Italian. As Gambino recalled, 'the interview of the League [of Revolutionary Black Workers] in Potero Operaio led to more than the well- known slogan of Potere Operaio: "Turin, Detroit, Togliattigrad, class struggle will win." It signalled the death knell of the isolated within the narrow confines of the official left's "Italian road to socialism."' Gambino, 'Only Connect,' p. 198.

[55] George Rawick published with others including Antonio Negri — *Operai e stato* [Workers and the state] (Milan, Feltrinelli, 1972), *Lo schiavo americano dal tramonto all'alba* (Milan, Feltrinelli, 1973), with Harold Baron and Hubert Gutman *Da schiavo aproletario* [From slave to proletarian] (Turin: Musolini, 1973). In 1976 Martin Glaberman published *Classe operaia, imperialismo, rivoluzione negli USA* [Working class, imperialism, and revolution in the USA] (Turin: Musolini), with an introduction by Bruno Cartosio. See Fernando Fasce, 'American Labor History, 1973–1983: Italian Perspectives,' *Reviews in American History,* Vol. 14, No. 4, (1986), pp. 602, 610–611. See also Chris Taylor, 'James and those Italians,' 'http://clrjames.blogspot.com/2009/09/james-and-those-italians.html,' and Paul Buhle, 'From a Biographer's Notebook: The Field of C.L.R. James Scholarship,' in Selwyn R. Cudjoe and William E. Cain (eds.), *C.L.R. James; His Intellectual Legacies,* (Amherst, 1995), p. 449.

[56] Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically,* p. 184. Alex Lichtenstein, 'George Rawick's "From Sundown to Sunup" and the Dialectic of Marxian Slave Studies, *Reviews in American History,* Vol. 24, No. 4, (1996).

towards an ultimately elitist substitution of the actions of a minority for the mass action of the working class among the Italian autonomists, as James — unlike say Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri — never lost sight of either the central importance of working class struggle or the need for some sort of revolutionary Marxist organisation.[57] Moreover, as Chamsy El-Ojeili has noted, compared to the majority of early Italian workerist theorists who failed to adequately consider the lives of workers outside of the purely economic battles at the point of production, James was more 'attentive to the wider cultural aspects of such an investigation of proletarian working life.'[58] However, that said, James's own reification of spontaneity, and own gradual abandonment of the rich classical Bolshevik legacy of strategy and tactics after his 1951 break with the official orthodox Trotskyist movement meant that he, like the Italian autonomists, was unable to ever really satisfactorily develop a new form of revolutionary Marxist organisation able to adequately relate to the key insight of 'working class autonomy.'[59] It is possible that this was because that insight in itself without an adequate material understanding of the wider economic and political context outside the factory, and the wider, uneven consciousness among the working class where forms of reformist politics are inevitably almost always dominant even inside the most militant factory itself can only reveal so much. Yet if James, the 'bohemian freelancer,' ultimately failed to make his great leap forward 'from the heights of Leninism,' his creative and revolutionary Marxism and its subsequent influence on movements such as Italian autonomism remain worthy of critical study by anticapitalist scholars and activists today.

As Peter Hudis has noted, 'James's emphasis on spontaneity can be seen as having influenced a number of currents in autonomist Marxism, including Negri and Hardt. At the same time, in regard to the problem of organisation, they seem not to have gone beyond his stopping point, as seen from the conclusion of *Empire*: The only event that we are still awaiting is the construction, or rather the insurgence, of a powerful organisation. We do not have any models to offer for this event. Only the multitude through its practical experimentation will offer the models and determine when and how the possible becomes real.' Peter Hudis, 'Workers as Reason: The Development of a New Relation of Worker and Intellectual in American Marxist Humanism,' *Historical Materialism,* Vol. 11, No. 4 (2003), p. 290. See also Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire,* (London, 2001), p. 411.

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[57] Jack Fuller, 'The new workerism; the politics of the Italian autonomists [1980],' *International Socialism,* 92, (2001).

[58] Chamsy El-Ojeili, 'Book Review: "Many Flowers, Little Fruit"? the Dilemmas of Workerism,' *Thesis Eleven,* 79, (2004), pp. 114–5. After they left the official Trotskyist movement, the Johnson- Forest Tendency in their newspaper *Correspondence* noted that 'From the stories we get everyday from the shops, we can see a new form of struggle emerging. It never seems to be carried to its complete end, yet its existence is continuous. The real essence of this struggle and its ultimate goal is: a better life, a new society, the emergence of the individual as a human being... This is the struggle to establish here and now a new culture, a workers' culture. It is this that we must be extremely sensitive to. We must watch with an eagle eye every change or indication of the things that these changes reflect.'

[59] For my discussion of James's failed attempt to build a 'Marxist Group' in Britain during the tumult of 1956 after he was forced to leave McCarthyist America in 1953, see Christian H0gsbjerg, 'Beyond the Boundary of Leninism? C.L.R. James and 1956,' *Revolutionary History,* Vol. 9, No. 3, (2006).

Convergence Through Practice 2: The Traditional Left

The Syndicalist challenge in the Durham coalfield before 1914

Lewis Mates

1) Introduction

The British labour unrest of the years immediately before the outbreak of the Great War saw millions of working days lost in -usually successful (up to a point)- strike action and the mushroom growth of the trade unions. Claiming that the industrial unrest was but one symptom of a deeper and terminal malaise that afflicted Liberal Britain, journalist George Dangerfield later famously claimed that 'the Great General Strike of 1914' was 'forestalled by some bullets at Sarajevo.'[1] Most have dismissed Dangerfield's contention as, at best, exaggerated, claiming that industrial militancy faded after the national miners' strike of 1912. However, Bob Holton's book on British syndicalism took issue with this, pointing out that by excluding the heavy influence of the miners on strike figures, the number of working days lost to disputes rose every year from 1910 to August 1914, and spread to other areas 1913–1914. The economic downturn of the summer of 1914 combined with an increasing counteroffensive by employers suggests that, the industrial turmoil could have reached a hitherto unseen intensity but for the war breaking out. Holton also sought to address the question of the influence of revolutionary syndicalism in Britain, where the pendulum swung too far the other way.[2] Naturally, when compared to syndicalism's impact in France, Spain and other parts of continental Europe, its role in Britain was of less significance.[3] But it is clear that the industrial unrest of this period offered revolutionaries of varying creeds potentially very favourable conditions to advance their political projects in Britain. The emergence of syndicalist ideas in this period seemed perfectly timed to give coherence and revolutionary temper to an evident urge to revolt amongst the organised working-class. Recent work by authorities such as Richard Price and David Howell has thrown more light on this phenomenon.[4] Syndicalism in Britain was an amalgam of influences from the rest of the world (and, to a lesser extent at home),

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[1] George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (1997), p.320.

[2] Here 'revolutionary syndicalism' is in accordance with that defined by Marcel van der Linden, in its 'broadest sense' of 'all revolutionary, direct-actionist' organisations. (p.182) This definition naturally includes the French had Spanish movements but also the IWW. This is not to gloss over the significant ideological differences that did exist and that played an important part in syndicalists' outlooks and relations in the Durham coalfield as elsewhere (see below). Marcel van der Linden, 'Second thoughts on revolutionary syndicalism,' *Labour History Review*, 63 (2) (1998), pp.182–3.

[3] David Howell, 'Taking Syndicalism Seriously,' *Socialist History*, 16 (2000), p.27. For international studies, see Ralph Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism. An International Comparative Analysis* (Ashgate, 2008); M. van der Linden and W. Thorpe (eds), *Revolutionary Syndicalism; An International Perspective* (1990); Wayne Thorpe, *'The Workers Themselves': Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913–1922* (Dordrecht, 1989).

[4] Richard Price, 'Contextualising British Syndicalism, c.1907-c.1920, *Labour History Review*, 63 (3) (1998), p.261.

mostly the USA and France, and fed from, and into, both Marxist and anarchist traditions. As the study below will show, ideas form the Marxist tradition could in some cases quite easily lead to anarchism. Yet there remained to some extent in syndicalism the traditional differences in emphasis between the Marxist and anarchist traditions. As such, within syndicalism there were both points of convergence between the two traditions and points of divergence; a commonality driving Marxists and anarchists together, and continued differences over, it has to be recognised, fundamentals, that continued to push them apart, even in this apparently relatively un-sectarian era.

This article will examine these themes as they related to revolutionary syndicalist activity in the Durham coalfield before the Great War. Firstly, it considers the context in terms of the politics of the Durham coalfield at this time and particularly the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) and the challenge of the Labour Party (mostly through, in County Durham, the Independent Labour Party, ILP). The second section discusses the ideological origins of syndicalism in general terms and more specifically to the developing politics of the Durham coalfield's two most significant revolutionary syndicalist activists, George Harvey and Will Lawther. The final two sections deal with the syndicalists' activities and achievements, and what this can tell us about their influence, and then comments on the extent to which various kinds of sectarianism and dogmatism conspired against this influence, making this period something of a lost opportunity for revolutionary syndicalism (and with potential contemporary and future relevance).

2) Potentialities in the Durham coalfield

Some of the first shots of the wave of late Edwardian industrial unrest were fired in the Durham coalfield. In January 1910, a considerable proportion of lodges affiliated to the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) struck against the advice of their executive. This was significant as the DMA's large membership (111,000 full and 19,000 half members; i.e. under-18s) and extensive finances made it, according to the *Durham Chronicle,* 'undoubtedly the strongest trade union in the country.'[5] The strike occurred because the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1908 had become operative in Durham. This stipulated that no one should be underground for more than eight hours in any 24 (though this excluded 'winding time' in mines). This significantly altered an agreement in Durham from August 1890 that limited the working day of hewers (the actual coal getters) to seven hours. In contrast to most other coalfields, before 1908 the majority of Durham collieries operated a two-shift system for hewers (150 collieries with 76% of Durham miners).[6] The effect of the 1908 act was to make many other collieries institute the three-shift system in order to remain competitive; 85% of Durham hewers were soon working a three-shift system, which was incredibly unpopular for the disruption it brought to family and social life.[7]

The unpopularity of the DMA leaders, and especially the most influential, Liberal MP John Wilson, grew enormously in these years as they opposed affiliation to the MFGB (whose affili-

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[5] *Durham Chronicle,* 26 July 1912.

[6] However, the remaining 25 collieries (with 23% of miners), which tended to be located nearer the coast and have the deepest and thickest coal seams, worked a three-shift system for hewers. W.R. Garside, *The Durham Miners, 1919–1960* (George Allen & Unwin, 1971), pp.19–26; B. McCormick and J.E. Williams, 'The Miners and the Eight-Hour day, 1863–1910,' *The Economic History Review,* 12 (2) (1959), pp.222–238.

[7] Durham miner Will Lawther described in some detail the arduous working day of his mother, and the average Durham housewife. See *Newcastle Journal*, 14 March 1955.

ates had gained increased wages, in contrast to the DMA) and then mishandled the inauguration of the 1908 act. The DMA executive's high-handedness in the national miners' strike of 1912 that successfully secured a (admittedly paltry) minimum wage meant that it only very narrowly survived a lodge vote of confidence by 321–302 votes in April 1912. The leadership's increasing detachment from its rank-and-file was obvious. Yet, by imaginative use of the union's rules, a lack of democracy (for example, the voting weights for lodges in DMA council, the trade union's main policy making body, only partly reflected their relative memberships), a (according to Craig Marshall) divided opposition that lacked leadership figures of sufficient standing within the union as a whole, and because leaders of such institutions are invariably difficult to dislodge, they retained their positions of control. Yet, according to Marshall, the disenchanted sections of the Durham rank-and-file did provide a twofold response of resistance. Firstly, it pursued its own aggressive and unofficial (i.e. not officially endorsed by the DMA's central leadership) strike policy. The months between the end of the 1912 minimum wage strike and the outbreak of the Great War saw a very high level of unofficial strike activity in the Durham coalfield. Durham miners were understandably angry as their wages were the slowest growing in the country, but unofficial strike action was, without the institutional backing of the DMA, a risky and demanding strategy and its increasing intensity suggested the strength of feeling in the lodges.[8] Secondly, efforts to reform the DMA became institutionalised fully in 1911, in the form of the Durham Forward Movement, a well-supported rank-and-file initiative headed by a group of ILP activists including Jack Lawson, checkweighman of Alma lodge. The ILP was established in 1893 and became one of the founding organisations of the Labour Party. The strong Nonconformist tradition in the Durham coalfield proved to be fertile ground for the ILP's brand of ethical socialism and it soon developed deep roots in the coal areas.[9]

The Forward Movement also campaigned for the abolition of the three-shift system, for the minimum wage and, when it came, for vast improvements in its levels and the ways in which it was administered. It also agitated for the abolition of the worthless — in the eyes of many miners- Conciliation Board. Its organising centre was the ILP- dominated miners' lodges of West Pelton near the Labour stronghold town of Chester-le-Street and its early conferences drew support from many of the lodges of the North-west Durham and Chester-le-Street constituencies. Between June and October 1912, its could draw representatives of between fifty and sixty lodges to its conferences that amounted to around one third of the total DMA membership (40,000 out 120,000 DMA members) or more and it claimed the support of a further fifty lodges.[10]

However, it seemed that it was the DMA leaders' particular style of leadership rather than their liberalism as such that caused the conflict. As Marshall pointed out, the leaders of the Notts and Derbyshire miners' leaders were also liberals, but they made more effort at dialogue with their

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[8] C. Marshall, 'Levels of Industrial Militancy and the Political Radicalisation of the Durham Miners, 1885–1914' (MA Thesis, Durham University, 1976), pp.311–313.

[9] A.W. Purdue, 'The ILP in the North-east,' in D. James, T. Jowitt and K. Laybourn (eds.), The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party. A Collection of Essays (1992), pp.35–42. Will Lawther recalled that the 'Nonconformist tradition was strong in our family and went to chapel as a matter of course.' In later life, Lawther was a convinced atheist. *Newcastle Journal*, 8 March 1955; Smith, 'Obituary Article,' p.27. See also R. Moore, 'Methodism and the Working Classes,' *Bulletin of the North-east Group for the Study of Labour History*, 3 (1969) pp.7–9; R. Moore, *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics* (Cambridge, 1974).

[10] *Durham Chronicle*, 18 August 1911; 1 September 1911; 8 September 1911; 7 June 1912; 26 July 1912; 18 October 1912; C. Marshall, 'Levels of Industrial Militancy and the Political Radicalisation of the Durham Miners, 1885–1914' (MA Thesis, Durham University, 1976), pp.92–95, 99–100, 310–311.

members and, as they served the profitable domestic market, both coalfields saw relatively minor disputes.[11] In terms of rank-and-file conflict with leaders, the DMA shared much in common with the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF). Both coalfields were amongst the largest in Britain. Providing work for similar numbers of miners, the DMA and SWMF had similarly large memberships that made them both potentially influential members of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB).[12] Furthermore, both coalfields were subject to the vicissitudes of the unpredictable export market. This meant the mine owners in both coalfields were more sensitive to pressures to keep wages low in order to make their product competitive on the international market. In South Wales the owners employed the 'sliding scale' arrangement, whereby wage levels rose and (normally) fell automatically with coal prices. Both miners' unions thus saw strong rank-and-file support for a minimum wage but had leaderships which, cognisant of the relative precariousness of international coal markets, sought desperately to minimise their demands on the owners, fearful that if wages went too high, owners would be thrown out of business in the event of an international downturn (a perspective no doubt encouraged by the owners; and a possibility later employed by syndicalists who wanted precisely to throw the owners out of business and take over the running of the mines themselves).

However, there were significant differences too. Founded in 1869, the DMA was a well and long established institution built on the politics of liberalism and Methodism that encouraged individual thrift, paternalism and cooperation between masters and men and that rejected a polarised two-class view of capitalism. In contrast, the SWMF was only established in 1898 as a way of, in part, rejecting these methods. While its leadership under Mabon (William Abraham) remained liberal and moderate, the rank- and-file was not so. David Egan emphasised the existence within the SWMF from its birth of a 'rank and file imbued in ultra-democratic traditions, possessing considerable autonomy of action and continually militant on matters of wages and working conditions.'[13] Thus, before the explosion of industrial unrest in 1910, South Wales miners were 70% more likely to strike than their counterparts in the other British coalfields. Most significantly for this article, South Wales miners produced *The Miners' Next Step* (written in 1911 and issued in January 1912). Labour historian Henry Pelling deemed it the 'the high water of syndicalist influence in British trade unionism' and it was certainly the single most significant piece of syndicalist propaganda produced in Britain.[14] Many of its main authors, like Marxist miner Noah Ablett, had been educated at Ruskin College and they took full advantage of the conditions provoked by the bitter Cambrian combine dispute when mounting their revolutionary challenge to the coal owners and the union's leaders.[15] Clearly, the unusual socio-economic conditions and radical cultural milieu in South Wales proved particularly conducive to generating and sustaining revolutionary syndicalism. Yet the socio-political upheaval in the Durham coalfield, too, certainly appeared to offer promising ground for potentially fruitful syndicalist intervention.

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[11] Marshall, 'Industrial Militancy,' pp.334–335.

[12] The peculiar working practices in the north-east pits provoked deep disagreement over the 8-hour day among the miners' unions, which had kept the north-east miners aloof from the Miners' Federation (MFGB) before 1908. (The DMA had affiliated briefly in 1892, but did not support an MFGB strike in 1893 and so was expelled and remained outside for the next 15 years). Marshall, 'Industrial Militancy,' pp.24–26.

[13] David Egan, 'The Miners' Next Step,' *Labour History Review,* 38 (1979), p.10.

[14] H. Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unions* (5th edition, London, 1992) p.130.

[15] Challinor, *British Bolshevism,* p.74; Chris Williams, *Capitalism Community and Conflict. The South Wales Coalfield 1898–1947* (Cardiff, 1998); H. Francis and D. Smith, *The Fed. A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff, 1998) and R. Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners to 1914* (1967).

3) The Ideological Origins of syndicalism

British revolutionary syndicalism drew its inspiration from essentially two foreign sources though (basically) three subsequent tendencies arose. The first foreign influence was American, in the form of the writings of Marxist Daniel De Leon and in the subsequent development of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or 'Wobblies'). De Leon developed a theory of revolutionary working-class advancement that demanded both political action — standing for elections on a revolutionary platform — and industrial action.[16] The latter was to come in the form of 'industrial unionism' (rather than 'syndicalism' as such), the creation of trade unions of all workers both skilled and unskilled in the major industries. These industrial unions were initially to exist and work alongside the already existing organisations until they supplanted them; this was dual unionism. De Leon was influential in the establishment in Chicago of the IWW in 1905, successfully proposed an amendment to the IWW's preamble (the first draft of which was written by anarchist Thomas J. Hagerty) at the IWW's founding convention that committed the union to political action. Though ratified, the preamble now appeared vague and the issue of political action soon split the IWW between De Leon and Wobblies under Big Bill Haywood of the Western Federation of Miners, as well as Haggerty and veteran anarchist organiser Lucy Parsons. In the fourth IWW convention of 1908 the 'direct actionists' finally prevailed and the changed IWW preamble precluded affiliation with any political party. De Leon, denouncing the direct actionists as 'slum proletarians,' 'anarchist scum' and 'the bummery' left to form a rival Detroit-based IWW, which was later renamed and faded away.[17] The language De Leon used to denounce his opponents in this spilt was sadly characteristic of the man and his attitude to all on the left who did not agree with him.

In 1902, a grouping influenced by De Leon emerged inside the British Marxist party, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), around James Connolly's newspaper, *The Socialist.* In 1903 Connolly and most of its Scottish branches left the SDF. Their 'Glasgow Socialist Society' soon became the Socialist Labour Party (SLP). With a base on the industrial 'red' Clyde, the SLP initially operated almost as a Scottish branch of De Leon's American party of the same name. Like its American counterpart it too eschewed joint activity with what it deemed the 'reformist' SDF and ILP and was in its early years something of an exclusive sect. In some respects, events in Britain mirrored those in the USA in 1906 as a syndicalist element that rejected all action in the political field split from the British SLP.[18]

However, the SLP became significant in Ruskin College, Oxford, influencing the student strike and revolt there in 1908. The majority of Ruskin students and the college's principal resigned in

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[16] For De Leon see Stephen Coleman, *Daniel De Leon* (Manchester, 1990); L. Glen Seretan, *Daniel De Leon, the Odyssey of an American Marxist* (New York, 1979).

[17] For the IWW see Melvyn Dubofsky and Joseph McCartin, We Shall be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World (Illinois, 2000); Verity Burgman, Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The IWW in Australia (Melbourne, 1996); Norman Caulfield, 'Wobblies and Mexican workers in Mining and Petroleum, 1905–1924,' International Review of Social History, 40 (1995), pp.51–75; Salvatore Salerno, Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World (Albany, 1989), pp.69–90; Patrick Renshaw, The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States (New York, 1967); Fred W. Thompson and Patrick Murfin, The IWW: Its First Seventy Years, 1905–1975 (Chicago, 1976). See also Daniel De Leon, "Syndicalism", first published in the Daily People, 3 August 1909 at http://www.marxists.org/archive/deleon/works/190973.htm (Accessed June 2009).

[18] Max Beer, *A History of British Socialism* (2001), p.392. For a history of the SLP see Ray Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism* (1977); for the SDF see Martin Crick, *The History of the Social- Democratic Federation* (Edinburgh, 1994).

protest at its failure to place Marx at the centre of the teaching curriculum. They then established Central Labour College, in London, De Leon's influence being clear in the choice of Plebs' League (inspired by a De Leon pamphlet) for the name of the organisation formed to support the idea and then reality of the Central Labour College.[19] Plebs' League members were, in turn, especially influential in the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants and the SWMF, both of which were involved in the industrial action of the period. While the Plebs' League was not explicitly anti-Parliamentary, it did regard Parliament as a 'feeble and timorous body' and instead advocated the direct action of industrial unionists to bring about revolutionary change.[20]

In terms of its industrial activities, the party's sectarianism began to diminish in 1907 when it began working in the British Advocates of Industrial Unionism (BAIU) and subsequently the Industrial Workers of Great Britain (IWGB). South Wales miner and Ruskin student Noah Ablett had helped to form a branch of the BAIU in the Rhondda, but he then broke with dual union-ism.[21] The increased emphasis on the industrial sphere as the main arena of struggle brought dividends with the labour unrest as, from 1910, party membership and branches grew at a rate commensurate with the SLP's increasing influence in the labour movement. This growth was in part a result of moves in the party to relax its positions on, for example, a ban on its members addressing the platforms of other organisations. While these changes drew some into the party, others left it. Alterations to the programme in 1912 led to revolts in the SLP from those who remained pro-sectarianism and claimed that the party had become reformist, including many members in Lancashire and a grouping that had moved to anarcho-syndicalism. Yet, while SLP activists exercised considerable influence in the Singer's factory strike on Clydeside, this belied the extent to which the party and the IWGB had been outmanoeuvred in the industrial sphere by the less sectarian and more flexible syndicalists. By the outbreak of war, like the other left parties, both revolutionary and reformist alike, the SLP was losing members.[22]

The second foreign influence that helped inform the second syndicalist strand in Britain was French. It was manifest in the changing politics of Tom Mann, a veteran of the 'New Union' struggles of the late 1880s. Mann had been away working and agitating in Australia, but had grown weary of the reformists in the Australian labour movement. In 1910 Mann went to France with fellow socialist Guy Bowman to learn about the ideas and practices of French syndicalism. Mann had also, however, been to America where he had seen the IWW at close quarters. Yet Mann's case provided evidence of the indigenous traditions that also fed into Britain syndicalism. Bob Holton claimed that a significant influence on Britain syndicalism was the Marxist William Morris; his anti-statism and anti-Parliamentarianism certainly influenced Mann's politics.[23]

On his return to Britain, Mann established the Industrial Syndicalist Education League (ISEL) and began producing the *Industrial Syndicalist* to propagate syndicalism; its first number ap-

[19] See William White Craik, *The Central Labour College, 1909–29: A Chapter in the History of Adult Working-class Education* (1964); Geoff Andrews, Hilda Kean and Jane Thompson, *Ruskin College: Contesting Knowledge, Dissenting Politics* (1999); John Atkins, *Neither Crumbs Nor Condescension: The Central Labour College, 1909–1915* (Aberdeen, 1981); John McIlroy, 'Two Tales About Crisis and Corruption at the Central Labour College, *Labour History Review,* 71 (1) (2007), pp.69–93.

[20] G.D.H. Cole, *The Common People 1746–1946* (1946), p.484.

[21] David Egan, 'The Miners' Next Step,' *Labour History Review,* 38 (1979), p.11.

[22] Challinor, *British Bolshevism*, p118, 121.

[23] Holton, British Syndicalism, p.38. For more on Morris see David Goodway, *Anarchist seeds beneath the snow: left-libertarian thought and British writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp.15–34.

peared in July 1910. In some contexts his propaganda appeared successful. His paper, *the Transport Worker,* achieved an astonishing circulation of 20,000 in the working-class foment and upheaval in Liverpool in 1911.[24] Mann became even more prominent after reprinting the famous 'Don't shoot' appeal to soldiers policing the picket lines in *The Syndicalist* of January 1912. Originally published in July 1911 by Jim Larkin, a syndicalist in Ireland, the arrest of Mann and Bowman led to their imprisonment. The publicity and outrage that followed helped to make syndicalism far better known, with those who remained unsympathetic to it nevertheless appealing for their release on the grounds of free speech. The SLP did not take kindly to Mann's encroachment on 'their' industrial territory and criticised the syndicalists' over emphasis on the power of the 'general strike' and consequent underestimation of the need for political action to capture state power. Further, the SLP rejected British syndicalism's apparently weak and informal organisation and regarded their tactic of industrial sabotage as both counter-productive and a sign of weakness.[25]

The Miners' Next Step is best understood in the context of this second syndicalist strand. It was produced by the self-styled 'Unofficial Reform Committee of the South Wales Miners' Federation' that included Marxist miners who, like Ablett, had been to Ruskin, were important at Central Labour College, and who had been influenced by De Leon's work.[26] It was quite clearly revolutionary, aiming for the 'elimination of the employer.'[27] This would occur when the union in each industry was 'thoroughly organised, in the first place, to fight, to gain control of, and then to administer that industry.'[28] Yet it was a highly pragmatic document, laying out in some detail a strategy for making the mines unprofitable to the capitalists so that the workers could take over and run them. But this control was not to be exercised under the aegis of the State in some form of nationalisation; *The Miners' Next Step* was quite clear in its advocacy of real workers' control.

It also contained a strong critique of trade union bureaucracy and leadership in general terms: 'The possession of power inevitably leads to corruption. All leaders become corrupt in spite of their good intentions. No man was ever good enough, brave enough, or strong enough to have such power at his disposal, as real leadership implies.'[29] Every leader was compelled to control their own members because 'In order to be effective the leader must keep the men in order, or he forfeits the respect of the employers and the "public," and thus becomes ineffective as a leader.'[30]

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[24] See Tom Mann, *Tom Mann's Memoirs: With a preface by Ken Coates* (1967); Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Tom Mann, 1856–1941: The Challenges of Labour* (Oxford, 1991); Joseph White, *Tom Mann* (Manchester, 1991); Geoff Brown, 'Tom Mann and Jack Tanner and International Revolutionary Syndicalism, 1910–1920,' *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History,* 27 (1973), pp.19–22.

[25] Holton, *British Syndicalism,* pp.114–6; Challinor, *British Bolshevism,* pp.95–6.

[26] For discussion of various aspects of *The Miners' Next Step* see Howell, 'Taking Syndicalism Seriously,' pp.36–42; Dave Douglass, Introduction in *The Miners' Next Step* [reprinted with introduction] (Doncaster, 1991), pp.1–6; D. Egan, 'The Unofficial Reform Committee and the *Miners' Next Step\ Llafur* 2(3), (1978), pp.64–80; K. Davies, 'Rival Prophets? William Ferris Hay, Noah Ablett and the Debate Over Working-class Political Action in the South Wales coalfield, 1910–1914,' *Llafur* 3&4, (1999), pp.89–100; D. Egan, '"A Cult of their Own": Syndicalism and the *Miners' Next Step*,' in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds), *Miners, Unions and Politics, 1910–1947* (Aldershot, 1996), pp.13–33.

[27] *The Miners' Next Step,* 1912 Reprinted with introduction by Dave Douglass (Doncaster, 1991), p.30.

[28] *The Miners' Next Step,* 1912, p.31.

[29] *The Miners' Next Step,* 1912, p.16.

[30] *The Miners' Next Step,* 1912, p.16.

Consequently, 'In a word, he is compelled to become an autocrat and a foe to democracy.'[31] Crucially, the emphasis in *The Miners' Next Step* was on working to reform radically existing miners' unions from the inside rather than creating new ones (dual unionism).[32] This rejection of dual unionism and emphasis on industrial action induced the SLP to denounce *The Miners' Next Step* as the work of 'anarchist freaks' who were hell-bent on using the 'political strike' at the cost of all else.[33] The use of 'anarchist' here was merely as a pejorative term. Indeed, the word 'anarchist' only appeared in *The Miners' Next Step* in relation to how the mine owners feared the contemporary radicalisation of the miners.[34]

As Bob Holton pointed out, the only issue on which *The Miners' Next Step* was contradictory was that of political action. One section affirmed that the miners' organisation 'shall engage in political action, both local and national, on the basis of complete independence of, and hostility to all capitalist parties, with an avowed policy of wresting whatever advantage it can for the working class.'[35] In another section (presumably penned by another activist and reflecting the disagreements amongst syndicalists on the matter), there is a stark contrast drawn between the ideal of 'industrial democracy' and Parliamentary democracy.[36] This second syndicalist strand split, however, in 1913 when Bowman convinced many of the leading ISEL figures to drop their 'bore from within' industrial strategy and adopt what was essentially the IWW position. Those opposing this change, including the key South Wales miner activists Ablett, Sam Mainwaring and Noah Rees left to form the Industrial Democracy League. Its programme reaffirmed the essence of *The Miners' Next Step*[37]

The inconsistency in *The Miners' Next Step* over political action meant that it lent itself fairly readily to an anarchist interpretation. This was the third strand of syndicalism in Britain before 1914, the anarcho-syndicalist. Grouped around Guy Aldred's *Herald of Revolt* (and its successor from May 1914, *The Spur),* the anarcho-syndicalists took Mann's rejection of political action to its logical end. Indeed, anarcho-syndicalists claimed Mann was unclear and hesitant on the general issue of political action, and that his criticisms of Parliament did not go far enough. However, their efforts to establish an anarcho-syndicalist 'Industrial Union of Direct Actionists' from 1908 made little headway.[38]

Anarchism had had some kind of active and organised presence in Britain since the 1880s, emerging in organised form within William Morris' Socialist League in the late 1880s, which had in turn split from the SDF. Indeed, Morris' developing politics had fed the growing anarchism of this grouping, though he was never an anarchist himself.[39] It declined in the 1890s. In north-east England, there was some form of anarchist activity, often low-level, for some years before 1910. In the early to mid- 1880s, Russian anarchist Prince Kropotkin's work appeared in the *Newcas-*

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[31] *The Miners' Next Step,* 1912, p.17.

[32] *The Miners' Next Step,* passim; Joseph White, 'Syndicalism in a mature industrial setting; the case of Great Britain,' in van der Linden and Thorpe, *Revolutionary Syndicalism,* p.112.

[33] G. Walker, *George Harvey: The Conflict Between the Ideology of Industrial Unionism and the Practice of its Principles in the Durham Coal field* (MA Thesis, Ruskin College, 1982), pp.36–39.

[34] *The Miners' Next Step,* p.13.

[35] *The Miners' Next Step,* p.21.

[36] Holton, *British Syndicalism,* p.87.

[37] Holton, *British Syndicalism,* p.121; White, 'Syndicalism,' p.109.

[38] White, 'Syndicalism,' pp.109–110; John Caldwell, *Guy A. Aldred (1886–1963)* (Glasgow, 1966).

[39] See E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (Stanford, 1976); A.L. Morton (ed), *The Political Writings of William Morris* (1973) and J. Callaghan, *Socialism in Britain* (Oxford, 1990).

tle Daily Chronicle, and he spoke at the 1882 Durham miners' gala and elsewhere in the region. Kropotkin's influence was also felt in the establishment of the anarchist commune at Clousden Hill in Forest Hall, just outside Newcastle. In the 1890s, there were anarchist meetings in the pit villages of Silksworth and Stanley as well as in several of the larger conurbations that bordered onto the Durham coalfield like Sunderland, South Shields and Gateshead. Anarchist papers circulated elsewhere in Durham pit villages.[40] A more recent phase of activity saw anarchists active in Newcastle and Sunderland in 1907, and, by 1909, there existed an active Newcastle anarchist club. The revival in terms of influence and ideas anarchism was to experience in the late Edwardian period was quite unprecedented. According to Holton, by 1914 anarcho-syndicalism was on the upturn. Partly as a result of 'the refusal of many of its supporters to uphold dual unionism,' it became a more substantial component of revolutionary industrial activity.[41] The launching of new weekly journal *The Voice of Labour* in early 1914 helped to draw together the many hitherto fragmented anarcho-syndicalist groups dotted around the country, though the Scottish dual unionist anarcho-syndicalists grouped around *The Herald of Revolt* remained outside this organisation.

In summary, syndicalism in Britain certainly allowed for the possibility of considerable overlap of the Marxist and anarchist traditions (though John Quail's remark on the 'almost completely ignored Anarchist contribution' to the British syndicalist revolt still holds).[42] This overlap and transference of ideas did not invariably occur however, as the studies of the political formation of the two most significant Durham coalfield revolutionary syndicalists before 1914 shows.

There were two main figures in the advocacy of revolutionary syndicalism in the Durham coalfield before 1914, George Harvey and Will Lawther. Harvey, born in 1885 (and four years Lawther's senior), spent his early political life as a not especially left-wing member of the ILP. In February 1907, for example, Harvey had endorsed conciliation boards in the ILP's regional journal. Harvey's radicalisation took place at Ruskin College which he attended 1908–1909. Ray Challinor claimed that this was probably due to the influence of tutors W.W. Craik and Noah Ablett. While there Harvey joined the Plebs' League, and the SLP. His rise in the ranks of the party was evident when he became editor of the party journal, *The Socialist,* for a year 1911–1912. Harvey remained committed to the SLP and industrial unionism throughout the pre-war period. Nevertheless, there was nothing inevitable about Harvey either being radicalised or, when having done so, moving into the SLP. Jack Parks, a friend of Harvey's from the north-east, was Harvey's roommate at Ruskin. He too became radicalised, though over a longer period of time, leaving the ILP in 1910 and becoming a syndicalist linked with Mann's *Industrial Syndicalist* (in which he appeared as a Northumberland miners' speaker contact from March 1911).[43] (As argued below, it was a pity for syndicalism in the Durham coalfield that Harvey chose the SLP).

For the purposes of studying at the individual level the dynamics of a political development from Marxism to anarchism through syndicalism, Will Lawther's case deserves far closer

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[40] G. Pattison, 'Anarchist Influence in the Durham Coalfield Before 1914,' *The Raven,* 11 (3:3) (1990), p.239; Quail, *Slow Burning Fuse,* pp.250–4; Nigel Todd, *Roses and Revolutionists: The Story of the Clousden Hill Free Communist and Co-operative Colony, 1894—1902* (1986). See also H. Shpayer- Makov, 'The Reception of Peter Kropotkin in Britain, 1886–1917,' *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies,* 19 (2) (1987), pp.373–390.

[41] Holton, *British Syndicalism,* p.142.

[42] John Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse: the Lost History of British Anarchists* (1978), p.255.

[43] *The Industrial Syndicalist,* 1 (9), March 1911 in Geoff Brown, *The Industrial Syndicalist* (Nottingham, 1974), pp.314–15; Ray Challinor, 'Jack Parks, Memories of a Militant,' *Bulletin of the North-east Group for the Study of Labour History,* 9 (1975), pp.34–38 (for Harvey's early life see pp.34–37); Challinor, *British Bolshevism,* p.116; Dave Douglass, 'The Durham Pitman,' in Raph Samuel (ed.), *Miners, Quarrymen and Salt Workers* (1977), pp.286–287.

scrutiny. Northumberland born into a mining family in 1889, Lawther was initially influenced by Robert Blatchford's *Merrie England* and was cognisant that his grandfather had been imprisoned for involvement in the Chartist agitation (though his own parents were not politically active). Like Harvey, Lawther began his own active political life (at the tender age of 15), by helping to establish an ILP branch in his pit village.[44] A year later in 1905 his family moved to Chopwell, a new pit in the north-west Durham coalfield. Lawther soon established himself as the young and active secretary of Chopwell ILP branch.[45] He later wrote that his 'groping for a philosophy hardened into a positive conviction that militant socialism was the answer to most of the problems that beset the working class...'[46] Perhaps more significantly, Lawther rapidly rose in the lodge hierarchy; in 1906 he was elected vice-chair of Chopwell lodge and soon after he became delegate to the DMA.[47]

Also like Harvey, Lawther's conversion to syndicalism came at the newly-established Central Labour College, which he attended for a year from October 1911, aided by funding from his family and Chopwell lodge. He had already, as an 'exhibitioner,' received free education in his precious spare time at Rutherford College in Newcastle, having been unable, as the eldest of a big family, to take up a scholarship he won to a local grammar school. At Labour College Lawther studied sociology, politics and history. Sociology lectures, delivered by Dennis Hird (MA), considered the work of Herbert Spencer. In economics, the emphasis was, unsurprisingly, almost exclusively on Marx. Lawther read *Kapital* twice and studied other of his works including *Critique of Political Economy* in addition to well-known studies of Marx by Louis Boudin and Daniel De Leon and Ricardo's *Political Economy.* Lawther also read William Morris, Bernard Shaw and Ruskin.[48] Of these, Marx was obviously a significant influence. Lawther's favourite work was the *Eighteenth Brumaire,* especially the line: 'Him whom we must convince we recognise as the master of the situation,' which he quoted frequently.[49]

What of the individuals Lawther met at college? As with Harvey, Craik, who delivered Lawther's economics lectures, must have been influential, as was Ablett, another of his lecturers who Lawther came to regard as 'the greatest of all pre-war Marxists.'[50] (That the influential Ablett's politics had changed between the times Harvey and Lawther came into contact with him from involvement in the SLP to rejecting its dual unionism and moving towards Mann was of potentially great significance). Lawther also joined the Plebs' League and, already armed with

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[44] *Newcastle Journal,* 8 March 1955; 10 March 1955. See also *Daily Herald,* 15 September 1948; R. Smith, 'Obituary Article: Sir William Lawther,' *Bulletin of the North-east Group for the Study of Labour History,* 10 (1976), pp.27–8; J.F. Clarke, 'An Interview with Sir Will Lawther,' *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History,* 18 (1969), p.20. For more on the socio-political conditions in the Northumberland coalfield see B. Williamson, *Class, Culture and Community. A Biographical Study of Social Change in Mining* (1982).

[45] *Newcastle Journal,* 11 March 1955; 15 March 1955. Still, he had thus far trod a path that many young miners followed at the time, from reading Blatchford to activity in the nascent ILP. For example, Manny Shinwell, a contemporary of Lawther's, and later MP for the mining constituency of Seaham in county Durham was also 'converted' by Blatchford. Emmanuel Shinwell, *Lead With The Left* (1981) pp.33–34.

[46] *Newcastle Journal,* 15 March 1955.

[47] The vote that elected Lawther was, he claimed, one of the first ballots to take place in the Durham coalfield of lodge officials, who had been elected hitherto by a show of hands. *Newcastle Journal,* 11 March 1955.

[48] *Newcastle Journal,* 11 March 1955; 15 March 1955; Lawther's Notebook of Economics Lectures, October 1911-July 1912 and Sociology Lectures, October 1911-July 1912 (both in possession of the late Jack Lawther); Smith, 'Obituary article,' pp.28–29, 33; Douglass, 'The Durham Pitman,' p.288; Clarke, 'Lawther Interview,' pp.14, 19.

[49] Smith, 'Obituary Article,' p.33.

[50] Holton, *British Syndicalism,* p.169.

a militant brand of ILP socialism pre-Labour College, he had less distance to travel politically than Harvey, a more moderate ILP member pre-Ruskin. While he was still at Labour College, Lawther had clearly imbibed much of the syndicalist case, condemning, in a letter to the *Daily Chronicle,* the DMA secretary John Wilson's 'old fashioned notion of conciliation,' and arguing instead that the DMA's attitude should embody the class-war.[51] Writing in 1955, a retired Lawther remained clear on the appeal that revolutionary syndicalism held at that time: 'to us it was new and exciting. It was the ultimate in extremism, the demand for direct action, and the professed disgust, not only with the class ridden structure, but also with all gradual means of getting rid of that form of society.'[52]

In his last months at Central Labour College, Lawther seemed to endorse a basic syndicalist case in the vein of Mann and, more importantly, *The Miners' Next Step.* This was evident in the first syndicalist propagandising Lawther conducted in his own coalfield, which came in May 1912 when he supported South Wales syndicalist miner W.F. Hay's speaking tour in county Durham.[53] Lawther's rhetoric was indistinguishable from that of Hay, the main speaker at these meetings. However, after returning home to Chopwell in late August 1912 Lawther's politics began to show signs of a shift towards anarchism. True, much of his rhetoric remained in tune with *The Miners' Next Step.* For example, there was Lawther's revolutionary critique of nationalisation and advocacy of workers' control. Speaking in October 1912, Lawther 'found that nationalisation of the mines, state ownership, was nothing more or less than state capitalism...'[54] One indication of a shift was a move from an implicit endorsement of the approach of *The Miners' Next Step* (and Mann) that emphasised working inside existing institutions for their radical reform, to support for creating new organisations (dual unionism).[55] Thus, in October 1912 Lawther based part of his speech at an 'industrial unionist' conference in Chopwell on the preamble of the dual-unionist IWW, saying that 'they were out for the whole of the workers to be in one organisation.'[56] Yet Lawther's position on dual unionism is hard to pin down, not least because he was not particularly vocal on this essential issue.[57] Indeed, Lawther later appeared to have a foot in both anarcho-syndicalist camps, contributing to the dual unionist, Scottish-based *Herald of Revolt* and becoming a leading supporter of the *Voice of Labour,* a weekly journal launched early in 1914 that did not advocate dual unionism.[58]

The inspiration of *The Miners' Next Step,* and particularly its emphasis on aggressive class conflict, the need for workers' direct action and self-empowerment and the rejection of leaders and bureaucracies, remained in evidence in Lawther's rhetoric throughout the pre-war period. For example, during the January 1913 agitation over an increased doctors' fee miners had to pay as a result of the new National Insurance legislation, Lawther claimed that 'The time had come when

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[51] Smith, 'Obituary article,' p.29.

[52] *Newcastle Journal,* 17 March 1955.

[53] *Durham Chronicle*, 31 May 1912; *Blaydon Courier*, 1 June 1912.

[54] *Blaydon Courier*, 19 October 1912. Noah Ablett the same case debates in South Wales. See Document; 'Socialism and Syndicalism: the Welsh Miners Debate, 1912,' *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History,* 30 (1975), pp.22–37.

[55] *The Miners' Next Step,* passim; Joseph White, 'Syndicalism in a mature industrial setting; the case of Great Britain,' in van der Linden and Thorpe, *Revolutionary Syndicalism,* p.112.

[56] *Blaydon Courier*, 19 October 1912.

[57] Nevertheless, it is quite clear that, contrary to Church and Outram's claims, De Leon's industrial unionist ideas and those of the syndicalists had a significant influence on Lawther. Church and Outram, *Strikes and Solidarity,* p.68.

[58] Holton, *British Syndicalism,* pp.142–3.

it was essential that every member of their fighting strength must develop a consciousness of what they had in view when they found it necessary to go out and do battle with the enemy.'[59] In October 1913, Lawther wrote in a letter to the local press, that activists of the 'New [revolutionary] Movement...' 'will not wait for the "lead" to come from a chosen few, for they will be conscious of their own desires and destination and their mandate will therefore be supreme.'[60] Yet these were all features of *The Miners' Next Step* that lent themselves readily to an anarchist interpretation.

However, Lawther was, unlike *The Miners' Next Step*, decisive in his total rejection of the use of political action (defined as standing candidates for elections to parliament and local councils). This marked Lawther's syndicalism as of the anarchist variety, and he became a contributor to the *Herald of Revolt,* where he was in good company. Lawther also began to use the term 'anarchist' explicitly to describe his politics at the time, and he spent some time emphasising this aspect of his revolutionary creed.[61] For example, in September 1913 at a public debate in Chopwell Workmen's Hall, Lawther argued for the affirmative on the title: 'That the emancipation of the working class can be brought about more readily by direct action than by legislation.'[62] He followed this debate up with a lengthy letter in the local press entitled 'Direct Action or Legislation. Which?'[63]

Determining the cause for the development of Lawther's more 'Marxist' syndicalism into a self-proclaimed anarchism is difficult. In terms of the works he read at Central Labour College, Morris'

Brand of Marxism must have been pivotal, especially evident in Lawther's anti- Parliamentary rhetoric.[64] Lawther later said that Morris 'made an appeal for life against the machine horrors.'[65] While in London Lawther also met the anarchist engineer Jack Tanner and they later collaborated on several anarchist projects, including the *Voice of Labour*[66] Yet probably the most influential figure in this development was George Davison, who Lawther first met at the 1911 TUC conference in Newcastle, before he went to Central Labour College. A follower of Kropotkin, Davison was an 'eccentric and courageous millionaire... who held very advanced views on politics and theology.'[67] Davison had risen from a poor beginning to become a civil servant. He was also a pioneer in the developing area of photography, bought shares in Kodak and became, by 1900, the company's managing director, though his political activities (and alleged lack of business

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[59] *Blaydon Courier*, 25 January 1913.

[60] *Blaydon Courier*, 18 October 1913.

[61] For example, when addressing an anarchist conference in Newcastle in April 1914 (*Newcastle Chronicle,* 13 April 1914). While Lawther tended to use the simple term 'anarchist' to describe his politics at the time and when writing about it in 1955 (rather than 'syndicalist' or 'anarcho- syndicalist'), he was clearly a syndicalist as well.

[62] *Freedom,* September 1913; *Blaydon Courier,* 20 September 1913.

[63] *Blaydon Courier*, 18 October 1913.

[64] Very reminiscent of Morris' rhetoric was, for example, Lawther's comment in 1914 that 'Anarchists believed that any movement which aimed at freeing the worker must carry out its propaganda not at the doss house in Westminster but at work and where work was.' (*Newcastle Chronicle*, 13 April 1914).

[65] Smith, 'Obituary Article,' p.28.

[66] Holton, *British Syndicalism,* pp.142–3; Geoff Brown, 'Tom Mann and Jack Tanner and International Revolutionary Syndicalism, 1910–1920,' *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History,* 27 (1973), pp.19–22. See also Nina Fishman, 'Tanner, Frederick John Shirley [Jack],' in *Dictionary of National Biography* (accessed online 3 December 2008).

[67] *Newcastle Journal,* 16 March 1955. Davison had a vast estate in north Wales to which the Lawthers went in later life. Lawther's memory here conflicted with accounts in Turnbull and Ward that claim Lawther met Davison whilst at Central Labour College. Les Turnbull, *Chopwell's Story* (Newcastle, n.d.); A. Ward, 'Red or Salmon: Chopwell' (BA Dissertation, Ruskin College, 1987).

acumen) forced his resignation from the Kodak board in 1912.[68] By this time Davison's desire to fund progressive causes was manifest in the funding he provided for the nascent Central Labour College in 1910. As financial backer of Hay's speaking tour of the Durham coalfield in 1912, his path crossed with Lawther's once more.[69] His money was to have some impact in at least one corner of the Durham coalfield before 1914.

4) The Influence of Revolutionary Syndicalism

For both Harvey and Lawther conversion to revolutionary syndicalism demanded that they propagandise for the new ideas. That they did so in to some extent different ways was more a reflection of their relative strengths as political activists and their access to different resources rather than a clear manifestation of the varying Marxist and anarchist approaches to syndicalism and propagandising. Harvey, a diminutive and unimpressive presence on the public platform, developed a talent for writing both reports in *The Socialist* and detailed and well-researched propaganda pamphlets.[70] His first came in August 1911 and was entitled 'Industrial Unionism and the Mining Industry.'[71] In June 1912 he produced 'Does Dr. John Wilson MP, secretary of the Durham Miners' Association, Serve the Working Class?' This was an enraged response to a 'joke' Wilson cracked at the retirement ceremony of Charles Fenwick, Liberal MP for Wansbeck and a DMA official. Lord Joicey, a mine owner, had awarded Fenwick a gift of £260. At the presentation, Wilson remarked that he, on his retirement, would like a similar 'bribe.' Harvey's answer to his pamphlet's title was very firmly in the negative: Wilson's 'aim has always been to bolster up capitalism, and he, more than any other leader perhaps, has swayed the miners to take that particular action which is either harmless or beneficial to the capitalist class … If £260 is the price, then miners' leaders are cheap and worth getting at.'[72] Wilson, who had written a lengthy and sycophantic paean to Joicey on his death in late 1911, demanded a withdrawal of the accusation, which Harvey refused.[73] The libel case went to trial in November 1912. Harvey maintained in court that Wilson was an 'enemy of the working class and servant of capitalism' and provided examples such as Wilson's agreement to a 5% reduction in miners' wages which even an Umpire had deemed unwarranted. The judge found in favour of Wilson, who was awarded £200 damages and £100 costs.

On his return from Central Labour College, Lawther established a 'Workers' Freedom Group' based on similar groups in the South Wales coalfield.[74] Lawther appeared less of a theorist than Harvey and did not write more detailed propaganda pamphlets on conditions in the Durham

[68] Colin Harding, 'George Davison,' in John Hannavy (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-century Photography* (2008), pp.387–388. Harding claimed that Davison was 'more of a Christian socialist than an anarchist in the Marxist sense [sic.].' (p.388).

[69] Quail, *Slow Burning Fuse,* p.254; Atkins, *Crumbs nor Condescension,* p.63.

[70] Challinor, *British Bolshevism,* p.117.

[71] Both Walker and Dave Douglass commented Harvey's impressive writing style. G. Walker, 'George Harvey and Industrial Unionism,' *Bulletin of the North-east Group for the Study of Labour History,* 17 (1983) p.21; Douglass, 'The Durham Pitman,' p.290.

[72] *Evening Chronicle,* 7 November 1912. Harvey's pamphlet mistakenly claimed that it was another Northumberland Liberal MP, Thomas Burt, who received the £260 and not Fenwick.

[73] Durham Record Office, D/DMA 12a, Wilson's Monthly circular No.193, January 1912.

[74] Quail, *Slow Burning Fuse,* pp.278–279. Smith and Saville both mistakenly claimed that Lawther was two years in Central Labour College. Craik and Atkins, however, were correct. *Newcastle Journal,* 16 March 1955; Craik, *Central*

coalfield and other questions. Yet his group engaged in energetic and varied propaganda activities, Lawther reporting in July 1913 that: 'by selling FREEDOMS [an anarchist newspaper] and pamphlets and by discussion circles, the kind of propaganda that matters is being kept up ...'[75] The group also organised public meetings with important syndicalist speakers including Tom Mann, and the Irish Transport worker's organiser Jim Larkin and his brother Pete.[76] Lawther's impetus was surely crucial in bringing representatives from several local lodges to Chopwell to discuss industrial unionism in October 1912. Lawther also contributed to public debates, corresponded with the local press and involved himself in community struggles. In Spring 1913, there was intense agitation throughout the coalfield against one of the provisions of the new National Insurance act that colliery doctors had used to increase their medical fees charged to miners' lodges by 50%. Lawther was central to the campaign in Chopwell for a return to pre-act fee levels.[77] Retaining his commitment to working-class education, Lawther also ran Plebs' League classes three times a week in Consett and South Shields as well as Chopwell.[78] It was clear that, for Lawther, this educational work was also essential propaganda work; he believed 'that the Labour College was of the utmost influence ...'[79]

Yet Lawther and the Chopwell anarchists' aims were greater than merely attempting to create a stronghold in their own pit village. In July 1913, the group wanted 'the message of direct action to be carried right throughout the coalfield and no help is refused.'[80] Thus, the previous month, Lawther had spoken at the 'new ground' of Crawcrook (another Durham pit village), whilst in July he spoke at the miners' annual gala on the 'need for direct action and revolution.'[81] The DMA annual gala, or 'Big Meeting,' was a day-out for all Durham miners and their families, and they thronged to Durham to congregate on the racecourse and hear speeches from local and national leaders. It was an obvious place to take propaganda efforts.[82] Lawther was also concerned that anarchists should organise effectively together in the region and nationally. In April 1914, for example, he took a delegation and spoke at an Anarchist conference in Newcastle. The conference concerned itself with national organisational issues such as supporting a new anarchist newspaper and international issues such as the (recently state-executed) Spanish freethinker Francisco Ferrer's 'modern schools,' as well as the organising of an international conference of anarchists in London in September 1914.[83] Lawther spoke at a modern school in east London in summer 1913.[84] To maintain the lines of communication between local and national Lawther supplied

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Labour College p.116; Atkins, *Crumbs nor Condescension,* pp.62, 65, 67; Smith, 'Obituary article,' p.29; John Saville, 'Lawther, Sir William,' in *Dictionary of National Biography* (accessed online 3 December 2008).

[75] *Freedom,* July 1913.

[76] Holton, *British Syndicalism*, p.169. Mann had lived in Newcastle as an SDF organiser and visited the mining villages of Durham and Northumberland in 1887. Mann, *Memoirs,* pp.46–47; Tsuzuki, *Tom Mann,* pp.26–28. See also Richard Fox, *Jim Larkin: The Rise of the Underman* (1957); Padraig Yeates, *Lockout: Dublin 1913* (2000); W. Moran, 'The Dublin Lockout, 1913, *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History,* 27 (1973), pp.10–16.

[77] *Blaydon Courier,* 19 October 1912; 25 January 1913; 20 September 1913; 18 October 1913; *Durham Chronicle,* 24 January 1913; *Freedom,* September 1913.

[78] Smith, 'Obituary Article,' p.33; Church and Outram, *Strikes and Solidarity,* p.68.

[79] Holton, *British Syndicalism*, p.169.

[80] *Freedom*, July 1913.

[81] *Freedom*, September 1913.

[82] On the 'Big meeting' See Beynon and Austrin, *Masters and Servants,* pp.211–218.

[83] *Freedom,* May 1914, *Evening Chronicle,* 13 April 1914.

[84] Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (2005), p.263.

regular reports to the national anarchist paper *Freedom* as well as contributing to other anarchist and syndicalist publications.

Clearly, the specific activities of both Harvey and Lawther had some degree of immediate impact. That Harvey, Lawther and their groupings' were also (in Lawther's words) 'fellow slave[s] of the lamp and pick' must have helped to ensure a sympathetic reception at a time of intense industrial and socio-political flux in the Durham coalfield.[85] Harvey's pamphlets were of particular significance in terms of his impact. 'Industrial Unionism and the Mining Industry' sold an impressive 2,000 copies and with Harvey receiving invitations to speak all over the Durham coalfield in summer 1911.[86] His pamphlet of June 1912 had in some respects an equally important impact. The libel case surrounding 'Does Dr. John Wilson MP, secretary of the Durham Miners' Association, Serve the Working Class?,' received extensive press coverage. It read like a trial of the old methods by the new revolutionary ideas; it was the single event that encapsulated the revolutionary challenge to the old DMA leadership. And the press publicity certainly helped Harvey further enhance his reputation and that of his politics.[87] Indeed, Harvey's very public championing of the Durham miner in 1912 must have played an important part in his securing a checkweighman post only a year later, at Wardley pit near Gateshead.[88] Harvey's political project also received a welcome boost. A matter of days after the media reported court-case Harvey launched the 'Durham Mining Industrial Union Group,' what the *Durham Chronicle* deemed somewhat wearily 'still another organisation anxious to reform the Durham Miners' Association.'[89] The group formed after a meeting of 'about 20 representatives' at Chester-le-Street, and decided to issue lodges with a copy of its industrial unionist manifesto.[90]

This built on Harvey's own local grouping, 'Chester-le-Street and District Industrial Union.' Harvey certainly maintained a strong local support base wherever he worked in the Durham coalfield throughout the course of his life.[91] One example of the longer term influence Harvey exercised came in the form of Tom Aisbitt, one of his Chester- le-Street industrial unionist converts. The same age as Harvey, Aisbitt had also been a member of Chester-le-Street ILP (he was its secretary) as well as helping to found Chester-le-Street trades council.[92] He later secured an influential post in the Newcastle trades council with which he influenced regional labour politics in the inter-war period.[93]

While Lawther certainly did not introduce anarchism to the north-east (as seen above there was a long though marginal history and an, albeit flimsy, structure in place before 1912), his

[85] *The Herald of Revolt,* February 1913.

[86] Walker, 'George Harvey,' p.21.

[87] *Evening Chronicle,* 7 November 1912; *Newcastle Journal,* 8 November 1912.

[88] Given this, it was odd for Holton to remark that Harvey had no standing in the DMA. While a position on the Executive Committee would have indicated standing in the central union, his checkweighman post was of great status in the locality. Holton, *British Syndicalism,* p.113.

[89] *Durham Chronicle*, 15 November 1912. The *Durham Chronicle* still provided several lines on the main principles of the new organisation; that the working-class must emancipate itself through its own efforts; must own its own press; the ballot is only useful when backed up by industrial organisation, and that industrial organisation must form the basis of the mechanism for future society.

[90] *Evening Chronicle*, 7 November 1912.

[91] *Evening Chronicle*, 7 November 1912.

[92] Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester (LHASC), CP/CENT/PERS/1/01, Tom Aisbitt biography by Horace Green.

[93] See Lewis H. Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left: Political Activism and the Popular Front* (I.B. Tauris, 2007). passim.

and his groups' impact was significant, bringing anarchism into the Durham coalfield in a more concerted and energetic way. Naturally, it was in Lawther's home pit village of Chopwell that his direct influence was most obvious, and in the form of bricks and mortar. Lawther's wealthy anarchist contact George Davison agreed to sponsor a 'Communist Club' in Chopwell, one of only three in the country. The club opened on 9 December 1913, two weeks into a strike at Chopwell pit. Indeed, the club's influence might well have been immediate as on its opening night 26 coal trucks from a local pit were deliberately set loose to run down a hill and then crash, destroying a long section of line and causing £3,000 worth of damage.[94] The local police noted this 'strange coincidence' though there was no direct indication that the men finally arrested (and acquitted) for this act of sabotage had drawn any inspiration from the inaugural meeting at the Chopwell Anarchist club.[95]

At an Anarchist conference in Newcastle in April 1914 (only a few months later), *Freedom* remarked that 'the Chopwell boys came in their dozens, each an embryo fighter, from whom more will be heard anon, we hope.'[96] Many of these must have been Lawther's converts, directly or indirectly. The local police were certainly impressed with the Anarchist club's members, who were 'mostly young men and are above the average miner in intelligence.'[97] However, not all Chopwell radicals were convinced by this new gospel. For example, Vipond Hardy, an important figure in the village and lodge (he was its delegate) who Lawther (in his ILP phase) had converted to socialism, certainly was not convinced by anarcho-syndicalism.[98] At a discussion in October 1912 he remained unconvinced by Lawther's claim that miners' leaders could be replaced effectively with delegates who would return to the mines once their union work was done.[99] Indeed, the immediate popular response to the war effort from Chopwell families — 500 men left the village to fight, including two of Lawther's own brothers — suggested that the revolutionary nucleus had had a distinctly limited impact on the political consciousness of the village's inhabitants. Only a hardcore that included Lawther and two other of his brothers, took a stand against the war and became Conscientious Objectors.[100]

What can be said about the wider influence of syndicalism in the Durham coalfield before 1914? Commentators have tended in their assessments of this influence to look at, understandably, the activities of George Harvey and Will Lawther (and to a lesser extent their groupings), though their conclusions have been quite different. Roy Church and Quentin Outram, for example, have claimed that syndicalist influence was virtually nil in County Durham, basing this assessment

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[94] Tyne and Wear Archives Service [TWAS], T148/1 Copy letters, Superintendent at Felling to Chief Constable of Durham, 11 June 1914 (p.367) and 10 July 1914 (p.451) (I am indebted to Kevin Davies for drawing my attention to these files).

[95] TWAS, T148/1, Copy letter, 27 December 1913 (p.71).

[96] *Freedom*, May 1914.

[97] TWAS, T148/1 Copy letter, 27 December 1913 (p.71).

[98] *Newcastle Journal,* 15 March 1955

[99] *Blaydon Courier,* 19 October 1912; *Durham Chronicle,* 20 June 1913.

[100] *The Spur,* Vol.1 No.7, December 1914; Vol.1 No.8, February 1915; *Blaydon Courier,* 11 March 1916; 3 June 1916; 30 September 1916; *Newcastle Journal,* 17 March 1955; Trade Films Collection, Gateshead, LAW1, Will Lawther letter to Eddie Lawther, 23 April 1917; John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: a History* (2007), p.27. See Ray Challinor, 'Jimmy Stewart and his Revolting Children,' *Bulletin of the North-east Group for the Study of Labour History,* 17 (1983) pp.8–12 and also M. Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914–1945: the Defining of a Faith* (Oxford, 1980) and Bertrand Russell, Richard Rempel and Louis Greenspan, *The No-Conscription Fellowship: Pacifism and Revolution, 1916–18* (1995).

basically on a somewhat cursory and mistaken reading of Lawther's politics and activities.[101] Specifically, they quoted John Saville's comment that in his early years Lawther 'described himself as a Marxist, Syndicalist, anarchist and member of the ILP' (which echoed Robin Smith, a prospective biographer of Lawther, in the North-east Labour History Society journal).[102] In one respect, this comment was valid, for, as we have seen, syndicalism grew from some interpretations of Marxism, but its emphasis on direct action and eschewing Parliamentary or 'political' action easily lent themselves to anarchist interpretations within what was a fairly broad church. Neither the theories nor (most of) the organisations formed to advocate them were exclusive and ideologically pure and self-contained in this time of flux.[103] Indeed, Robin Smith employed his claim about Lawther's politics to illustrate this very point, though Smith was referring to the whole period before 1926 (when Lawther was aged between 15 and 36). This *was* unhelpful, as it encompassed a good deal of change in Lawther's politics and there *was,* with the advent of the Communist Party in Britain in 1920, something of a drift towards more exclusivity and sectarianism amongst the left after the end of the Great War. Nevertheless, the implication of Robin Smith's claim and the accounts of those who endorsed it was that Lawther was something of a dilettante, a political butterfly, promiscuously flitting between parties and political programmes at whim, or that he was confused about his true political home. In reality, as discussed above, there was a quite distinct development of Lawther's politics from 1905 to the earlier 1920s. There is no reason to doubt the genuineness of Lawther's conversion to syndicalism from activism in the ILP in 1912 and his subsequent move to anarcho-syndicalism before August 1914. The very level and intensity of his activity in this period is evidence on its own of the extent to which his political conversion was deeply felt. If the authenticity of Lawther's politics are to be the yardstick for measuring syndicalism in the Durham coalfield then it *was* a significant force. Needless-to-say, this measurement is, in itself, of limited value in assessing a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon.

In contrast, Bob Holton, the only writer to date to take British syndicalism as his central subject (in a book published in 1976), took Harvey and Lawther's politics very seriously. His consideration of these two activists formed the bedrock of his discussion of syndicalism in the Durham coalfield. Indeed, he went as far as to remark that syndicalism had its next most important impact after South Wales in the Durham coalfield.[104] Holton's wider remarks on the Durham coalfield made in substantiating this claim are, however, rather insubstantial. He noted the particularly strong unrest in the coalfield over the return to work after the 1912 national strike, but later acknowledged that the major coalfield to vote FOR a return to work in 1912 was South Wales (where syndicalism was strongest). While he explained this with the peculiar conditions in South Wales including a lack of resources which had brought about strike weariness, there is clearly no simple correlation between militancy in 1912 and syndicalist influence.[105]

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[101] Roy A. Church and Quentin Outram, *Strikes and Solidarity: Coalfield Conflict in Britain, 1889‑1966* (2002), pp.62, 68.

[102] John Saville, 'Will Lawther,' in J. Bellamy and J. Saville, *Dictionary of Labour Biography Vol. VII* (1984), p.141; Smith, 'Obituary Article,' p.29.

[103] White, 'Syndicalism,' p.110.

[104] Holton, *British Syndicalism*, p.169.

[105] Holton, *British Syndicalism,* pp.117–9.

5) Dogma, Pragmatism and Sectarianism

While considerable research remains to be done in this area, it is clear that, thanks to the activities of George Harvey and Will Lawther and their groupings, syndicalism *did* make some kind of impact in the Durham coalfield but that this was not as great as that in South Wales. Though George Harvey's pamphlets were effective, they did not compare to *The Miners' Next Step* in terms of applied theory or the extensive process of debate that led to its production. The South Wales coalfield contained many autodidact militants; the Durham coalfield but few and this both reflected the conditions in and culture of the coalfield and in part explained the degree of impact.

In Durham the ILP had done remarkably well in the Durham Forward Movement in channelling miners' grievances in such a way as favoured them and to some degree isolated them from the more revolutionary alternatives on offer.

Nevertheless that the Durham Forward Movement existed at all was testament to the level of grievances present amongst the lodges of the DMA, the kinds of grievances that the revolutionary syndicalists could appeal to. It is clear that two aspects of the syndicalists' own politics that intertwined -their puritanism, of negatively put, their dogmatism and their sectarianism- militated against their influence. Firstly, aspects of their politics served to inhibit their ability to propagate their message, and isolate them from the wider movement. Second, the revolutionary syndicalist alternative was to some degree divided within itself in the Durham coalfield as elsewhere in Britain.

In terms of dogmatism, Will Lawther suffered the most. His anarchism meant that he was opposed to any form of constitutional office and therefore he did not stand for any lodge, DMA or party position (until 1915). This was significant as Lawther had been a lodge official before going to Labour College, in one of the largest and most militant pits in county Durham. Being a lodge official earlier in his life had brought Lawther into contact with influential Durham miners throughout the coalfield, individuals such as Peter Lee, as well as with significant national and international figures within the movement.[106] This principled decision, while undoubtedly laudable, denied Lawther access to certain important means of exercising local and regional influence. While in South Wales two syndicalists, Ablett and Rees were elected to the SWMF Executive Committee in 1911, both demonstrating their prominence in the coalfield and further enhancing their authority . The Durham lodges did not even have an opportunity to show whether Lawther's new revolutionary politics had gained him the level of standing required to secure election.

George Harvey, on the other hand, did not have this particular problem. Indeed, the (in some respects) more pragmatic Harvey had been instrumental in altering the SLP's doctrine that had prevented its militants for standing for any trade union office.

Harvey pointed out that in Durham any prospective party member would have to relinquish trade union office to join the party. Naturally, they refused to do this and yet the lodges in which these individuals were officials were those that bought the most socialist literature. In doing so, they gave the party greater opportunities to spread their propaganda.[107] Thus, the now unshackled Harvey won a checkweighman post in 1913. This was of considerable significance as the position of checkweighman was of great prestige in any miners' lodge, reflecting a high degree

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[106] In 1911, Lawther met, among others, the American trade unionist Dan Tobin at the TUC annual conference in Newcastle. *Newcastle Journal,* 11 March 1955.

[107] Walker, 'Harvey thesis,' passim; Douglass, 'The Durham Pitman,' p.288; Challinor, 'Jack Parks,' p.37; Challinor, *British Bolshevism,* pp.116–118.

of trust that the miners had in its incumbent. Harvey's election both reflected his already established reputation (certainly as a trade unionist, possibly as a revolutionary), as well as further entrenching and widening his influence.[108]

In some respects, the period before the Russian revolution, and especially 1910–1914, saw sectarianism between Marxists and anarchists diminish. The Marxist and anarchist traditions could both feed into and emerge from syndicalism. In the apparent relative ease of movement between the two traditions, exemplified in the development of Will Lawther's politics, they in some respects reflected the wider socio-economic flux of which they were a part. This was evident in, for example, Lawther's Cold-war informed explanation for the naming of the Edwardian 'Communist Clubs' such as that in Chopwell. They were 'supposed to be the rallying grounds for those interested in communism and anarchism, a communism, by the way, which bore little resemblance to the Russian brand today [1955].'[109] As Marx and Marxists had clearly influenced Lawther, though he had branded himself an anarchist, so the 'Communist Club' (which was also known in this period as the 'Anarchist club'), was a forum for the exchange and imparting of various revolutionary ideas that were in a state of flux and in many respects difficult to separate.[110]

Ray Challinor wrote of the decline in the sectarianism of the SLP in this period too.[111] However, it still existed and in terms of sectarianism between the revolutionary syndicalists in the Durham coalfield, Harvey was the main offender. This was evident at the Chopwell industrial unionist conference in October 1912, where Harvey and Lawther both vied to convince the audience of their case. Lawther sketched over the differences in politics between himself and Harvey, concluding his speech, 'they were out for the whole of the workers to be in one organisation. They could call that Industrialism, Unionism [sic. presumably a press mistake for industrial unionism] or syndicalism, or what they liked...'[112] Harvey, who spoke after Lawther, pleaded that the audience should go away and propagandise for a Durham mining industrial union. His call for education and organisation, his claim that 'Leaders and politicians could do nothing' and that the 'hope of the working-class lay in the working-class themselves' all echoed Lawther. The description of industrial unionism -organising all British workers in one mechanism with departments for different industries 'working on principle that an injury to one is an injury to all' (an IWW slogan)- also resonated with Lawther's speech.[113]

However, Harvey then underlined where he and Lawther differed in explicit terms: 'they ought not to go in for syndicalism, because if it were a halfway house they had to recognise sooner or later that they must go to the higher pinnacle of organisation. He contended that the scientific weapon was industrial unionism. They were out for industrial and political action. The two must go hand in hand.' This political action included fighting all elections, not for votes as such but on a 'revolutionary issue' to 'create a fever heat of industrial revolution and they could only do that by industrial and political propaganda.'[114] Indeed, the extent to which Harvey argued in favour of political action caused problems in his own party. His claim in *The Socialist* (March 1912) that SLP candidates would be the best parliamentarians as only revolutionaries could win

[108] John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *The Slump* (1977), p.135; Beynon and Austrin, *Masters and Servants,* p.353.

[109] *Newcastle Journal,* 16 March 1955.

[110] Beynon and Austrin, *Masters and Servants,* p.338; Smith, 'Obituary article,' p.29; Saville, 'Lawther.'

[111] Challinor, *British Bolshevism,* p.117.

[112] *Blaydon Courier,* 19 October 1912.

[113] *Blaydon Courier,* 19 October 1912; Dubofsky and McCartin, *We Shall be All,* p.118.

[114] *Blaydon Courier,* 19 October 1912.

reforms, received extensive criticism from within the SLP and provoked the secession of most of the party's members in Lancashire, claiming that the Party had become reformist.[115]

More unfortunately, Harvey also adopted the language of many SLP activists in Britain, who in turn reproduced that of De Leon, slandering other revolutionary groupings and denouncing them as 'fakirs.'[116] Harvey was thus a 'virulent critic' of Tom Mann's syndicalism (perhaps unfortunately his sectarianism was the most noteworthy aspect of Harvey's politics for some later authorities).[117] In response to the imprisonment of Mann for publishing the famous 'Don't shoot' article appealing for soldiers not to fire on strikers, Harvey wrote in *The Socialist* (of April 1912) that his Party were not syndicalists and 'have no sympathy with syndicalism.' Nevertheless, on this occasion, as the SLP were 'fighters for freedom and the free press,' they reprinted Mann's banned article.[118]

On the ground, though, it seemed that Lawther was willing to accept Harvey's attempts to place a clear ideological dividing line between them, though Harvey's support for 'political action' remained anathema to Lawther's anarchism. In February 1913, Lawther made an impassioned appeal for Harvey in the aftermath of the Wilson case: 'It is up to us, as miners, to show to George Harvey, by word or deed, that we believe that what he said [about Wilson] was true ... And I believe that, during the forthcoming summer, the gospel of revolt, of direct action, of anti-leadership will spread, not because Harvey or any other person believes in it, but because of the oppression and tyranny that is taking place in the mines...'[119] In July 1913, the two men, amongst others, shared an (unofficial) platform at the Durham miners' annual gala.[120] Notwithstanding Lawther's evident desire to accommodate Harvey and not allow political differences to divide them, they evidently offered two distinct brands of syndicalism in the Durham coalfield and the effect of them both sharing similar but different visions of a revolutionary politics with an interested but not necessarily informed miner audience must have confused more individuals than the journalist recording the event for the local press.

Lawther displayed another kind of sectarianism, however, and, while it served to underscore his revolutionary credentials, it must have inhibited his ability to operate effectively, denying him access to the platforms of potentially influential and sympathetic organisations and individuals in the DMA. One of the first to address the 'industrial unionist' conference in Chopwell in October 1912, Lawther opened his speech by explaining why they 'were out for the new movement. They were out against the "forward movement."'[121] Lawther was clearly keen to distinguish himself and his followers from the Forward Movements' project — indeed, defining them as opponents — from the outset. He did so by first attacking nationalisation, the aim of key Forward Movement activists, and thus doing effectively marked the gap between the apparent reformists of the Forward Movement and the revolutionaries. That the Forward Movement leaders were intent on making reputations and careers for themselves on the back of the miners' discontent was a fairly common theme in Lawther's rhetoric.[122] (And, ironically, a charge that was made unjustly

[115] Challinor, *British Bolshevism*, pp.120–1.

[116] Beer, *British Socialism*, p.392.

[117] Brown (introduction), *Industrial Syndicalist*, p.19. The only context in which Page Arnot *(South Wales Miners to 1914* (1967), p.376) mentioned Harvey was in his denunciations of Mann as a 'false prophet.'

[118] Challinor, *British Bolshevism*, p.85.

[119] *The Herald of Revolt*, February 1913.

[120] *Freedom*, September 1913.

[121] *Blaydon Courier*, 19 October 1912.

[122] See, for example, *The Herald of Revolt*, February 1913.

against Lawther himself, though many Durham Forward Movement activists, like Jack Lawson, did go on to make careers in the DMA or Parliament).[123]

Again, Harvey revealed a little less principled idealism and a little more pragmatism in relations with the wider rank-and-file movement. At his libel trial in November 1912, Harvey asked Wilson if he was aware that he had been heavily criticised by the Forward Movement. Harvey quoted part of a speech by John Jeffries, a Forward Movement leader, claiming that Wilson's evident talents were 'from time to time not used for the purpose they ought to be' and, explicitly, that Jeffries was referring to the conciliation doctrine that Wilson 'continually dinned into their ears.' Harvey's defence here was of great significance, as he was taking the logic of Forward Movement rhetoric a step further, clearly aligning himself with it as he did so. Indeed, Harvey claimed (slightly disingenuously) that he 'had said no more than what had been said by other bodies during the last decade — by the socialists or the "Forward Movement" — and the action had only been taken against him because he was a working miner.''[124] The extent to which this benefited Harvey in terms of his ability to propagate his industrial unionism is difficult to measure. But it seems to have secured him a prominent position on the platform of at least one Durham Forward Movement mass meeting. In April 1912 Harvey seconded a motion of censure of the DMA agents, with a speech complaining that the men had been 'sold-out' by their leaders. Harvey argued that the leaders should receive the same wage as the miners and perhaps then the leaders would fight for their demands, as 'every time the men got a rise they would also be better off.'[125] Lawther, unsurprisingly, never appeared on a Durham Forward Movement platform as such, though he did speak at a meeting on the minimum wage in Newcastle in December 1913, this was not apparently under their auspices.[126] That said, he was fortunate in that his words did not prevent cooperation in Chopwell with those active in the Durham Forward Movement. For example, Lawther sat on the negotiating committee in the doctor's fee agitation in early 1913 with Vipond Hardy, who Lawther had failed to convince of syndicalism and who was, instead, active in the maligned Durham Forward Movement.[127]

6) Conclusion; An Opportunity Missed?

Revolutionary activists are often confronted with a dilemma when faced with favourable circumstances in which to propagate their politics; the extent to which they soft-pedal or compromise on fundamentals in order to be able to access platforms and provide a message that has the potential to chime with large numbers of individuals in some form of struggle; too much compromise leaves them open to the jibe of being opportunistic, too little means they are zealots, inflexible and too dogmatic. To take another example , I have argued elsewhere that in the late 1930s, left-wingers and communists seeking to build a grassroots movement in support of the Spanish Republic sacrificed too much of their politics in ultimately futile attempts to build the Comintern-endorsed 'popular front' of all progressives against fascism.[128] (Harvey and Lawther were both

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[123] *Durham Chronicle,* 14 August 1926.

[124] *Evening Chronicle*, 7 November 1912.

[125] The newspaper report refers to a 'Mr. G. Harvey of Handon Hold lodge,' who is almost certain to have been George Harvey. *Durham Chronicle,* 12 April 1912.

[126] *Durham Chronicle*, 5 December 1913.

[127] *Blaydon Courier,* 19 October 1912; 25 January 1913.

[128] See Mates, *Spanish Civil War,* passim.

involved in these campaigns at different levels and in different forms but by this time both had gravitated to the Labour Party though remaining, to different degrees, sympathetic to the CP). So much did the left activists emphasise the humanitarian aspect of their Spanish aid campaigns that individuals could and did become involved in them solely for humanitarian motives. Thus, the campaigns involved individuals who had no position on the politics of the conflict in Spain at all (and were unlikely to acquire one) and even some who supported British NonIntervention in Spain (essentially a pro-Franco position). Here was an example of political opportunism on the left taken to extremes; so much so that it proved largely counter-productive for the left, both in terms of their organisations and politics and certainly in terms of actual support for the Republic by putting pressure on the government to end Non-Intervention.

In the period of industrial strife 1910–1914, Lawther, certainly, was arguably too pure in his politics, which denied him access to certain platforms and alienated him from those who were potentially his allies. Harvey, on the other hand, was too sectarian, fixated on the finer points of the policy of his infinitesimal party. This is not to argue that Lawther in particular should have abandoned the principled political positions he held that evidently cost him influence. However, it is to recognise that holding such positions did have consequences and that in certain circumstances what is sacrificed for the sake of principle is great. Both Lawther and Harvey in their different ways failed to act in the more pragmatic way that the influential South Wales syndicalists did; for example in soft-pedalling on the more ambitious aspects of their programme during the 1912 strike in order to concentrate on the minimum wage issue.[129] In Lawther's case his relative youth and inexperience might have been significant in explaining his more rigid adherence to self-shackling principle. Anarcho-syndicalism was arguably more theoretically coherent and defensible than the syndicalism of the Unofficial Reform Committee. Yet, even when better coordinated in 1914 it remained a minority strand within the minority revolutionary syndicalist strand of the labour movement. Harvey's SLP, though more tightly organised for a longer period of time, also remained a minority tendency within syndicalism and, in its efforts to break out of this ghetto, often prompted by Harvey himself, it often seemed to loose almost as much as it gained.[130] In this respect it was something of an unfortunate happenstance that meant there were no significant syndicalist advocates of the Mann/Unofficial Reform Committee groups in the Durham coalfield (though of course, they were to split as well). It seems clear from the October 1912 conference in Chopwell that there was a radical wing to the Durham Forward Movement that was potentially sympathetic to syndicalism. *The Miners' Next Step* in particular, written by miners steeled by their experiences in intense industrial struggle and penned in its immediate aftermath, in some respects merely formalised and extended causes that the Durham Forward Movement itself agitated for.

Though necessarily counterfactual, it seems highly likely that a concerted joint effort of Harvey and Lawther's groupings to provide a sustained and dynamic advocacy of *The Miners' Next Step* would have resonated more (and had a greater impact) amongst the masses of angry Durham miners of the period.[131] Conditions were not as favourable for syndicalism in the Durham coalfield as they were in South Wales. Still, arguably both Marxism and anarchism (and the tensions

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[129] Holton, *British Syndicalism,* p.119.
[130] Challinor, *British Bolshevism,* pp.118–121.
[131] For evidence of this see the report of the October 1912 conference in Chopwell.

between the activists who advocated them and their respective organisations) had fallen short in terms of propagating syndicalism in the Durham coalfield.

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Georges Sorel's Contribution to Anarcho-Marxism

Renzo Llorente

Georges Sorel's Anarcho-Marxism

Georges Sorel (1847–1922) was an important figure in the development of radical left-wing theory during the early decades of the twentieth century, his ideas having strongly influenced the work of some major Marxist thinkers, including Antonio Gramsci (Lichtheim 1971: 106; McLellan 1998: 193), Georg Lukacs (Meszaros 1972: 21) and Jose Carlos Mariategui (Garda Salvatecci 1979; Paris 1978). Today, however, there appears to be very little interest in Sorel's works among left-wing thinkers and commentators, whether Marxist or anarchist in outlook. This neglect is unfortunate, in that Sorel's works address many of the central themes in emancipatory social theory: the permissible use of violence in political struggles; the possibilities and limits of parliamentarism; the role of intellectuals in revolutionary movements; the suitability of various revolutionary strategies and organizational structures available to the oppressed; the contrast between reform and revolution; the relationship between left-wing political parties and those whose interests they claim to represent; the transformation of the bourgeois state; and the moral aims of socialism.

At the same time, the contemporary tendency to ignore Sorel is perhaps not so surprising after all, considering the great divergence of opinion regarding the value of Sorel's contribution to political theory. On the one hand, there are the views of scholars and thinkers such as Eugene Kamenka, John Gray and Jose Carlos Mariategui. Kamenka, a philosopher and Marx scholar, ranks Sorel among the 'most perceptive exponents' of socialism (Kamenka 1977: 119), while Gray endorses Croce's description of Sorel as 'the most original and important Marxist theorist after Marx himself' (Gray 1993: 100–01).[1] For his part, Mariategui, Latin America's greatest Marxist writer, considers Sorel 'Marx's most vigorous follower *[continuador]* in…[a] period of social-democratic parliamentarism' (Mariategui 1994: 1292; my translation).[2] On the other hand, however, George Lichtheim, a historian of Marxism, calls Sorel an 'irresponsible chatterbox' and a 'romantic litterateur' (1967: 261; 1965: 229, note 2), and Lenin himself dismisses Sorel as a 'notorious muddler' (1972: 292).

Yet highly divergent judgments regarding Sorel have arisen not only in connection with the calibre and value of Sorel's writings; there is also considerable disagreement when it comes to the basic political orientation of his texts: Does Sorel belong to the Left, or to the Right? If his place

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[1] It is worth noting that Leszek Kolakowski also ranks Sorel highly in comparison with other Marxists: 'As a writer he stood far above the orthodox Marxists, but he had insufficient command over his talent' (1981: 153).

[2] Mariátegui is perhaps the only major Marxist writer to consistently champion Sorel, whom he does not hesitate to mention in the same breath as Lenin and Marx (see, e.g., 1994: 261; 1318).

is among theorists of the Left, should we include him with the Marxists or with the anarchists? With respect to the first question, I think it is clear, in light of Sorel's most significant political writings, that we ought to situate him on the Left, and for my present purposes will simply assume that those who depict Sorel as a right-wing thinker are fundamentally mistaken.[3] How, then, to respond to the second question? Which label best describes Sorel—'Marxist' or 'anarchist'?

To be sure, in the *Reflections on Violence,* his most important work as a political theorist (first published in 1908), Sorel unequivocally identifies his enterprise with Marxism, and most works in political philosophy tend to classify Sorel as a Marxist of sorts (when it is a matter of choosing between 'anarchist' and 'Marxist' as an ideological marker).[4] Yet it is also true that Sorel has, as Jeremy Jennings puts it, 'traditionally been regarded as one of the most controversial figures in the history of Marxism' (Jennings 1983: 453). While there are many factors that account for Sorel's controversial status in the history of Marxism, one reason is undoubtedly his debt to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, whose works had a profound and lasting influence on Sorel's thought.[5] In fact, as Sorel scholar John Stanley points out, 'it is Proudhon who is cited most frequently in his [Sorel's] early writings' (1976: 7), and Stanley goes on to claim that 'the thinker who is closest to Sorel is…Pierre-Joseph Proudhon' (1976: 17). It is partly owing to this affinity that some commentators, such as Lichtheim, tend to consider Sorel a 'Proudhonist,'[6] while others view him as an outright anarchist. Indeed, Irving Louis Horowitz not only includes a selection from the *Reflections on Violence* in his 1964 anthology of anarchist texts, but actually refers to Sorel, along with Bakunin, Malatesta and Kropotkin, as one of 'the classical anarchists' (Horowitz 1964 [a]: 17),[7] and James Joll's well-known study of anarchism (1980) also contains several pages devoted to Sorel's thought.[8]

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[3] Significantly, many of the commentators who maintain that Sorel's thought lends itself to reactionary or fascistic uses, or that Sorel himself was essentially a right-wing thinker, furnish very little argument to support their claim. For some examples of this tendency to casually link Sorel to the Right (or as much to the Right as to the Left), see Woodcock 1962: 323; Horowitz 1964b: 592; Lichtheim 1971: 116; Joll 1980: 194; and Marshall 1993: 442.

[4] What is more, there are entries for Sorel in various reference works on Marxism (e.g., Jennings 1983 and Gorman 1985), and Kolakowski devotes a chapter to Sorel in his *Main Currents of Marxism* (1981), even though he believes that Sorel is a Marxist only 'in a very loose sense' (14). McLellan (1998), however, mentions Sorel on only one page (193), and merely in order to register his influence on Gramsci.

[5] 'So Proudhonian in inspiration' (1999: 292) is how Sorel himself characterizes the *Reflections on Violence* in his 'In Defence of Lenin,' an essay written in 1919 and added to the fourth (French) edition of the *Reflections* as an appendix.

[6] 'But one must always bear in mind that Sorel was really no Marxist, but a Proudhonist' (Lichtheim 1971: 113). Coming from Lichtheim, this can hardly be taken as praise. 'What he [Proudhon] really represented,' writes Lichtheim elsewhere, 'was a fusion of backwoods barbarism with the mental chaos typical of the autodidact' (Lichtheim 1973: 427). In any event, it is worth noting that the Comintern likewise considered Sorel a 'Proudhonist.' As Carr (1962) notes, 'After Sorel died the *Communist International,* the official journal of Comintern, opened its columns to a lengthy, if critical, appreciation of this 'reactionary petty-bourgeois Proudhonist and anarcho-syndicalist' who had rallied to the defence of the proletarian revolution' (162–3).

[7] Somewhat incongruously, Horowitz also characterizes Sorel as a 'modern-day' anarchist in a subsequent chapter in the same work (1964b: 592). In any case, in his 1961 book on Sorel, *Radicalism and the Revolt against Reason,* Horowitz also describes Sorel as an adherent of anarchism (160).

[8] Roger Scruton also effectively assimilates Sorel's thought to anarchism, for he describes Sorel's project as an attempt to synthesize syndicalist and anarchist ideas (1984: 456). For his part, Lenin cites one of Sorel's texts in a brief paragraph listing works that offer 'a critique of Marx from the point of view of anarchism,' but refers to Sorel himself as a 'syndicalist' (1974a: 91). In any case, just as some Marxists dispute Sorel's Marxist credentials, some anarchists and writers sympathetic to anarchism tend to minimize Sorel's affinities with the anarchist tradition. For example, in his history of anarchism, George Woodcock writes that Sorel's 'place in anarchist history is peripheral' (1962: 323)

What is one to make of so much disagreement in interpreting Sorel? In my view, the disagreement and uncertainty stem from the fact that the theoretical basis for the position developed in *Reflections on Violence* is in essence neither Marxism nor anarchism, but rather a fairly coherent, if idiosyncratic, variety of *anarcho-Marxism*.[9] Accordingly, I would propose the term 'anarcho-Marxism' to describe Sorel's perspective, as this term is more accurate than either 'Marxism' or 'anarchism' and, on the other hand, much more illuminating, theoretically speaking, than 'anarcho-syndicalism,' the customary label for his views.

My aim in the following pages is to sketch the justification for construing Sorel's theoretical outlook, as articulated in the *Reflections on Violence,* as first and foremost a form of anarcho-Marxism. To this end, my paper focuses on four themes, or rather positions, that figure prominently in the *Reflections:* anti- statism; the condemnation of parliamentary socialism; the advocacy of revolutionary syndicalism; and defence of the revolutionary general strike. Starting from the premise that the four positions are characteristically anarchist views, I argue that Sorel's adherence to these positions entails an acceptance of some important components of anarchism. I also argue, however, that many Marxists could endorse these same anarchist views, provided that they attach as much importance as Sorel does to *workers' self-emancipation* as a Marxist value. Since it turns out, therefore, that Marxists could endorse the *Reflections'* anarchist views and, as I also contend, anarchists could assume the *Reflections'* Marxist views, we may safely say that the *Reflections on Violence* both combines Marxist and anarchist theses and does so in a way that makes each group's theses acceptable to the other group. To the extent that this is the case, *Reflections on Violence* proves successful as a statement of *anarcho- Marxist* doctrine. The final part of the paper briefly considers some of the merits of this particular variety, or model, of anarcho-Marxism.

Before turning to each of the themes mentioned above, it will be useful to review briefly the main argument in the *Reflections on Violence*[10] As the book's title indicates, Sorel's central topic is violence, but the violence that interests Sorel is a specific manifestation of political violence, namely the violence that workers use or administer in doing battle with the bourgeoisie in strikes and militant labour actions. Sorel's central claim holds that this kind of 'proletarian violence'—an absolutely indispensable element of class struggle in his view—is the most effective method for establishing socialism.

His reasoning is as follows. Following Marx, Sorel assumes that capitalism must produce the maximal development of the forces of production before socialism becomes possible; in other

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and scarcely discusses Sorel's ideas. Similarly, Peter Marshall devotes only two (ill-informed) paragraphs to Sorel in his encyclopaedic survey of anarchist thought (1993: 442). Both Woodcock and Marshall appear to believe that their extremely cursory treatment of Sorel is justified in light of Sorel's apparently negligible influence on anarchist thinkers and activists (which proves especially odd in Woodcock's case, since the subtitle of his book is 'A History of Libertarian *Ideas* and Movements' [emphasis added]). Had Woodcock and Marshall taken more of an interest in the actual *content* of Sorel's theories, presumably they would have seen fit to accord Sorel more space in their respective histories.

[9] I should perhaps emphasize that I am not saying that Sorel himself made any such claim, for he did not, at least to my knowledge.

[10] Unlike the references to other texts given in the body of essay, all references to the *Reflections* (including the appendixes) will contain the page numbers alone.

words, capitalism will give way to socialism only when capitalist relations of production become a fetter on the forces of production and an impediment to their further development.

Capitalism, in short, must exhaust the possibilities for development and expansion of the productive forces within the framework of capitalist relations of production before we can undertake the transition to socialism. According to Sorel, capitalists, or the bourgeoisie, will be effective in developing the forces of production, and hence in achieving the complete development of capitalism, to the extent that they focus single-mindedly on maximizing profit. An exclusive focus on profit maximization entails, in turn, a refusal to grant any concessions to the workers—e.g., higher wages, a reduced workday, measures to improve conditions in the workplace, expansion of employee benefits, or establishment of worker rights requiring new expenditures or investments—which might hamper or retard the utmost development of the forces of production.

What does this have to do with violence? In Sorel's view, proletarian violence facilitates the bourgeoisie's pursuit of profit—and thus contributes to and hastens the creation of socialism—by dissuading capitalists (and others) from making concessions to the workers. For if workers unfailingly 'repay with *black ingratitude* the *benevolence* of those who wish to protect the workers' (77; emphasis in the original),[11] that is to say, if they respond to welfare-enhancing concessions from the bourgeoisie with heightened militancy (with new strikes and more violent resistance), the capitalists will conclude that nothing is to be gained by making such concessions and they will cease to offer them. Consequently, instead of squandering their time, energy and resources on measures designed to enhance the workers' well-being, capitalists will devote themselves single-mindedly to the pursuit of profit and the development of the forces of production. In short, proletarian violence, and consistently militant opposition from labour more generally, help to sustain the bourgeoisie's spirit or ethic of capitalist ruthlessness and antagonism; thanks to this attitude on the part of the workers, *capitalists remain capitalists,* and are prevented from succumbing to any of the impulses that might distract them from the business of producing surplus value. To put the same point a bit differently: Acts of proletarian violence and the workers' disposition to meet concessions with ingratitude serve to 'reawaken' the bourgeoisie 'to a sense of their own class interests' (77), thereby reinvigorating the bourgeoisie and 're-establish[ing] the division into classes' (85; cf. 78). As Sorel explains,

> ...proletarian violence comes upon the scene at the very moment when the conception of social peace claims to moderate disputes; proletarian violence confines employers to their role as producers and tends to restore the class structure just when they seemed on the point of intermingling in the democratic morass... This violence compels capitalism to restrict its attentions solely to its material role and tends to restore to it the warlike qualities it formerly possessed. A growing and solidly organized working class can force the capitalist class to remain ardent in the industrial struggle; if a united and revolutionary proletariat confronts a rich bourgeoisie eager for conquest, capitalist society will reach its historical perfection (78–79).[12]

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[11] Sorel goes on: 'to meet with insults the homilies of the defenders of human fraternity and to respond by blows to the advances of the propagators of social peace...'

[12] In short: 'The day when the bosses perceive that they have nothing to gain by works which promote social justice or by democracy, they will understand that they have been badly advised by the people who persuaded them to abandon their trade of creators of productive forces for the noble profession of educators of the proletariat' (77–78).

Violence, in short, promotes the optimal development of capitalism, thereby helping to establish the material preconditions for, and accelerating society's advance toward, socialism. It is precisely for this reason that proletarian violence 'may save the world from barbarism' (85).[13]

In summarizing Sorel's argument it is important to emphasize that his concept of 'proletarian violence' refers to acts of violence flowing from the resistance that forms a part of militant strikes and other labour struggles involving intransigent opposition on the workers' part. For Sorel, moreover, such acts of violence, and strikes in particular, are 'acts of war' (279), the war in question being the class war (if revolutionary strikes are inherently violent, it is precisely because they constitute acts of war). Sorel is careful to distinguish this type of violence from acts of violence committed by the *state:* whereas the purpose of the latter is to preserve and strengthen the state, proletarian or 'syndicalist' violence consists in acts of violence 'perpetrated in the course of strikes by proletarians *who desire the overthrow of the State'* (108; emphasis added). In other words, the workers' violence does not aim at replacing one (authoritarian) state structure with another, but rather at doing away with the state altogether, along with the domination and exploitation which the state makes possible.

It is also worth emphasizing that Sorel defends proletarian violence not only on account of its role in the consummation of capitalism, but also because of its beneficial effect on the workers themselves. In preparing and executing acts of violence in strikes, proletarians develop self-confidence, acquire political independence, develop skills and abilities necessary for self-management, and of course gain greater class consciousness (see, e.g., 74–75). And to the extent that acts of proletarian violence achieve one of their primary purposes, namely to 'mark the separation of classes' (105–106), these acts are likely to heighten workers' militancy and combativeness (which will of course encourage capitalists to devote their energies exclusively to developing the forces of production…which should provoke, in turn, even more proletarian violence).

Yet the greatest benefit of all from acts of violence has to do with their role in preparing workers for a *revolutionary* (or 'syndicalist') *general strike,* an idea which, in Sorel's opinion, 'contains within itself the whole of proletarian socialism' (150). Unlike sheerly political strikes (or even a *political* general strike), a proletarian general strike does not produce a mere change of government, but the destruction of the state as such: as Sorel succinctly puts it in one of the Appendixes ('Apology for Violence') to *Reflections on Violence,* the revolutionary or proletarian general strike involves 'an overthrow in the course of which both employers and the State will be removed by the organized producers' (279–280). Besides being the event that puts an end to capitalism, the general strike is important insofar as it functions as a *myth* for revolutionary workers. For Sorel, myths are 'expressions of a will to act' (28), compelling images and conceptions of a (future) collective enterprise that serve to inspire, motivate and mobilize the actors who will be engaged in

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[13] Cf. p. 251. Sorel also claims that insofar as concessions are granted to the workers, a society will find itself in a state of economic decline or decadence—which he distinguishes from a period of economic crisis (127)—when the revolution finally occurs (79–80). To the extent that economic decline implies a loss of certain gains achieved in advanced societies (gains that we identify with civilization), violence can be said to prevent a lapse into (relative) barbarism in this sense, too. It is worth pointing out that this claim is far less plausible than Sorel's main thesis: while significant concessions from employers may very well sap or erode workers' will to revolution, it seems unlikely that these concessions will inevitably contribute to economic decline. Indeed, employers often choose to offer certain benefits to their workers on the assumption that these concessions will improve morale among their employees, and therefore raise productivity.

this very enterprise.[14] Myths are, to borrow Lichtheim's apt description, 'the product of a collective will- to-believe' and 'a prophetic anticipation of that which is to come' (Lichtheim 1971: 118; 112).[15] Sorel maintains that only those who embrace some such myth will prove capable of great endeavours (see, e.g., 140), and it is the 'myth' of the general strike, the very idea of which 'produces an entirely epic state of mind' (250), which serves as an indispensable inspiration and motivation for the revolutionary worker.[16]

Reflections on Violence is a somewhat eccentric and highly uneven work.

It contains incisive analyses of trends and developments in fin-de-siecle socialism, and many provocative arguments concerning the struggle for socialism. At the same time, Sorel's text is often meandering, and his reasoning exasperatingly quirky. What is more, some of his principal theses are undeniably unsettling. For example, Sorel's approach to the emancipation of the working class is, as we have seen, an incomparably robust version of *The worse, the better,* albeit cast in the form of *The better, the worse:* the more welfare-enhancing concessions the workers exact from capital, the poorer the prospects for their emancipation. (Sorel's defence of this viewpoint is, I would suggest, one of the chief reasons that the *Reflections* 'remains a profoundly disturbing book,' as Jennings says in his 'Introduction' to the text (1999: xxi).

In any event, while Sorel's *Reflections* raise numerous questions, I would like to focus on the book's fundamental political orientation, which, as I shall try to demonstrate, is best interpreted as a variety of anarcho-Marxism. My remarks will deal mainly with the anarchist dimension of the *Reflections on Violence,* for two reasons. First of all, as I indicate below, it is, I believe, more difficult for Marxists to assume Sorel's properly 'anarchist' commitments than it is for anarchists to assume his essentially 'Marxist' views. Secondly, the fact is that Sorel is most often classified, as noted earlier, as, if anything, a Marxist of sorts, however idiosyncratic his interpretation of Marxism may turn out to be. In other words, the identification of Sorel with Marxism is somewhat less controversial than his assimilation to anarchism. Since my discussion centres mainly on the 'anarchist Sorel,' let me first summarize very briefly the grounds for regarding Sorel as a Marxist.

To begin with, one can hardly ignore the various passages in the *Reflections on Violence* in which Sorel expressly affirms the Marxist affiliation of the 'new school' of theorists to which he belongs (see, e.g., 40), leaving little doubt as to the tradition in which he situates himself.[17] More important, Sorel explicitly endorses many Marxist theses and assumptions (a few of which have already been noted) over the course of his *Reflections.* For example, Sorel accepts many

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[14] '[M]en who are participating in great social movements always picture their coming action in the form of images of battle in which their cause is certain to triumph. I propose to give the name of "myths" to these constructions...' (20). As I note below, 'Marx's catastrophic revolution' (Ibid.) is, for Sorel, one such myth.

[15] Kolakowski also provides an illuminating characterization of Sorel's conception of myth: 'Its value is. [as] a force inspiring and organizing the militant consciousness of a self-contained group... Only by means of a myth can a fighting group maintain its solidarity, heroism, and the spirit of self-sacrifice' (1981: 160).

[16] '[T]he proletarian general strike. awakens in the depth of the soul a sentiment of the sublime proportionate to the conditions of a gigantic struggle' (159). For a similarly rhapsodic characterization of the revolutionary general strike, and strikes generally, see 118.

[17] Sorel himself stresses, however, that he is by no means a slavish or dogmatic follower of Marx (see, e.g., 171), and that 'the *new school* does not in the least feel itself bound to admire the illusions, the faults and the errors of the man who did so much to work out revolutionary ideas' (172; italics in the original).

of Marx's central assumptions regarding the material preconditions for socialism and the philosophy of history; he agrees with Marx's emphasis on the centrality of class struggle in social life (and development), and its role in the struggle for socialism; like Marx, Sorel views the state as an instrument of class domination and advocates its abolition; he rejects and is dismissive of utopias and socialist utopianism; Sorel acknowledges, like Marx, the primacy of production, as this notion is understood in historical materialism; he, too, affirms the desirability of a cataclysmic socialist revolution that abolishes capitalism once and for all, and the importance of helping workers to bring it about; as with Marx, Sorel envisions socialist society as a classless social order in which the forces of production are collectively owned, and managed by the workers themselves; and, finally, Sorel, like Marx, stubbornly adheres to the principle of proletarian self-emancipation.[18] As a matter of fact, it is precisely because of Sorel's commitment to Marx's essential views and doctrines—or rather what Sorel takes them to be—that he denounces 'the anti-Marxist transformation which contemporary socialism is undergoing' (73),[19] and also for this reason that the *Reflections* largely take the form of a polemic against distortions or (neutralizing) corruptions of Marxism attributable to writers who claim an allegiance to Marx.

But what about anarchism? As it turns out, in addition to his enthusiastic endorsement of numerous Marxist views, Sorel also defends some essentially and indisputably anarchist positions in the pages of the *Reflections on Violence.* I will mention four of them

The first plainly anarchist position to note is Sorel's uncompromising *anti- statism.* Sorel advocates the abolition of the state, and he regards the abolition of the state as a *condition* of the revolution, or rather as a measure that coincides with the overthrow of capitalism, and not as a more or less distant occurrence resulting from a process of 'withering away.' Indeed, the goal of the general strike, and hence the ultimate end of proletarian violence, is nothing other than the suppression or destruction of the state (18; 107; 161), or as Sorel writes in one passage, the elimination of 'both employers and the State' (279).

Significantly, this uncompromising stance vis-a-vis the state leads Sorel to reject 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'—a principle which, according to Lenin, constitutes 'the very *essence* of Marx's doctrine' (Lenin 1974b: 233; italics in the original).[20] The dictatorship of the proletariat would, Sorel maintains, perpetuate a division between 'masters' and 'servants' (163), and is therefore unacceptable.

A second essentially anarchist position advanced in the *Reflections* is the *condemnation of parliamentary socialism.* Sorel stresses time and again in this work the inherently anti-revolutionary, conservative nature of parliamentary institutions, and their baneful effect on socialists willing

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[18] On the material preconditions for socialism and the philosophy of history see 128, 73, 80 and 129; on the importance of class struggle, see 85, 34, 182 and 126; as regards the state, see 18, 161 and 30; on the question of utopias and utopianism, see 28–29,129, 224, 118–9 and 132; regarding 'the primacy of production,' see 138; on the nature and desirability of socialist revolution, see 155, 126 and 140; concerning the stated conception of socialist society, see 155, 238 and 171; and as regards the principle of proletarian self-emancipation, see 32. Some of these passages also contain more general statements of sympathy with Marx's views, i.e., comments that express Sorel's embrace of Marx without referring to any specific topic or thesis. If references to Marx and Marxism abound in the *Reflections on Violence,* references to anarchism and anarchists are, by contrast, relatively few in number, and for the most of an incidental character.

[19] '[T]he official socialists,' remarks Sorel, '.wish to admire in Marx that which is not Marxist' (172).

[20] It is no surprise, then, that in 1921 the Comintern should have instructed the French Communist Party to 'criticize in a friendly by also clear and firm manner those anarcho-syndicalist tendencies which reject the dictatorship of the proletariat. ' (Adler 1983: 282).

to serve these institutions. He acknowledges that the anarchists were correct in warning that participation in bourgeois institutions, with its exposure to bourgeois influences, would lead to a political *embourgeoisement* of revolutionaries (34). The 'official socialists' (Sorel's term for parliamentary socialists) 'boast to the government and to the rich bourgeoisie of their ability to moderate revolution,' for parliamentary socialism basically *'sells peace of mind to the conservatives'* (67; emphasis in the original).[21] A revolution that brought official socialists to power would change little (83), since parliamentary socialists desire above all to preserve, and if possible expand, their own power (and that of the parties they represent), and this objective presupposes the preservation and fortification of the state. Proletarian violence, carried out in the proper fashion, will put an end to parliamentary socialism, which is plainly one of the reasons that the parliamentary socialists themselves condemn it (79; 118–119).

A third anarchist position can be found in Sorel's *espousal of revolutionary syndicalism.* According to the doctrine of revolutionary syndicalism, autonomous trade unions, acting independently of political parties and institutions, must be both the agent of revolution and the fundamental organizational components of the future socialist society, understood as an arrangement in which these bodies will control production. Unlike parliamentary socialism, revolutionary syndicalism is resolutely opposed to the state, which it aims to destroy (107; 108). Furthermore, syndicalism is—again, unlike parliamentarism—what Sorel calls a 'great educative force,' as it teaches workers to resist capitalism, while also preparing them for their role in the socialist future, with its worker-managed system of production (243; 126).

The final important anarchist position that Sorel champions in the *Reflections on Violence* is a commitment to the *revolutionary* or *syndicalist* (or *proletarian) general strike.* This form of strike is, Sorel insists, very different from a merely 'political strike' (whether or not it is 'political *general* strike'). The latter does not presuppose, as does the proletarian general strike, an absolute class confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (151). Nor do merely 'political' strikes pose any fundamental threat to politicians (147), since they aim at reforms and improvements within the existing socio-political order, whose fundamental legitimacy remains unquestioned by those who organize and carry out 'political strikes.' The revolutionary or proletarian general strike, on the other hand, 'entails the conception of an irrevocable overthrow' (281), followed by the creation of a new civilization (280). Since the concept of the revolutionary general strike also includes the definitive defeat of the bourgeoisie and the destruction of the state, it is an 'idea…[which] contains within itself the whole of proletarian socialism' (150; cf. 110; 113; and 118).

Each of the four positions that I have mentioned constitutes either an essential anarchist commitment (anti-statism, the rejection or parliamentarism), or a position that has been defended and embraced mainly by anarchists (revolutionary syndicalism, the general strike),[22] or both (anti-statism and the rejection of parliamentarism). Indeed, some major anarchists, such as Rudolph Rocker and Emma Goldman, hold all four positions (see Rocker 1989 and Goldman 1972).[23] At

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[21] For some typically caustic remarks on the failings of parliamentary socialism, see 67–8; 111; and 154.

[22] It is worth recalling that Bakunin himself was a proponent of the general strike (see, e.g., 1985: 149150), and that his views on the value of strikes more generally sound like an anticipation of Sorel (see, e.g., 1972: 304–307). It is likewise worth recalling here that according to Emma Goldman syndicalism constitutes 'the economic expression of Anarchism' (1972: 68).

[23] Goldman mentions Sorel in her essay 'Syndicalism: Its Theory and Practice' (which echoes some of the themes found in *Reflections on Violence),* as does Rocker in his classic work *Anarcho-Syndicalism.* Yet both authors refer to

any rate, even those anarchists who reject revolutionary syndicalism and the general strike would surely acknowledge that these positions are not fundamentally at odds with essential anarchist values. Accordingly, just as few Marxists would dismiss as essentially un- or anti- Marxist any of the 'Marxist' positions (listed above) that Sorel defends, few anarchists would dismiss as un- or anti-anarchist any of the 'anarchist' positions that he defends.

So, in *Reflections on Violence* we find a number of standard Marxist positions, alongside a number of standard anarchist positions. One might be inclined to conclude, on the basis of my remarks and given the differences between Marxism and anarchism, that the result is a rather incoherent amalgam, or at best a very unstable synthesis of two political doctrines widely believed to be grossly incompatible with each other. As it turns out, however, *Reflections on Violence* is actually fairly successful as a model of anarcho- Marxism, owing to the fact that *anarchists could embrace Sorel's Marxist commitments, while Marxists could embrace his anarchist commitments.*[24]

Let me begin with first of these last two claims. It is, I believe, the case that anarchists could subscribe to all of the theses and views that make *Reflections on Violence* a 'Marxist' text, or at least to those mentioned earlier. Recall that these were: i) Marx's view of the material preconditions for socialism; ii) his perspective on the role of class struggle in social evolution and the struggle for socialism; iii) Marx's concept of the state as an instrument of class domination, and his belief that it must, therefore, be abolished; iv) Marx's dismissive attitude toward socialist utopianism; v) Marx's emphasis on the 'primacy of production'; vi) Marx's support for a cataclysmic socialist revolution, which one should help the workers to bring about; vii) Marx's conception of socialist society as a classless social order in which the forces of production are collectively owned, and managed by the workers themselves; and viii) Marx's commitment to proletarian self-emancipation. If I am correct in claiming that anarchists could endorse all of these views, and hence both the anarchist *and* Marxist commitments present in the *Reflections on Violence,* it is difficult to understand how they could reject, in general terms, Sorel's anarcho-Marxism.

What about Marxists? Could they subscribe to Sorel's anarchist theses and views, or at least to those discussed above? This is, in my view, the main issue in assessing the 'success' of Sorel's anarcho-Marxism. One might naturally approach the issue by examining the works of more mainstream Marxist theorists and thinkers, thereby determining whether or not other many other Marxists have endorsed the anarchist views defended by Sorel. I will, however, follow a different approach, which consists in considering Sorel's stated rationale for defending positions that are almost invariably associated with anarchists. This approach seems especially appropriate, considering that Sorel himself conceives of the *Reflections* as a non-dogmatic development and updating of Marx's theories, but one that recovers, and draws its inspiration from, the most essential and authentic elements in Marx's thought (e.g., 120).

Sorel merely to counter the notion that the essential ideas of revolutionary syndicalism derive from his writings (see Goldman 1972: 65; 67, and Rocker 1989: 134).

[24] One might also convey the anarcho-Marxist tenor of Sorel's work in negative terms, so to speak, and this is in effect Kolakowski's approach: 'his [Sorel's] criticism of Marxist orthodoxy has much in common with that of the anarchists. He attacks anarchism from a Marxist standpoint, yet on some points he criticizes Marx from the angle of Bakunin or Proudhon' (1981: 170).

Let us begin with Sorel's commitment to revolutionary syndicalism, which he claims is 'on the true Marxist track' (132). Can one make a plausible Marxist case for revolutionary syndicalism,[25] a doctrine that is usually synonymous with *anarcho*-syndicalism?

For most Marxists, revolutionary syndicalism appears suspect, and impossible to embrace, owing to its decidedly *anti-political* character:[26] revolutionary syndicalism rejects political parties, condemns participation in parliament or collaboration with governmental institutions, etc. This stance, which gives economic struggle absolute priority over political activity, is anathema to most Marxists, who typically accord primacy to political activity.[27]

Sorel, like the anarchists, insists on the primacy of economic struggle (militant initiatives in the workplace, strikes, industrial mobilizations, direct challenges to employers' domination, etc.), but he suggests, in effect, that this is in reality the more authentically Marxist view.[28] For Sorel attaches extreme importance to *proletarian self-emancipation,* and this principle, so central to the Marxist outlook,[29] can plausibly be construed as providing warrant for privileging economic struggle over political struggle. After all, if one adheres to the principle that the emancipation of the working class must take the form of selfemancipation, and the sphere in which workers enjoy the best prospects for exercising their collective agency is in the economic realm (i.e., in the world of production), then it is hardly unreasonable to embrace something like revolutionary

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[25] At least one important Marxist thinker, Mariátegui, explicitly claims that Sorel's syndicalism is consistent with Marxism (1994: 206). Unfortunately, Mariategui does not try to defend this claim.

[26] Berlin puts the point as follows: 'Sorel rejects everything in Marx that seems to him political—his notion of the workers' party, his theory of, and practical measures for, the organisation of the revolution, his determinism, above all the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which Sorel regards as a sinister recrudescence of the worst elements of repressive Jacobinism. Even the anarchist classless society with which true human history is to begin is virtually ignored by Sorel' (1980: 312). For his part, Kolakowski explicitly links Sorel's 'anti-political' orientation to anarchism: 'he shared with the anarchists their basic premiss of the need to do away with all state institutions and their refusal to take part in parliamentary life or to support "political socialism"' (1981: 171).

[27] 'Both Marx and Engels had asserted the primacy of the political struggle over the economic. Trades unions, in their estimation, were essentially defensive organizations... It became part of Marxist orthodoxy to argue that long before the exacting pre-conditions for a successful general strike could be realised, the electoral and political ascendancy of social democracy would render it redundant' (Harding 1996: 68).

The separation of 'the political' and 'the economic' is of course in many ways quite artificial, little more, at bottom, than an analytical construct—and one that often serves 'bourgeois' interests (or at least bourgeois mystification), as Marxists rightly point out. Even so, the distinction does seem useful with respect to the kind of contrast that I wish to establish here.

[28] At least one well-informed commentator, E.H. Carr, is inclined to agree with Sorel: 'Syndicalism is, in Sorel's eyes, the true heir of Marxism. It is anti-political in two senses, both of them Marxist. In the first place it rejects the State, as Marx did and as most contemporary Marxists did not; it seeks not to capture the machinery of the State— much less to find places for socialist ministers in bourgeois governments— but to destroy it. Secondly, it asserts, as Marx did, the essential primacy of economics over politics. Political action is not class action: only economic action can be truly revolutionary. The *syndicats,* the trade unions, being not political parties but organizations of the workers, are alone capable of such action' (1962: 157).

[29] According to the First International's 'Provisional Rules,' drafted by Marx, 'the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves' (Marx 1974: 82). In his 'Circular Letter to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke, and Others,' written in 1879, Marx reaffirms the paramount importance of this principle (1978a: 555), as does Engels in his 'Preface' to the 1888 English edition of the *Communist Manifesto:* 'And as our notion from the very beginning [i.e., the years preceding the appearance of the *Manifesto*] was that "the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself.' '(1971, 136). Marx also cites the formulation from the 'Provisional Rules' (in a slightly modified form) in the 'Critique of the Gotha Program' (1978b: 532), written in 1875. For discussion of the principle of proletarian self-emancipation in Marx and Engels' thought, see Draper 1971; 1977: 213–234; and 1978: 147–165.

syndicalism, with its emphasis on industrial agitation, direct action, and mobilization of the rank and file. Furthermore, self-emancipation requires a certain degree or level of worker militancy, a point that Marx insists on, according to Sorel: 'Marx wishes us to understand,' writes Sorel, 'that the whole preparation of the proletariat depends solely upon the organization of a stubborn, increasing and passionate resistance to the present order of things' (126). If this spirit of resistance is as decisive as Sorel says, and revolutionary syndicalism promotes and sustains this spirit (or morale) better than rival doctrines, then perhaps it really is the case that revolutionary syndicalism affords workers a 'truly proletarian ideology' (226).

Let us turn now to Sorel's impassioned defence of the revolutionary general strike. While it is true that Rosa Luxemburg once wrote that the strike is 'the external form of struggle for socialism' (Luxemburg 2004: 368), Marxists have generally attached considerably less importance to strikes,[30] and the notion of the revolutionary generally strike, first popularized by Bakuninites (Hyman 1983: 470; Joll 1980: 179), has almost invariably been associated with anarchist doctrines and movements. Indeed, the German trade union leaders of Sorel's day, whose views were shaped to one degree or another by the 'Marxism' upheld by German Social Democracy, were given to saying that 'General Strike is General Nonsense' (Joll 1980:193).[31] Yet Sorel actually holds that 'the fundamental principles of Marxism are perfectly intelligible only with the aid of the picture of the general strike and, on the other hand, the full significance of this picture.is only apparent to those deeply versed in Marxist doctrine' (122). Moreover, in several passages in the *Reflections* he underscores alleged similarities and affinities between the Marxism's general theoretical framework and that which justifies the revolutionary general strike (120; 130–1). What are these alleged similarities and affinities?

First of all, the revolutionary general strike, like Marx's revolution, is a 'catastrophic' occurrence—Sorel uses 'catastrophe' or 'catastrophic' many times in connection with the general strike (see, e.g. 126; 140; and 182)[32]—which evokes and symbolizes, but also precipitates the passage from capitalism to socialism, and thus from oppression to liberation. Owing to the awesome, epic images that it conjures up, the 'catastrophic' notion of the revolutionary general strike serves, much like Marx's concept of socialist revolution, to inspire and motivate workers (which is why Sorel regards both the general strike *and* 'Marx's catastrophic revolution' as 'myths' (20)). What is more, 'It is through strikes [including the general strike] that the proletariat asserts its existence' (279): the strike is the method or strategy of struggle most readily available to the workers, and so they naturally use strikes in order to emerge from invisibility, establish their social presence, and express their needs and demands. (Furthermore, to the extent that these actions are accompanied by, or rather give rise to, a new class con-

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[30] For a brief overview of some of the different attitudes toward strikes encountered within the history of Marxist thought, see Hyman 1983: 469–471. Summarizing the general attitude among Marxists, Harding writes, 'For Marxists, the policy of the general strike was associated with the infancy of the labour movement' (1996: 69). Sorel suggests, however, that the truth is actually the opposite of what, according to Harding, most Marxists believe: 'Revolutionary syndicalism is not. as many believe. the first confused form of the working-class movement, which is bound in the end to free itself from this youthful error. It has been, on the contrary, the product of an improvement brought about by men who had just arrested a deviation towards bourgeois ideas' (35).

[31] Harding (1996: 69) attributes this dictum to Marx himself, but does not provide a source for his claim. The phrase is normally attributed to German Social Democrat Ignaz Auer (1846–1907).

[32] *Apocalypse* is, according to Sorel, also an appropriate description: 'Apocalypse.in reality corresponds perfectly to the general strike which, for revolutionary syndicalists, represents the advent of the new world to come' (Sorel 1961: 251).

sciousness among the workers, it may also be said that strikes help the proletariat to become a 'class for itself.') In this sense, an insistence of the supreme political value of the revolutionary general strike, and strikes more generally, seems to follow quite straightforwardly from an unqualified commitment to proletarian self-emancipation. If Marx himself does not appreciate this, it is, Sorel suggests, partly because Marx gave little thought to the actual organization of workers for revolutionary struggle (169), and partly because he could not possibly have foreseen developments that occurred after his death, developments which make it clear that adoption of the revolutionary general strike as a political strategy represents a correct adaptation of Marxist thought to contemporary realities (213).

As for anti-parliamentarism,[33] it would also seem clear that Sorel can derive his position from a bedrock commitment to proletarian self-emancipation, in that parliamentarism substitutes mediation and representation for the workers' own activity and initiatives, and also fosters passivity among them. For these reasons, the acceptance of parliamentarism seems be at odds with the principle of self-emancipation. What is more, parliamentarism is, on Sorel's view, inherently de-radicalizing and corrupting; in a word, an obstacle to class struggle and revolution. As noted above, Sorel contends that revolutionaries and radicals who participate in parliament inevitably end up devoting themselves to 'preserving] the old cult of the state' (103), from which they benefit, and limit themselves to 'attack[ing] the men in power rather than power itself' (107). If 'official socialists' are unable to understand proletarian violence, it is precisely because the perpetrators of this violence wish not to take over the state, but rather to eliminate it (18–19).

This brings us, lastly, to Sorel's radical anti-statism, which represents an essentially anarchist perspective on the abolition of the state: the suppression of the state is to coincide with the advent of the revolution, and constitutes a necessary condition of its success. '[T]here is an absolute opposition between revolutionary syndicalism and the State' (108), writes Sorel, making it clear that he departs from Marxist orthodoxy when it comes to the fate of the state following the revolution. Sorel seems to assume, however, that to insist on the abolition of the state as a condition of the revolution is in fact more consistent with Marx's basic outlook, inasmuch as Marx held that 'the socialist revolution ought not to culminate in the replacement of one governing minority by another' (107). (Recall that Sorel rejects the dictatorship of the proletariat because it would perpetuate a division between 'masters' and 'servants' (163).) Yet whether or not it is true that one can find in 'authentic' Marxism this type of justification for a position that is in essence the anarchist view on the state, one could presumably also appeal to the principle of workers' self-emancipation in order to justify the same position. After all, the main impediment to selfemancipation (as well as *self-emancipation)* is the state, insofar as it upholds the employers' interests and serves as their instrument of domination (i.e., it is the 'central nucleus' of the bourgeoisie (18)).

These are, it seems to me, the arguments available to Sorel if pressed to explain how he can endorse his four *anarchisant,* or outright anarchist, positions without departing from Marxism. As I have tried to show, it turns out that the key commitment in making a Marxist case for each of the positions is the thesis of proletarian self-emancipation. To the extent that Marxists' commitment to proletarian self-emancipation would in fact enable them to endorse the four positions examined here (with some important qualifications, perhaps, in the case of Sorel's 'rad-

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[33] The corollary of a view that we might call *radical anti-substitutionism,* this position has undoubtedly found more prominent Marxist adherents than any of the other three positions discussed here.

ical anti-statism') and assuming, on the other hand, that anarchists could embrace Sorel's indisputably Marxist convictions, it is fair to say that Sorel's theory furnishes a fairly coherent model of anarcho-Marxism.

But how appealing or compelling is this model? Before venturing an answer to this question, I should make it clear that by 'model' I mean only the four political positions discussed here, together with an adherence to the various Marxist theses enumerated earlier. In other words, in referring to Sorel's model of anarcho-Marxism, I do not include, for example, his advocacy of 'the ethics of the producers,' the theme of the *Reflections'* last chapter. Nor do I include in this model Sorel's theses regarding 'myths,' or his conception and defence of violence. My justification for ignoring, or rather excluding, these and other issues discussed in the *Reflections* is that the positions and theses that I have emphasized can be assessed—and, accordingly, embraced or rejected— independently of Sorel's views on such things as myth, violence, and 'the ethics of the producers.' There is, in other words, no logical connection between the latter ideas and, say, a defence of the general strike, or a condemnation of parliamentarism.

So understood, Sorel's variety of anarcho-Marxism remains fairly impressive in its own right and, even more importantly, is an indispensable resource for any future endeavour aimed at reconciling or synthesizing Marxism and anarchism (even though this was not Sorel's goal). As regards the latter consideration, the value of Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* is twofold. First, Sorel's book focuses, as we have seen, on a number of questions that are central to any systematic rapprochement between Marxism and anarchism. Second, Sorel's work suggests that a successful reconciliation of Marxism and anarchism—or rather, the development of a defensible anarcho-Marxism—will inevitably involve a return to certain basic political affinities that have been ignored or eclipsed for more than a century. The advocacy of workers' selfemancipation is a case in point: this is, without question, a fundamental commitment for Marxists, but it is surely of no less importance to anarchists.

Sorel contends that his interpretation of Marxism represents a return to the true 'spirit of Marx' (120), but it is clear that this interpretation also yields a theory that proves to have a great deal in common with the 'spirit of anarchism.' If Sorel is correct in claiming that his Marxism is indeed faithful to the essential elements of Marx's teaching, then 'the spirit of Marxism' turns out to be much closer to 'the spirit of anarchism' than most Marxists and anarchists tend to realize. Is Sorel right? Considering what is at stake in the answer to this question, Marxists and anarchists alike would do well to (re-)acquaint themselves with Georges Sorel's *Reflections on Violence.*

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Victor Serge — A Man of Our Time

Suzi Weissman[1]

Victor Serge: From the Defeated Past to the Expectant Future

In the wake of the collapse of the USSR "statism" was roundly attacked east and west. This was the free market offensive that was pushed during the 1990s and the first part of the new century. Under attack were the bureaucratized former Soviet bloc economies to be sure, but anti-statist reforms were also imposed to dismantle social democratic gains everywhere. Not content with these ideological victories, the free marketeers went after the crony capitalist regimes in the Far East, chaebol and otherwise. Privatization, free trade, and free markets became the buzzwords of the day. Anarchism on the right and left seemed to dominate the discourse. No longer: the world-wide economic slump/epic recession/depression awakened the sense that governments could provide some form of security. This point resonates more in the US than in social democratic Europe, however much welfare provisions were weakened during the decades of free market euphoria. A safety net still exists in much of Europe, while it was largely shredded in the US. This new political conjuncture colors the form opposition takes, making the question posed by this volume — Is Black and Red Dead? -all the more relevant.

So how does Victor Serge fit into this debate and why do I insist that he is a man for our time?

Victor Serge had an enormous impact on the developing consciousness of revolutionary Marxists, libertarians and anarchists all over the world. He was the best known Trotskyist of his time, though his relationship with the Trotskyist movement was contentious. Just to mention Serge conjures up the poetic, active expression of an era. He was with the revolutionary Marxists who refused to surrender to the Stalinist counter-revolution and who struggled so that their ideas would escape Stalin's attempt to exterminate them. It is this that makes his work so powerful. Serge has been called the poet, the bard, the journalist and the historian of the Left Opposition.[2] He was also its conscience.

Like his Left Oppositionist comrades, Serge was marginalized by history precisely because he rejected capitalism as well as Stalinism. His contribution is attractive today because he never compromised his commitment to the creation of a society that defends human freedom, enhances human dignity and improves the human condition. Serge lived in the maelstrom of the first half of the 20th Century, but his ideas have contemporary relevance in the post-Soviet, post Cold War world of the early 21st century.

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[2] He is identified as the Bard of the LO by Richard Greeman; the journalist of the LO by Ernest Mandel; the Historian of the LO by Susan Weissman.

Serge: Our Contemporary

As the 20th Century drew to a close, the Soviet Union collapsed and with it the colossal battle of ideas it provoked nearly disappeared from public discourse. How could the ideas and struggles that Serge represented, now deemed passe, resonate anew?

With the demise of Stalinism, the victors of the Cold War proclaim there is no alternative to Western style capitalist democracy, even as inequalities deepen and religious nationalists resort to terror. With all the insecurity and uncertainty of our time of grotesque inequality and reactionary response, a new generation has taken to the streets demanding a better world, and what is more, insisting that it is possible. As one sorts through the intellectual and political disputes of the disastrous Soviet experience, one is struck by the voice and testimony of Victor Serge, which stand out for their probity, rigor and deeply human concerns. His works address the paramount and still unresolved important issues of the day: human liberty, autonomy, and dignity. He belonged to a revolutionary generation that sought to create a society sufficient to meet these human goals. They failed, but he spent the rest of his life describing their attempt and analyzing the defeat. For that reason his work merits republication, analysis, interpretation, and above all, *rescue.*

While Victor Serge wrote of the time he lived through, his thinking is relevant for the struggles we face. Reacquainting ourselves with Serge can help us imagine — and hopefully create — the future.

Victor Serge died at age 57 in 1947. In that brief lifespan he participated in three revolutions, spent a decade in captivity, published more than thirty books and left behind a substantial archive of unpublished work. He was born into one political exile, died in another, and was politically active in seven countries. His life was spent in permanent political opposition. Serge opposed capitalism — first as an anarchist, then as a Bolshevik. He opposed Bolshevism's undemocratic practices and then opposed Stalin as a Left Oppositionist. He argued with Trotsky from within the anti-Stalinist left; and he opposed fascism and capitalism's Cold War as an unrepentant revolutionary Marxist. He was a revolutionary novelist and historian. Though he is still little known in the former Soviet Union, he was one of the most lucid observers of its early political developments, chronicling in his many works its brutal departure from the ideals of the revolution of 1917.

Serge's political experience led him not to renounce socialism once Stalin had triumphed, but to bring to it a declaration of human rights, enriching socialist goals. He opposed the one party system, declaring as early as 1918 and again in 1923 that a coalition government, although fraught with dangers, would have been less dangerous than what was to transpire under Stalin's dictatorship of the secretariat and the secret police. His proposals for economic reform included 'workers democracy' and a 'communism of associations' instead of rigid, top-down, anti-democratic 'plans.' Serge was never guilty of an ahistorical analysis, and he realized the choices facing the Bolsheviks after the Civil War were few. Not seeing what lay ahead, they feared the revolution could be drowned in blood by reactionary forces. Too many of their decisions were influenced by party patriotism.

Reading Serge's body of work on the USSR is indispensable for anyone who wants to get a feel for the atmosphere of the 1920's and 30s inside the Soviet Union and the Communist movement, and he spelled out the dilemmas of the 1940s with a sense of immediacy and clarity. This contributes to his current appeal — because he literally recalls another world. In fact rescuing Serge

from obscurity helps recapture a vital sense of history, one that salvages what should always have been a truism — that democracy is a crucial component of socialism.

Serge's early influences were anarchist. His parents were Russian anarcho- populists from the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will); his uncle was executed for his participation in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. Serge's parents had to flee their native Russia when the repression following the assassination completely broke the organization (Narodnaya Volya.) Thus, Serge was born in exile in Belgium and spent his early years there (and in London). He wrote in his *Memoirs* that his parents' house in Brussels was a gathering place for other anarchist exiles, and on the walls hung portraits of executed anarchists. It is no wonder that his early political commitment was anarchist.

To understand Serge's political journey, context is critical. Serge was born in 1890. At age 15 he first joined the Belgian Young Socialists. He moved toward anarchism in disgust and impatience: the Belgian social democrats were simply opportunistic, corrupt and stuck in electoral politics. More importantly, it was 1905, the year that saw the birth of the Wobblies, path-breaking discoveries, and gigantic struggles. The General Strike in Russia spread to Finland, there were strike waves in France, Belgium, Germany and beyond. Serge and his young comrades were animated by this surge of struggle which put the reformism of the Belgian social democrats in even starker light. They were attracted to the actions as well as the passions of the strikers in Petrograd and elsewhere. Looking at Belgium, Serge became disillusioned with the social democratic leaders, as well as the masses who lacked the heroic militancy he saw in Russia. He and his friends moved to anarchist individualism. His early anarchism was an extension of his boyhood friendships and his commitment to liberty and action, as well as his disgust with the stodgy social democratic misleaders of his time.

Serge's early conviction was that of an individualist anarchist, but he 'graduated' from the individualist and even illegalist views to that of anarcho-syndicalism and from there to Bolshevism. This all took place from 1909–1917.

Just to read a sampling of Serge's work affirms that he was an active anarchist, but it is also clear that he was open-minded and adventurous. He experimented with vegetarianism, lived in an anarchist commune, and his childhood friends were involved in the infamous Bonnot gang, as was Serge, at least intellectually. Serge did not accept, nor ever submit himself and his action to the dictates of any authority. He changed, as did a generation by the actuality of the first socialist revolution, the Russian Revolution.

In the dock in 1913 at the sensational political trial of the infamous Bonnot gang (the social bandits of pre-war France who were ruthlessly repressed), Serge kept solidarity while drawing the distinction between anarchism and 'illegalism.' Though part of the Bonnot gang, Serge (still going by the name Kibalchich then) was a propagandist rather than a bandit. When the verdicts came in Serge was sentenced to five years in solitary as the intellectual ringleader. Even during this period Serge wrote (signing his articles "Le Retif" or the stubborn one) that his multiple political commitments of the time demonstrated his growing ambivalence with individualism and his attraction to the developing revolutionary ferment in Russia. He argued he was moving from individualism to social action. From 1908 on Serge wrote against the ill-advised, even mad

violence and futile tactics and ideals of the Bonnot bandits. In the *Memoirs* Serge described their descent into violence as "a kind of madness" and "like a collective suicide."[3]

Serge conceded that at the time "we wanted to be revolutionaries; we were only rebels." It was in fact the five years in prison, plus his fifteen months in the concentration camp at Precigne where he was in a Bolshevik study circle that Serge reflected, studied seriously and grew politically. By his own admission he considered anarchism a dead end as early as 1913, but did not make the move to Bolshevism for another five years. In Spain in 1917 Serge left behind his anarcho-individualism, participated in the syndicalist uprising, took on the name Victor Serge and then began his journey to his never-seen homeland, the Russia of revolution.

He never looked back: he didn't try some impossible mix of anarchism and Bolshevism, he became a Bolshevik and then a Left Oppositionist. Not only did he break with anarchism, he wrote in "l'anarchisme" that beginning with Bakunin the anarchist movement had its share of authoritarian and intolerant characters[4] and that anarchists fail to recognize the necessity of large industrial organization, the importance of political power in social struggles, the complexity of social development and the impossibility of building an equitable and free society without passing through diverse phases of transition. Its doctrine, Serge noted, is idealist and completely utopianist.[5]

Beginning in 1918 Serge took it upon himself, as an anarchist turned Bolshevik to persuade his anarchist comrades to support the Bolsheviks. Serge himself writes a critique of the anarchists later, mentioned above. He was a man of action, but even more a man of letters: that is his dual character, and we know of Serge because of the literary legacy he has left us.

Serge himself was a worker, and spent his entire life in poverty. He worked in printshops and was a member of the printers union in Spain. He also worked as a copyeditor, and translator. He had no need to 'glorify' the working class, nor did he hold back when he was disappointed in missed opportunities by the class. As a writer, he was committed to "expressing to men what most of them live inwardly without being able to express, as a means of communion, a testimony to the vast flow of life through us, whose essential aspects we must try to fix for the benefit of those who will come after us."[6]

Serge's journey from 'black' to 'red' followed the momentous historical cleavages of the day: war, revolution, civil war. He arrived in the Soviet Union in the frozen winter of January 1919, the country engulfed in Civil War. He chose sides, joining with the revolution and the Bolsheviks, though already alarmed that the vibrant instruments of soviet democracy were being shut down and red terror matched the ferocious terror of the whites. Totalitarianism hardly existed as a word, but it was emergent in post-Civil War Russia. Serge's eyes were wide open, and he sensed the dangers to come, was torn by the distance between theory and reality, the growth of privilege and bureaucracy. Like Lenin and Trotsky, Serge understood the giant obstacles that stood in the way of socialist development in backward Russia, yet also understood that history provided few

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[3] *Memoirs,* p. 34. Serge wrote a novel about the pre-war anarchist movement in France *Les Hommes perdus* which was confiscated in the Soviet Union. It has never been recovered.

[4] While recognizing that even the anarchist movement was populated with authoritarian figures, from Bakunin to Makhno, Serge saw the essence of anarchism as the absence of authority; but authoritarianism can exist among those who oppose authority. Serge, *L'Anarchisme,* unpublished essay [#8], written in the forties (no date provided), Serge archives.

[5] Serge archive, no date, archive essay #8.

[6] *Ibid.*

alternatives — and Serge decided that Bolshevism was "tremendously and visibly right. It marked a new point of departure in history."[7] Capitalism seemed finished, if not suicidal after World War I. The inter-war period was so unstable that the survival of civilization was in question if capitalism was not transformed. Yet in the young Soviet Union the promises of the revolution were being abandoned. Serge wrote:

> Over all our achievements there hung a death-sentence; since for all of us, for our ideals, for the new justice that was proclaimed, for our new collective economy. Still in its infancy, defeat would have brought a peremptory death and after that, who knows what? I thought of the Revolution as a tremendous sacrifice that was required for the future's sake; and nothing seemed to me more essential than to sustain, or rescue, the spirit of liberty within it.[8]

Serge belonged to a critically minded and intelligent group of old Bolsheviks[9] who resolutely resisted totalitarianism, a large group he insisted was right at the heart of Bolshevism.[10] They fought a losing battle because of Stalin's stranglehold on all forms of political and organizational expression. Serge believed the solution lay in pushing for a revival of the soviets as an arena of free political activity. Instead the entire current of old Bolsheviks was slaughtered, and any hope of socialist revival died with them.

This experience of defeat informed all of Serge's thinking, writing and activity. He warned all along of the inherent dangers of a 'totalitarian way of thinking' — based not on looking for truth, but on conducting a political fight. This method, Serge reminded us, developed under the weight of the Stalinist machine which engaged in a distortion of thought, fraud and massacres so monstrous as to be unimaginable.

Defeat, Renewal and Democracy — the heart of socialism

Stalin was insecure in power and became obsessed with obliterating opposition at home and abroad. It may seem surprising that he concentrated such fury and zeal in hunting down the rather small number of Trotskyists and oppositionists who challenged his rule in far left journals and organizations in the West in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The mighty effort to extinguish the small flames of defiance seems out of proportion to other tasks at hand, like preparing for war. But Marxist critics like Trotsky and Serge were not just a thorn in Stalin's side, but a moral reproach to his rule. Better to silence them, to prevent their voices from finding large audiences. Trotsky was assassinated in August 1940, but Serge survived and continued to write in profusion. His final essays and thoughts were devoted completely to analyzing the features of the post-war period and to his insight that socialism would have to undergo a renewal in order to remain relevant.

Yet before Trotsky was assassinated there were four years that both Trotsky and Serge were in the West and could collaborate. Think of the power of their combined voices and cogent writings

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[7] *Memoirs,* p. 114.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Serge was referring to the revolution and civil war generation of Bolsheviks, those schooled in making a revolution and fighting for its survival.

[10] Victor Serge to Sidney Hook, 10 July 1943.

! Stalin had erred in expelling them both: perhaps he hadn't imagined that in exile they would challenge every aspect of his betrayals and murders. Trotsky led a sustained fight against Stalin since his expulsion in 1929, exposing his crimes to the world. In 1936 Serge joined Trotsky in exile, another Bolshevik with an eloquent voice and pen who had stood with Trotsky since 1923 could now fortify the fight against Stalin's crimes. How tragic then, that these anti-Stalinist voices were divided, that their relationship became acrimonious.

Trotsky's assassination was a terrible blow to the followers of his thought everywhere. Those who were inspired by the example of the Russian Revolution lacked the experience Trotsky's revolutionary generation had in organizing, building and making a successful revolution. As a consequence there was a theoretical and organizational dependence that naturally developed and was profoundly affected by Trotsky's death. In some ways revolutionary thinking was frozen in the 1940 mindset.

Serge was a vital link to that generation, even though he arrived on the Soviet scene just after the first year in January 1919. Stalin's GPU agents were active in promoting divisions among the International Left Opposition militants and Victor Serge was a victim of their dirty, divisive work.[11] But political differences and organizational practices were also responsible for straining his relations with Trotsky.[12] Serge took part in the Fourth International though he found the internal atmosphere stifling and "could not detect [in the FI] the hope of the Left Opposition in Russia for a renewal of the ideology, morals and institutions of Socialism."[13] Serge was convinced that "Socialism too had to renew itself in the world of today, and that this must take place through the jettisoning of the authoritarian, intolerant tradition of turn-of-the-century Russian Marxism."

These perceptions put Serge at odds with the Trotskyist movement in the West: Here was a talented, compelling Left Oppositionist, the best known Trotskyist in many intellectual circles, yet his unorthodox approach was criticized by Trotsky and Trotskyists and caused much grief for Serge, isolating him from the very movement — the Left Opposition — that he had devoted so many years to and at such risk.

From Serge's 'present' to ours

In several of the essays Serge wrote in the last years of his life, he looked forward from the defeats inflicted by Stalinism and Fascism and called for a renewal of socialism. Sixty years later the call remains unanswered. As the post Cold War era struggles for definition and the world faces a

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[11] Although the GPU (State Political Directorate) was transformed into the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) in 1934, it was often still called the GPU.

[12] For a detailed discussion of their political differences see Susan Weissman, "Kronstadt and the Fourth International," in *The Serge-Trotsky Papers,* Edited by David Cotterill, Pluto Press, 1994, pp. 150191.

[13] "I recalled, for use against Trotsky himself, a sentence of astounding vision which he had written in 1914 I think: 'Bolshevism may very well be an excellent instrument for the conquest of power, but after that it will reveal its counter-revolutionary aspects...' I came to the conclusion that our Opposition had simultaneously contained two opposing lines of significance. For the great majority ... it meant resistance to totalitarianism in the name of the democratic ideals expressed at the beginning of the Revolution; for a number of our Old Bolshevik leaders it meant, on the contrary, the defence of doctrinal orthodoxy which, while not excluding a certain tendency towards democracy, was authoritarian through and through. These two mingled strains had, between 1923 and 1928 surrounded Trotsky's vigorous personality with a tremendous aura. If, in his exile from the USSR, he had made himself the ideologist of a renewed socialism, critical in outlook and fearing diversity less than dogmatism, perhaps he would have attained a new greatness." Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary,* pp. 348–350.

bleak landscape of competing religious nationalisms, the virtual collapse of Finance capital and devastating economic crisis, the renewal of socialism seems more urgent than ever.

Reviewing the issues that preoccupied Serge's thinking in these dark years yields much to reclaim for the present day, even though the context of his time is radically different from the 'present' we inhabit. Serge was writing during WWII and the immediate post-war environment, before the Cold War began.[14] How could he have imagined the end of the USSR, the decline of social democracy, the neo-liberals, neo- cons and the rise of obscurantist religious terrorists? Yet the tendencies he noted and the questions he asked in their regard are relevant. On this note Serge proved prescient: if an historically conscious collectivism did not successfully challenge the totalitarian collectivism of Stalinism and fascism, it would mean the end of socialism for a whole era.

Serge held that the axioms from the Russian Revolution were no longer adequate. Writing in 1943, he observed that everything — science, production, social movements and intellectual currents — all had changed. History permitted apparent stability only to religious dogmas. An intellectual rearmament was necessary. As Serge noted, "the poverty of traditional socialism coincides … with the immense revolutionary crisis of the modern world that has unavoidably put on the order of the day… independently of the action of socialism — the problem of a social reorganization oriented toward the rational and the just."[15] Serge couldn't emphasize strongly enough that the socialist movement had to break free from its fossilized thinking, and that the terrible new conditions demanded a new approach — dialectical thought combined with political action, a form of active humanism.

Serge was grappling with new uncertainties, frustrated by the inability of socialists to think creatively in their attempts to interpret the new world conjuncture. The USSR represented a new force in the world that was neither capitalist nor socialist, but altered the nature of class struggle in the world. It was now an obstacle to socialism, exerting a negative influence on all current struggles. We have yet to recover from its damage.

It was sobering to realize that collectivism was not synonymous with socialism (as Serge and his comrades had previously thought) and could in fact be anti-socialist, demonstrating new forms of exploitation. The world had changed, and the old theories didn't explain the role of Stalinist expansion. Stalin drowned socialism in blood, creating a terrible system that became equated with Marxism. The intellectual weakness of the socialist movement (sapped of its energies by the formidable Stalinist machine) could only be remedied by an "epoch of uprising."[16]

We are ostensibly entering that epoch of uprising, however uneven its 'eruptions.' Unemployed immigrant youth rebelled in confusion, anger and frustration, bereft of the intellectual armor required in France in 2005, while super-exploited immigrant labor massively demonstrated in the United States in 2006. By 2008 the world financial system virtually collapsed, though swift intervention in the form of bailouts prevented capitalism from going under. Reeling from the

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[14] Serge's thinking about post WWII economic and political development was shaped by the terrible experience of the twin totalitarianisms of fascism and Stalinism. The condition of humanity had been worsened by these regimes: the working class movement was deeply damaged by Fascism, and Stalinism threatened the fate of socialism everywhere. Neither labor militancy in the west nor the colonial revolution in the east raised his spirits so long as the Soviet Union was in a position to crush revolutionary movements to its left and channel the others into anti-imperialist national liberation struggles that would lead to an extension of Soviet totalitarianism, a far cry from socialism. See Victor Serge, *Carnets,* (Actes Sud, 1985), p. 181.

[15] "Necesidad de una renovacion del Socialismo," *Mundo, Libertad y Socialismo,* Mexico, junio de 1943.

[16] "Pour un Renouvellement du Socialisme," *Masses/Socialisme et Liberte* (no. 3, juin 1946).

blows of joblessness and insecurity the workers' response has been tepid at best, atomized and overshadowed in the US by extreme right-wing so-called populist rage. The Greek youth rebellion of Christmas 2008, the boss-nappings in France are signs that creative social revolt is on the order of the day, though it hardly means the end of capitalism, just bright spots along the way. Yet the hope persists that the economy and society can be organized to serve humanity and the community — not the reverse.

Serge misjudged the tendencies he noted, believing the world was in transition away from capitalism under the influence of the Soviet Union. Unlike other thinkers of the time, Serge did not proclaim socialism a failure, but called for its rebirth. He insisted the aims must be for a society that guarantees human freedom — in the interests of more than just the working masses, for all of humanity. Democracy must mean democracy of work; liberty must mean personal and political freedom.

We are far from realizing these goals, yet ever more people are posing the need to achieve them. The release in 2009 of Michael Moore's film "Capitalism, A Love Story" calls for capitalism to be replaced by 'democracy,' a democracy that includes economic democracy. The debasement of the very language of liberation by the Stalinist regimes posing as socialists requires, it seems, euphemisms for socialism.

However difficult the present may seem, it is salient to recall the situation of Left Oppositionists like Serge who survived the '30s when they were hounded by the NKVD and the Gestapo, and who rejected both Stalinism and the Cold War liberalism of capitalism. Serge cautioned that negativism is an attitude, not a solution. All we have left is intelligence, that is, knowledge and technique, and an inner impulse for a more dignified life. In response to the many socialists who had reverted to Christian mysticism or to those who retreated to individual acts of conscience, Serge noted that scruples and the courage of conscience are absolute necessities, but have no social value unless conjoined with action that is persevering, general and draws in the greatest numbers. That was in 1945, but could have been written for today. Serge concluded that a progressive movement is needed.[17]

Not just any progressive movement, but one that had a sense of history and recognized that democracy — control from below — is essential. Again, what was true then remains so today. The Stalinist scourge nearly eradicated the notion that socialism is full democracy, and rendered it equivalent in the popular mind with anti-democracy.

Much of what Serge wrote is the product of his efforts to come to grips with a world where totalitarianism and totalitarian collectivism, as he called it, dominated both the Soviet Union and, increasingly, Western Europe. At war's end, with fascism defeated and Stalinism surviving, Serge was left to survey the landscape, to map the contours of the world in process of becoming. Of course he couldn't see past the period he lived in, and his vision proved wrong for the most part. In our present post-Cold War world of decline, Serge's call for a renewal of socialist thinking is long overdue.

The world Serge believed lay ahead does not exist. We live in an era of failed neo-liberalism and cannibalistic finance capital. Specious stability and security are interrupted by uncomfortable reminders of grotesque inequalities and dashed aspirations, by spontaneous riots and mass rebellions, or vile acts of individual terror that wreak havoc and invite repression in the form

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[17] Victor Serge to Dwight Macdonald, 8 October 1945, Macdonald Papers, Yale University Library.

of restricted civil liberties. The surviving super-power — the US — stumbles in anarchic decline seemingly unable and/or

unwilling to respond to catastrophes of the natural, political and economic, except to crack down and attack living standards.[18] The election of Barack Obama brought a sense of relief and unleashed pent-up hope, but promised reforms hardly match the speed of the collapsing economy and increasingly volatile climactic conditions.

Stalinism and the Cold War were disastrous for socialism. The left remains marginal in the West and religious fundamentalism grips much of the Middle East where the left was systematically repressed, killed or forced into exile. What, then, of Serge's thinking is relevant for the present we ourselves inhabit and the future we face? What can be salvaged from his writings, given so much has changed?

For Serge the struggle to renew required creative thought, but also fealty to the principles of democracy, liberty, free inquiry, and in general, the conditions to enhance human dignity. For us, it also requires a commitment to full democracy. In the post-Cold War world ailing parliamentary democracy has been degraded beyond restitution. Today the struggle for democracy is a direct struggle for new forms of democratic decision-making, exercised locally from below — call it 'genuine' or 'authentic' democracy, but in a word it is the struggle for socialism. Democracy is not an accessory of the revolutionary process; it is at the heart of the socialist project. Socialism without democracy isn't socialism.

Democracy and Socialism

Looking back at what happened to soviet democracy — socialist democracy — in the Soviet Union is instructive, given the influence that the Russian revolution has had on all subsequent revolutionary struggles. The problem for the Bolsheviks was that their commitment to democracy from below was underdeveloped and then sacrificed by the dire conditions during the civil war and the threat of reaction. Stalin obliterated the issue completely in later years.[19] As much as we scrutinize the Russian revolutionary experience, it is of limited utility for the present — the specific conditions they faced do not exist and won't be repeated.

The Soviets did not live up to their promise as institutions of democratic control, and they survived the Civil War in name only. Reviving the Soviets in the situation of the 1920s was not a high priority, despite the Left Opposition's critique of growing bureaucratization and the stifling of democracy in the Party. The issue of democracy in the society as a whole was rarely addressed. Serge raised the issue of revitalizing political parties and political life, yet even while demanding democracy both in and out of the party, Serge admitted that after 1921 "everybody that aspires to socialism is inside the party; what remains outside isn't worth much for the social transformation." This explains to some degree their concentration on inner-party democracy rather than on revitalizing democratic institutions for the society at large. This presented a contradiction for the Bolsheviks who recognized that the soviets were both the tool of the proletariat in the revolutionary process and the form of transition to socialism: internationalism was more important to them than ensuring the survival of democracy. Socialism *is* control from below and soviets in

[18] 9/11, Hurricane Katrina 2005, financial meltdown 2008–9.

[19] For a fuller discussion, see Susan Weissman, "Disintegrating Democracy: From the Promise of the 1905 Soviet to Corrupt Democratic Forms," *Critique 41,* April 2007, pp. 103–117.

theory are the instrument. But the Bolsheviks in power in the 1920s were less concerned with soviet democracy than with the danger of capitalist restoration. The revolution was under siege: the SRs took up arms against the Bolsheviks, and the suppression of the Kronstadt revolt was the last straw for the anarchists. The Bolsheviks hadn't intended to rule alone, but they only trusted themselves to understand the nature of the struggle for socialism in the world — no other political party saw the importance of the extension of the revolution as the only way they could survive, so Lenin and Trotsky didn't trust the others to rule with them. With the Bolsheviks representing the majority in the soviets, the locus of activity shifted to what they saw as the more important political arena of the Party. So the contradictions residing in creating vibrant revolutionary institutions of democratic control from below were evident from the outset.

The question of forms, however, is still important. The promise of socialism was of a *genuine* democracy with soviets or councils as the organizational form. Workers would be the masters of their destiny: people would organize collectively, at every level from bottom to top to become the masters of their work, their lives and their fate. The Russian revolution held out the promise of socialism, but it was doomed by its isolation and dashed by the rise of Stalin.

Given the huge influence the experience of the Russian revolution had on revolutionaries everywhere thereafter, the particular circumstances that choked democracy in the USSR were overlooked while the authoritarian model was generalized. The marker of a healthy revolution — organs of democratic control from below as an integral part of a successful revolution and transition — was relegated to rhetoric, not reality.

The few successful revolutions after the Russian revolution developed as copies of the Stalinized Soviet Union: bureaucratic, authoritarian, anti-democratic and often nationalist societies with little resemblance to socialism. Yet in the post-war (WWII) West, democratic advances were being won by socialists in the labor movement, in effect enhancing democracy. Serge recognized that "socialism has only been able to grow within bourgeois democracy (of which it was a large extent the creator)"[20] and cautioned that further advances were only possible through utmost intransigence against Stalinism and capitalist conservatism. He understood that this principled fight would be a revolutionary one.

It may seem paradoxical that the Soviet Union crushed democracy at home and betrayed the revolution's promise — yet that promise influenced democratic reforms in the industrialized capitalist countries. Important elements of a more advanced political democracy, such as universal franchise, representative democracy, free speech and other basic rights, were won and conceded to in response to the existence of the Soviet Union and to contain radicalism at home.

The democratic gains of the second half of the 20th Century, brought by the labor, Civil rights and the women's movements significantly deepened democracy leading to substantial changes in advanced industrial democracies without appreciably deepening the struggle for "economic democracy" or further specific workers rights.[21]

These reforms strengthened democracy, but cut into the profitability of capitalism. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the social democratic concessions were less necessary, and increasingly difficult to deliver in the age of finance capital. Perhaps it is no

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[20] *Carnets,* 10 Dec. 1944, p. 182

[21] Workers individual rights have improved, winning protection from discrimination at work, but at the expense of union rights and protections — which have been eroded and often exist in name only. For a nuanced discussion of the relationship of rights consciousness to the labor movement (in the U.S.) see Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor,* (Princeton University Press, 2002), chapter 5.

surprise then that the collapse of the Soviet Union hastened the decline of social democracy. At the same time, we are seeing the hollowing out of bourgeois democracy, perhaps nowhere more pronounced than in the United States itself. It is caricatured in the so-called new democracies of the former Soviet bloc and in occupied Iraq. The promise of democracy is potent and even risky. More and more people demand the genuine article, not managed electoral shams — as we have seen in the continued so-called colored revolutions ousting leaders who cheated their way to power in fraudulent elections, or even the rage and hope galvanized by the Obama election in the US.

The 21st Century began with the pessimism of TINA (there is no alternative), while the clarion call of the anti-globalization activists is that 'another world is possible.' The disintegration of the USSR left in its wake revulsion and rejection of statist solutions and has provoked a resurgence of vague pro-anarchist sentiments evident in social movements left and right. The reaction in the former Soviet Union (FSU) was hardly surprising given the power of its state over every aspect of people's lives. More surprising perhaps is that the yearning for a time of order and security has made the time of Stalin seem desirable in comparison. (This requires not rose-colored glasses, but a denial of history !)

The intellectual rearmament Serge called for has not occurred. If anything, more confusion rather than less reigns today, in this period of generalized attack on living standards and democratic rights. Reaction to these class-based policies has given rise to nostalgia for the nation-state, as if it were a benign structure the forces of globalization and Wall Street have undermined. As workers vainly look to the nation state for protection against the forces of globalizing capital, they are demanding that the state conserve the social democratic benefits won through years of struggle. But social democracy in effect was capitalism=s response to the Russian Revolution, and as the USSR imploded social democracy also fell into decline.

Despite the advances that have been won, the labor and socialist movements have been weakened in the age of finance capital and this is directly tied to the decline of bourgeois democracy. In the US, government efficiency is an oxymoron, bureaucratic rigidity gets in the way of delivering relief and the actual exercise of democracy is hugely tainted by corruption and vast infusions of money.

Authentic democracy — control from below — requires a sufficient level of understanding and education, and is impossible if money has influence in the process. In many ways the struggle for this bottom up democracy is a revolutionary struggle that involves coming up with better forms than the soviets promised: getting real democracy means getting revolutionary. We can't presume in advance what forms the working class will take when it acts for itself. The political form will be determined by the struggle itself, though without control from below in a society that is progressively eliminating the division of labor, and has a high level of education and participation, substantive democracy remains but a dream.

In 1943 Victor Serge wrote that "we are prisoners of social systems worn to the point of breakdown," and he lamented that even the clear-sighted are half-blind, filled with confused hopes. What was true mid-20th century is also true today. The renewal of socialism depends on our discarding all the remnants of Stalinism, rejecting the corrupting divisions of capitalism, and recapturing the daring and imagination of the revolutionaries of the early 20th Century. In this respect black and red are not dead. To be socially effective requires lucidity, courage, and hope. Serge would also remind us not to lose sight of the irrepressible human impulse for freedom, dignity and autonomy.

Beyond the Rainbow: Overcoming Dogma and Confusion in the Articulation of Revolutionary Theory and Practice

Larry Portis

Overcoming Dogma and Confusion in Revolutionary Theory and Practice: Red and Black in Historical Perspective

A central question in contemporary revolutionary thinking is how to draw the best from past experience while overcoming political reflexes tied to debates that no longer (or should no longer) exist. Historical knowledge is absolutely necessary for informed thinking and acting, but partial historical understanding can perpetuate doctrinal disputes that further limit and rigidify perspectives. At the same time, partial knowledge of individual motivations— especially our own—can amplify the effects of the ignorance and confusion in which everyone participates in some way.

From this perspective, it is necessary to confront the motive bases of dogma and confusion. By dogma I mean defined and received certainties that are often founded in personal insecurities but projected onto perceived adversaries or heretics. Confusion may be best defined as misunderstandings that arise from either lack of knowledge or understanding, and that tend to be reinforced by individual interests and their conscious or unconscious defence. The history of the "Red and Black"[1] current of political praxis—theory and practice—is perhaps the best example of how dogma and confusion have limited the effectiveness of revolutionary struggle since the mid-nineteenth century.

The "Red and Black" refers to a revolutionary political current or tendency defined in relation to what is generally taken to be, on the one hand, "Marxism" and, on the other, "anarchism." And here is much of the problem: a supposed conflict between two doctrinal tendencies has largely hidden from view the existence of an alternative current that has attempted to draw upon all expressions of transcendent social philosophy and action. There is, indeed, a fundamental division of the revolutionary movement, but it is a division that exists artificially in that it has been willed into existence and has obstructed perception and knowledge of alternatives. There is, in fact, no reason to juxtapose in a binary way what Red and Black represent. In reality, there is no implicit contradiction in a nuanced synthesis of the most directly democratic and egalitarian ideas and practices called into existence by opposition to the industrial capitalist system.

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[1] The colours red and black have concrete historical foundations of symbols of political and social struggle, but we should not ignore the reductionism and even regimentation that such symbols may reinforce. To reduce the interplay of competing or converging political tendencies to physical properties is, in my estimation, too reminiscent of spectator sports and the emotional conditioning that characterize them.

Historical origins

This division of the revolutionary left into "Marxist" and "anarchist" camps might be called the "Great Misunderstanding." As it is well known, the idea and reality of such a division emerged during the latter half of the nineteenth century, splitting the movement calling for a free, egalitarian social relations into two parts, each with its own symbols, hallowed texts and authority figures. The backdrop of this antagonism—called the "Great Schism" by James Joll—long preceded the clash between the "Marxists" and the "Bakuninists" in the early 1870s. The political strife manifest during the establishment of the First International Working Men's Association was perhaps an inevitable development rooted in the multifaceted reaction against the growth of industrial capitalism that is most largely conceived of within the context of the Romantic Movement.

In other words, it was the "humanistic" rejection, on both emotional and intellectual grounds, of the de-humanizing civilization and mentalities produced by capitalist social relations that most fundamentally gave rise to modern revolutionary movements. Such activity expressed a will to go beyond existing social and mental structures towards those that would somehow liberate human creative potential and facilitate the "pursuit of human happiness." In North America, for example, this general movement was rightly called "transcendentalist."

To "transcend," to accede to a qualitatively different state of being, is to realize revolutionary change. Throughout the nineteenth century, the social revolutionary dimension of this impulse became progressively more evident, and it was given inspiration and formulation by thinkers of the European Enlightenment of the previous century—Jean- Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, William Godwin, G.W.F. Hegel and others. However, ideas are one thing, and the realization of them is another. Attempts to realize—to create— free and equal social relations on a practical basis raise the most difficult questions of all.

The split between the Red and the Black is generally expressed as a disagreement over method, over the political strategy needed to accomplish the real transcendence of the capitalist system of production and the social relations necessary to it. To go beyond the localized experiments in communal living and working that were rightly (if derisively) called by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels "utopian socialism"[2] implied the destruction of "actually existing" capitalism.

Genesis and evolution of the Great Misunderstanding

The thinkers at the origins of the Red and Black agreed as to the ultimate expression of transcendence of the capitalist mode of production and its corresponding civilisation. But the way of transcendence was the problem. Even then, however, when Marx and Engels spoke of the "dictatorship" of the proletariat, it was not because they approved dictatorship as a mode of political governance or social control; it was rather to emphasize that the reign of social- class domination must be thoroughly eliminated. When Marx so cruelly ridiculed Pierre- Joseph Proudhon (in the Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy),* it was not to say that Proudhon was an agent of the

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[2] With Karl Mannheim, I would call "utopian" that which refers to the idea and will to realize a yet non existing but desirable condition founded upon the belief in the necessity and possibility of improvement, and opposed to the belief that what exists must be preserved against such attempts at fundamental change. See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia.*

capitalist system, but rather to expose how what he perceived as idealist confusion is a dangerous foundation for an anti-capitalist revolutionary movement.

Still, we know that the conflict was more than this, even if these are its principled, philosophcal bases. If Marx believed that a proletarian revolution would be liberation from wage slavery and class domination, and if he dedicated his life to the struggle for this liberation, it is nevertheless clear that his personality was that of an authoritarian. And it is important to say it because, firstly, his authoritarian cast of mind combined with the perception that working-class revolution was imminent gave rise to the centralized, exclusionary power relations that Marx promoted in the First International. Secondly, in response, Mikhail Bakunin opposed what he called Marx's "authoritarian communism" with what is, in effect, "libertarian socialism"—the idea that only the creation of autonomous, local administrative bodies can ensure *non* coercive social relations. For Bakunin, the strategy and tactics of revolutionary struggle must *directly*, that is to say immediately, contribute to the creation of non-authoritarian social relations.

What is remarkable to me, and I believe it relates fundamentally to our perception of the "red and black" current of revolutionary struggle, is how this split between the so-called "Marxists" and the so-called "Anarchists" has persisted to the present day. "Marxism" continues to be synonymous with authoritarian political practice, not only in the delusion of capitalist ideologists but also in the rhetoric of far-too-many self-proclaimed anarchists. This is the case in spite of the fact that Bakunin repeatedly expressed his greatest admiration for Marx's analysis of the capitalist system in all its aspects. Bakunin, at least, was an anarchist who knew how to distinguish between theory and practice. But this confusion between the analytical, theoretical corpus of Marx's intellectual work, on the one hand, and, on the other, his organizational intrigues, created unnecessary, but long-lasting barriers within the revolutionary movement. And the confusion between anti-capitalist analysis and political practice quickly congealed into sectarian ideologies.

There have been many prominent and less-prominent individuals who resisted the red or black dichotomy, and this resistance has been given important organisational expression. The will to transcend invidious notions limiting revolutionary struggle has, for example, been evident in the revolutionary syndicalism and more particularly in the Confederation generale du travail, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo (CNT), in council communism, and in the work of "affinity groups" and "consensus" decision-making within some of the "new social movements," especially those associated with radical environmental groups and anti "globalisation" in general.

More broadly, however, it may be best to think of the history of the "Red and Black"—or "libertarian socialism" or "libertarian communism" or "anarcho-communism"—as a struggle within a struggle. There are two important questions in this regard. The first is: how and why has libertarian socialism taken so long to reach a larger militant public? The second is: what are the possibilities for the development of libertarian socialism in the future?

The acceptance of revolutionary libertarian socialism has been countered by two powerful forces: 1) the idea and reality of the nation state; 2) the idea and practice of authoritarian socialism, defined as political organisation adopting hierarchical modes of functioning and decision-making. These latter are most prominently represented by those Leninist ones consequent to the Bolshevik Revolution and the creation of the U.S.S.R. Under the reign of Joseph Stalin, the

idea of "socialism in one country" even combined, in practice at least, an expression of a kind of nationalism with a particular vision of social and political organisation that was called socialism.[3]

However, even before the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia, the possibility of appropriating of existing governance by an "avant-guard" political formation and the subsequent exercise of power was a widely held idea. Marxist dogma about the difference between "utopian socialism" and "scientific socialism" reinforced the expectation. By the same token, the debate between the Marists and the Narodniks in Russia in the 1880s tended to valorise the privileging of "objective," "structural" and, thus, "scientific" factors over the types of human agency privileged by the Russian Populists. In the context of nineteenth- century European culture, the positivistic, "scientistic" character of Marx's intellectual work (but especially that of those people he so influenced—the "Marxists") had a distinct advantage over more prosaically practical or commonsensical visions of revolutionary social change. The practical exigencies of class struggle seemed to require rigorous organisation and discipline, including a clear hierarchy of leadership. This perception lent force to the more authoritarian mind-set seemingly made necessary by the ferocity of the counter-revolutionary forces.[4]

The dominance of authoritarian socialism lasted precisely one century, from the creation of the Second Socialist International to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. As long as the Soviet Union existed, the Third and Fourth Communist internationals remained powerful machines for recruitment and indoctrination in the pursuit of authoritarian revolutionary socialism.

During this century, there was little debate between the proponents of libertarian and authoritarian revolutionary socialism. The Leninists, like Marx, did not attempt to reason with their opponents on the revolutionary Left, but rather worked to destroy them, to discredit them by any and all means. Even *within* Leninist parties, the techniques of humiliation, forced submission, exclusion and, if need be, physical modes of "liquidation" were standard operating procedure. Within such a movement, the "humanistic" impulse was bound to become an object of scorn and relegated to the category of "bourgeois" mentality.

Ideals and authoritarian socialism: Dialectics of "Bad Faith"

Historical developments seem to indicate that hierarchical political structures— revolutionary in intent or not—lead to manipulations and forms of social and political domination. Institutionalized, formalized control over others develops that is invidious to the emergence of healthy social relations.

There is a mechanism here that leads to (or contributes to) what Jean-Paul Sartre called *la mauvaise foi*—that "bad faith" that justifies the use of others for selfish reasons that is masked as altruism. In other words, one's own self-interested motives are transformed, in one's own mind, into the most selfless ideals. They are then presented to others in this guise.

"Bad faith" is not peculiar to the capitalist system or to reactionary politics. It is a psychic mechanism of people who, for a variety of reasons, have not learned to pursue their personal

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[3] This was not only the case in the U.S.S.R. During the last 1930s and 1940s, for example, the Communist Party of the U.S.A. called their orientation "twentieth-century Americanism."

[4] Which is likely the reason Jack London named, in *The Iron Heel* (1907), his quintessential revolutionary Earnest Everhard.

projects or to present themselves as individuals openly, without resorting to misrepresentation. Instead of confronting positively inter-personal differences or interests, this personal weakness is compensated for by the manipulation of others.

It is important to understand that the exercise of bad faith cannot be a totally unconscious process. The major distinction here is that conscious deception is more than hypocrisy; it is lying. In contrast, bad faith is situated somewhere between consciously deceitful, calculated deception (lying) on the one hand, and the hypocritical blindness characteristic of narcissistic egoism on the other. As Sartre says, bad faith is a continual vacillation between self-delusion and the terror of understanding and, consequently, self-reproach.[5] It is this uneasiness, this *malaise,* which reinforces the will to dominate others by any and all means. It is a failure to confront the contradiction between self-interest and professed motivations that produces (or contributes to) the authoritarian pathologies that can be associated with Leninism.[6]

From a phenomenological or psychoanalytical perspective, therefore, we are in the presence of political mechanism produced by the psychic consequences of hierarchical social relations, those inherent in both feudal and capitalist systems. But this type of character formation has the effect of reinforcing non-egalitarian social relations. Character weaknesses and emotional immaturity, involving low self-esteem, passivity and submissiveness to authority, even when compensated for by rebellious poses and attitudes, can lie behind authoritarian casts of mind.

The political consequences of character and personality formation can be a serious problem in political activity and decision-making. Subjectively, and within a "progressive" milieu, the desire to democratise social relations is often used as a means to dominate other people in order to liberate them. Objectively (or "sociologically") speaking, however, the effect is to replicate the existing social relations necessary to the perpetuation of domination and exploitation.

Again, it must be insisted that, on the revolutionary political Left, this will to dominate is rarely cynical. Rather, it is explained *to the self* as well as to others as necessary in the pursuit of a social ideal. But it is a psychic house of cards that is fragile. Bad faith is in continual danger of self-revelation, which is why any attempt to call attention to its weaknesses brings forth the most violent and merciless retaliation. So dominant was this paranoid, desperate and arrogant mindset on the revolutionary political Left that many involved with libertarian socialism have been, also, seriously afflicted by it.

Towards a reassertion of a "Red and Black" revolutionary praxis

After one century of enormous influence over the expression of revolutionary thought and practice in the western industrial capitalist countries, the dominance of authoritarian socialism no longer exists. And this is why the potential for the "Red and Black," for libertarian socialism, is now greater than ever.

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[5] According to Sartre, "there is in fact an 'evanescence' of bad faith" that "vacillates continually between good faith and cynicism" belonging "to the kind of psychic structures which we might call *metastable,* it presents nonetheless an autonomous and durable form. It can even be the normal aspect of life for a very great number of people. A person can *live* in bad faith, which does not mean that he does not have abrupt awakenings to cynicism or to good faith, but which implies a constant and particular style of life." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* translated by Hazel Barnes, New York, Washington Square Press, 1969 [1943], p. 90.

[6] Those evoked in homilies such as "The end justifies the means" or "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."

Over the past several decades, the once strong Communist parties have largely collapsed, and support for other Marxist-Leninist organizations has also dramatically dwindled. In contrast, it is true that, for more than thirty years, the most dynamic critique of capitalism has been, in some way—Green. We have come to understand that environmental destruction is an inescapable sign of the humanly dysfunctional essence of the capitalist system. But the limitations of the environmental, anti-corporate movement are also manifest, and it seems equally clear that environmentalism, as a reform program, is no solution to the problem posed by the capitalist system of production.

What is needed is a generalised recognition of how a non-authoritarian, anti-capitalist perspective has developed over the past century and a half, and how it can offer a solution to the class-based, short-sighted logic inherent in capitalist production. This is the analysis and world view—that drawing from the works of all revolutionary writers and actors who have elucidated and combated this system—that must now be presented as the revolutionary position most capable of inspiring real democratic—libertarian and egalitarian—change. The history and contemporary relevance of this understanding, this existing tradition, must rise out of obscurity, out of the recesses of revolutionary theory and practice, and be shown to be the most ethnically coherent, analytically refined, and socially healthy orientation produced by resistance to the rise and decline of the capitalist system.

This is what we must refer to, but to whom should we refer? We all have contributions to make to this historic task. And we all have ideas about who has been important in the elaboration of libertarian socialism. My experience, partial as it is, has led me to some consider what I believe are important experiences or figures in this movement. Here are a few of them.

First on my short list is William Morris, because his appropriation and active propagation of both Marxian analysis and libertarian principles, on the one hand, and his integration of aesthetic concerns and environmentalist sensitivities is more than relevant to contemporary conditions. Morris' focus on how industrialism capitalism devastated the human habitat for the vast majority of people, and how that devastation contributes to the destruction of human spirituality is, perhaps, a contribution that is far-too-neglected. And it is one that needs greater elaboration. In addition, in my opinion, Morris' *News from Nowhere,* for example, breaks down the invidious distinction between "utopian" and "scientific" socialist perspectives.

Next, my reading of Georges Sorel has convinced me that his contribution to anticapitalist thinking has either been misunderstood or consciously maligned, and that his place in the evolution of the Red and Black is essential. Sorel was one of the earliest to insist, like Marx himself, that there was little in common between Marxian ideas and Marxist dogma, at least concerning revolutionary philosophy. This perception caused him to be one of the first to explore the complex philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of Marx's thought. But it was an effort eclipsed both by slanderous interpretation on the part of capitalist ideologists and by the Bolshevik revolution and its lamentable effect on revolutionary thought in general.

Most importantly, For Georges Sorel, as for William Morris, the object of revolutionary struggle is, or should be, the engendering of values—morality in this sense—that contribute to the acceptance of social solidarity and individual creativity. Egalitarian revolution means overcoming the deference towards authority generated by hierarchy and social-class domination. It means liberation in the Wilhelm-Reichian sense, of a society of psychically free individuals, tolerant of others, recognising their own limitations, and yet confident in their own creative potential.

This stress on the Revolution as a moral transformation—one that forges values through political struggle—can easily be derided as "bourgeois humanism"—which is perhaps why Goerge Orwell referred to "bourgeois morality" as "common decency," or why C.L.R. James placed high value on a "sense of fair play." Orwell understood that the epithet "bourgeois" is simply part of that totalitarian cant that must be exposed as such.

Another major example of the transcendence of the Great Misunderstanding in the evolution of revolutionary theory and practice is the experience of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.). There must be a reason (and there is) why the I.W.W. continues to enjoy the admiration, even the adulation, of revolutionaries coming from both the libertarian and authoritarian ranks. But what is particularly striking is how so many disillusioned people from Leninist backgrounds became (and have become) nostalgic about the actions, the organisation and especially the spirit of the famous Wobblies.[7]
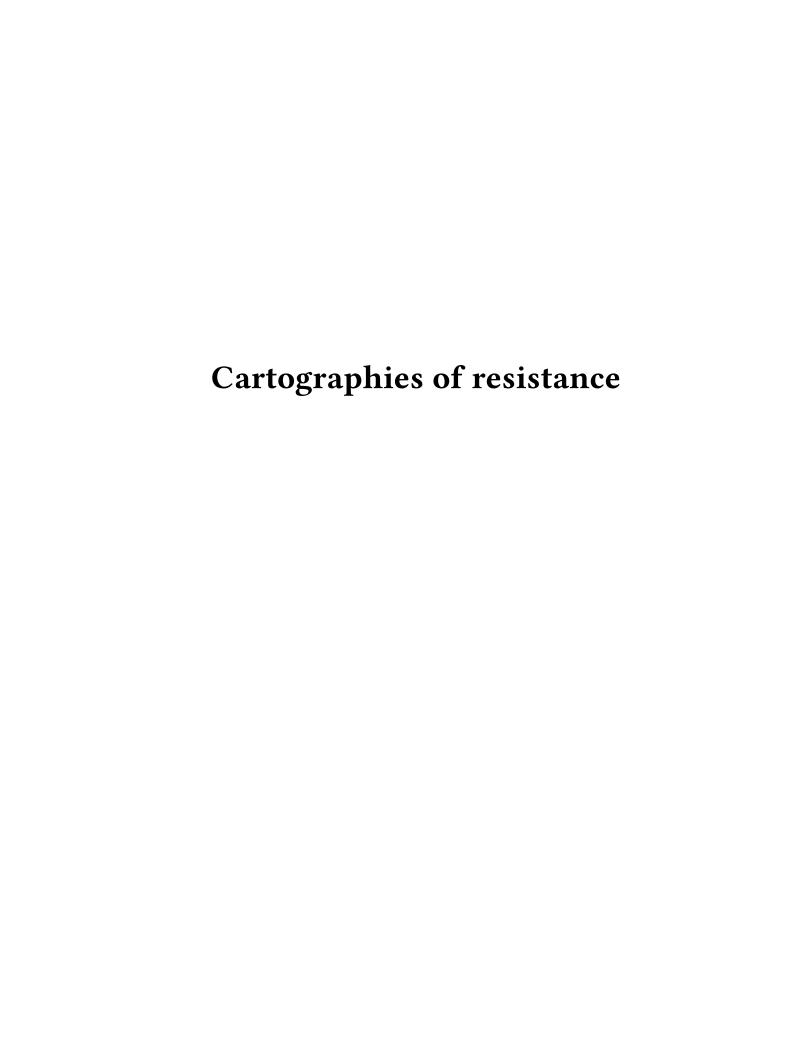
There are many important examples of this passage from authoritarian to libertarian socialism: Victor Serge, Daniel Guerin, Daniel Anselme, Clancy Segal. And there are many people who always seemed to have avoided the Great Misunderstanding, such as Franklin and Penelope Rosemont, Georges Fontenis, Rene Lefeuve...

It seems clear to me that both Leninist and reformist socialism have reached a dead end, that they are in a state of complete decomposition. One indication is that there are now Marxist mandarins, still enjoying the advantages of political and publishing networks, who are attempting to shift towards the libertarian left, but without joining what they call the "ultra-left."

The problem is that "Red and Black"—revolutionary, libertarian socialism, anarcho- communism—*is* the "ultra-Left." To make the shift—this political transition, means abandoning the habit of intellectual domination and the smearing of opponents. It means becoming aware of how this elitist approach to knowledge and its uses—that cultivated especially in universities and political parties—is destructive of real political consciousness and of individual creativity. It means breaking with the idolatry proper to movements based on the faith inspired by the cult of the leader—whether Marx or Lenin or Trotsky or Mao or Che Guevara or Bakunin or Durruti.

This is the meaning and the promise of the Red and Black. These, the only revolutionary elements of Marxian and Anarchist thinking and practice, cannot be dead, because the capitalist system engenders their very existence.

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[7] See, for example, Len De Caux, *The Living Spirit of the Wobblies,* New York, International Publishers, 1978, Philip S. Foner, *The Industrial Workers of the World 1905–1917,* New York, International Publishers, 1965, and Clancy Sigal, *Going Away: A Report, A Memoir,* New York, Carol and Graf Publishers, 1961.

Cartographies of resistance

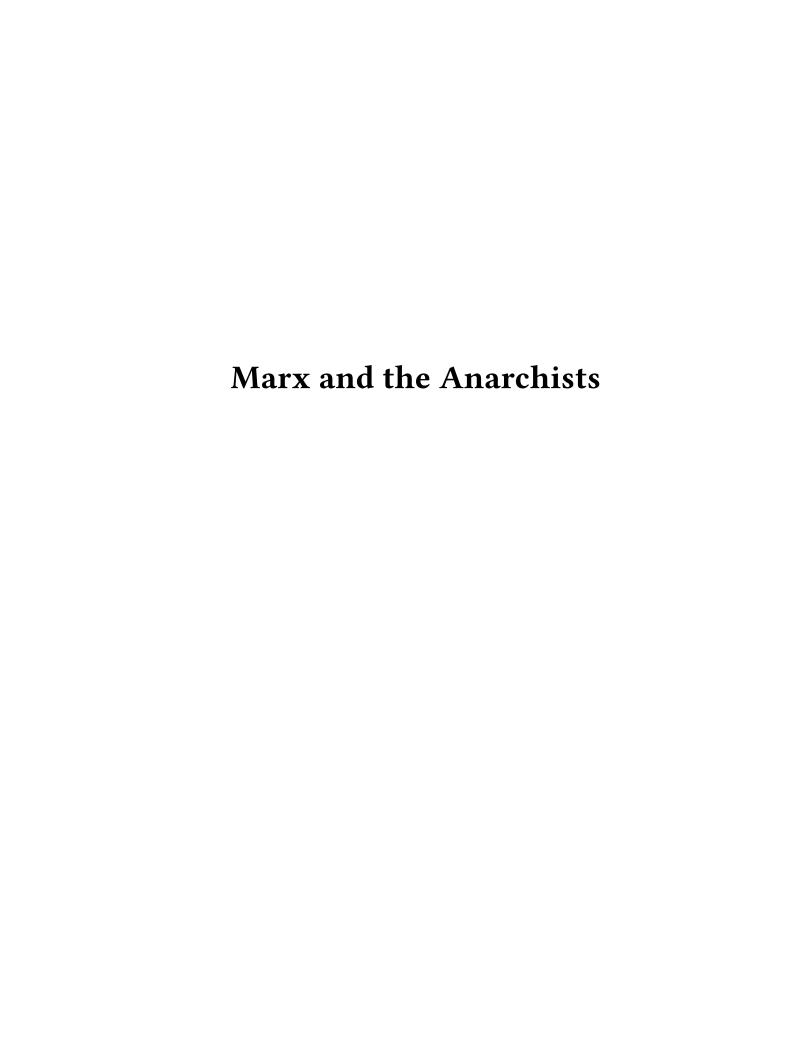# Geography Against Capitalism

Alberto Toscano
Not Available.

Zones

Benjamin Noys
Not Available.

Autonomy, Self-Organization, and the Spatial Composition of the Social Imaginary

Stevphen Shukaitis
  Not Available.

Marx and the Anarchists

Autogestion et dictature du prolétariat

Matthijs Gardenier
Not Available.

'Un Marx libertaire? Dictature du Prolétariat chez Marx

Nicolas Bressy
Not Available.

Convergence Through Practice 3: Publishing

Beyond 'Red' and 'Black': Publishing in the pursuit of libertarian socialism

Jean Michel Kay

The history of a political current can never be reduced to that of its organisations or to the study of its doctrine, unless it has never had the least influence outside itself. On the other hand, it is difficult to identify such a current when it has not built any permanent organisation and has not produced a body of doctrine. Nonetheless, it is the surmise of such a current that we beg to offer as a research topic based on the story of an activist publisher from the 1930s on.

What is surmised here is that at certain periods of French contemporary social history, and probably elsewhere in Europe, a political current has sprung up that overcomes the historical deadlock between the protagonists of "State socialism" and those of "socialism without a State." This current has not given birth to permanent political organisations; it has not spawned recognized theoreticians, it has not spelt out a formal doctrine. The reason that suggests itself for those three negatives is that this current has only emerged in periods of social upheaval and has generally lacked time to create a lasting political vehicle, and that the theory of what it stood for could only develop after the event.

As shorthand, we will designate this current as "libertarian socialism." This label has no historical legitimacy; it has been used by Daniel Guerin as cover title of his first collection of essays aimed at reconciling those he called "twin brothers, feuding brothers."[1] In later editions, he has changed it to "libertarian Marxism," and then to "libertarian communism." But at the time when we surmise that libertarian socialism first materialized, libertarian communism was claimed as their objectives by the Spanish CNT and FAI, and they are clearly different.

We propose to search for that current through the enduring story of an unusual publishing house, which has carried on for fifty years thanks to the exertion of one individual, Rene Lefeuvre, and which has outlived him. The features of that publishing endeavour — the *Cahiers Spartacus* — qualify it as an appropriate tool for identifying that current and turning it into a legitimate research topic:

- It is an activist publishing house, i.e. one that pursues specific political goals.

- It is not-for-profit, and has no other concern than to publish whatever it feels should be made available to the readership it hopes to reach.

- It is independent, to the extent that it is not controlled by any political organisation.

- However, it does not rely on patronage or to any significant extent on donations. Therefore, while it does not need to be profitable in any sense, it can only carry on publishing if there are enough buyers for its output. It has not always been the case.

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[1] *Jeunesse du socialisme libertaire,* Marcel Riviere, Paris, 1959.

Libertarian socialism as we mean it only materializes as a political current after the October revolution. The lessons it draws from the 1917 revolution and its aftermath differ from those drawn by other anti-Stalinist currents such as the anarchists, the Trotskyists or even the council communists, whose experience was anyway practically unknown in France at the time. Its political assumptions may be summarized as follows:

- The evolution of society can only be grasped through the analysis of class struggles; class antagonisms, crises borne by the ruled can only be eliminated if they wrest political and economic power from the ruling classes and exert it themselves.

- The capitalist State is the instrument of domination of the ruling classes; as such, it has to be dismantled; but as classes will survive even after such dismantlement, and as social activities will need to be organised and decisions made, political institutions will remain necessary at various territorial levels.

- The nation is the framework of bourgeois power; it is not suitable for building socialism; libertarian socialism is internationalist by nature.

- Libertarian socialists know that trade unions have become institutions of capitalist society; they find however that in many instances taking part in union activity is the first means at the disposal of workers to take part in collective action and the class struggle.

- Political parties are necessary to formulate analyses and proposals, to gather means for education and action; but no party can claim a monopoly of power:

  "The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be implemented by a single sector of the proletariat, only by all sectors, without exception. No workers' party, no trade union can exert any dictatorship."[2]

Lastly, libertarian socialists do not view taking part, or not taking part, in the electoral process and discharging elective duties as a matter of principle. But for them, for any party coalition to obtain and retain government power through the electoral process cannot be a goal in itself.

An activist publisher

At the request of his father, a master stone mason in a village in Brittany, Rene Lefeuvre also becomes a stone mason. But rural life does not suit him. Although with only primary schooling, he's an assiduous and inquisitive reader. At 20, when called up for military service, he manages to be quartered in the Paris area, where, but for the war years, he will live from 1922 to his death in 1988.

By what he has learnt of it, and in spite of the repulsive picture drawn of it by the conservative opinion leaders in his home region, he is attracted by the Russian revolution and the achievements of the Soviet Union. He reads Boris Souvarine's *Bulletin communiste,* which reports on

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[2] Andres Nin, leader of the POUM, quoted by Rene Lefeuvre in his foreword to Andre and Dori Prudhommeaux's *Catalogne 1936–1937, Cahiers Spartacus* n°6, March 1937.

them but will not hide the disputes that are starting to divide the Executive of the International, of which he is a member, and the leadership of the Soviet Communist party. Boris Souvarine's exclusion of the French communist party, of which he had been a founding member, and Souvarine's maturing understanding of the class nature of the Soviet regime will contribute to Rene's strengthening political beliefs: availing himself of the notions of classes and exploitation as developed by Marx, Souvarine asserts in the late 1920s that a new ruling, exploitative, class is being created in the Soviet Union through its control of the State. He also rejects what he sees as the invention by the Soviet leadership of a Leninist doctrine. Lastly, he also rejects what he perceives in Trotsky — whose right to hold dissenting views he had supported in the Executive of the International — as a commitment to reproduce the analyses and behaviour of the Soviet Communist party.[3] Rene attends some of the meetings of the *Cercle communiste Marx et Lenine* launched by Boris Souvarine in 1926 with other members or former members of the CP opposition. In 1930, it becomes the *Cercle communiste democratique*, whose purpose is to "*uphold, continue and invigorate the democratic and revolutionary tradition of Marxism*" and to "*actively seek the seeds of the renewal of revolutionary thought and action.*" Its manifesto expands on the theme: "*Together with Marx and Engels ,the* Cercle *declares itself democratic, by which it means to restore against fake communists, who negate it, and fake socialists, who debase it, a notion which is inseparable from the revolutionary idea. Communists and socialists of the Marxist school have in politics long simply called themselves 'democrats' before calling their party 'social- democrat .' The Marxist critique of the implementation of the democratic principle in capitalist society is directed to the contradictions of its practice, not to the principle itself, and makes the point that it is impossible to achieve true political democracy without the foundation of economic equality.*"[4]

Until 1928, Rene earns a living as a stone mason craftsman. Then, thanks to distance learning courses he had taken up when in Brittany, he is hired as a clerk in a claddings firm, which frees some of his time to pursue other interests. This is when he joins the *Amis de Monde,* and becomes their secretary. Launched in 1928 by Henri Barbusse, a Communist party member since 1923, *Monde*[5] sought to be "a *weekly publication, reporting major literary, artistic, scientific, economic and social information to provide an objective picture of current affairs.*" But its launch reflects a disagreement between Henri Barbusse and the Communist International of the third period, in which the social-democrat, now dubbed "social-fascist," has become the main opponent. In 1926, the International had requested Henri Barbusse to launch an international body of revolutionary writers. As this would have only brought together Communist party members, or writers already close to the Party, Barbusse has chosen instead to create "*a hive of publications*" — much more than a newspaper — aiming at a "*world gathering of intellectuals.*"[6] Contributors to *Monde* will therefore include Communist writers, some of them writing from the Soviet Union, but also former Communists and even Socialists, for which *Monde* will be condemned at the second congress of revolutionary writers held in Kharkov in November 1930. *Monde* is charged with

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[3] About Boris Souvarine, refer i.a.to Jean-Louis Panne, *Boris Souvarine,* Robert Laffont, Paris, 1993.

[4] Cercle communiste democratique, *Declaration et statuts,* Librairie du travail, Paris, 1931, quoted in *Critique sociale, Les vies de Boris Souvarine,* www.critique-sociale.info, 2008.

[5] On *Monde,* refer i.a.to Bernard Frederick, *Confrontation entre Henri Barbusse et le Komintern,* Fondation Gabriel Peri, 2006, and Guessler Normand, *Henri Barbusse and his* Monde *(1928–1935), Journal of Contemporary History,* 1976, 11.

[6] The *Association des ecrivains et artistes revolutionnaires* (AEAR), the French section of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers, will be launched in 1933.

being "*a paper without guiding principles, which from the start has taken an anti-Marxist position,*" of being distinctive by " *its confusionism,*" of harbouring contributors who are "*Trotskyist agents, social-fascists, bourgeois radicals, pacifists,*" in short with being hostile to proletarian ideology. It is worth mentioning that back in April 1930, Pierre Naville, Trotskyism's first official representative in France, had taxed *Monde* in his *Lutte de classes* with being a "*collection of garbage from the most swampy, the most confused, and in the end the most anti-proletarian output of petty-bourgeois politico-literary circles*"

Monde is clearly not a Communist party paper, although Henri Barbusse would not condone attacks against the Soviet regime. The *Amis de Monde* are assigned ambitious goals: not only should they support the paper's sales, but they should also contribute news and reports to it. In 1930, when Rene Lefeuvre becomes their secretary, the membership numbers about 800. Lucien Laurat,[7] who belongs to *Monde's* editorial team, has organised a political economy study group, which in particular studies Marx's *Capital.* As the *Amis* are keen that other groups, on other topics, be set up, Rene will dedicate himself to the task to the full. Always eager to learn, he is also devoted to the transmission of knowledge, to popular education which will always remain the true aim of his publishing. New study groups are set up: for social studies, workers' movement history, architecture, Esperanto; also a drama troupe. Rene also organises movie screenings, visits to exhibitions.

After two years, members of the study groups are asking for a means regularly to publish the outcome of their work. Rene is put in charge of that venture. He suggests *Spartacus* as title of this new paper: members choose *Masses,* a reference to the American *New Masses.*

At first, Masses'outlook could not be significantly different from that of *Monde* and the manifesto published in its first issue, dated January 1933, states in particular that "a revolutionary culture *is opposed to bourgeois culture. In the great struggle, such a culture is a weapon*"; and also that *"against bourgeois calumnies, we will defend the Soviet Union's exertion to build a classless society by setting* truth *against lies'"*

Events will make *Masses* partly change its editorial course. This first issue does indeed include features on architecture, sociology, the theatre, and on workers' unity. In the second issue, there's also a piece from Rustico[8] in which he reports on the activity and state of mind of the Berlin Communists he has joined in October 1932 in expectation of a decisive showdown in Germany between reactionary forces and the masses. The third issue, dated March 1933, pays tribute to Karl Marx for the fiftieth anniversary of his death, with, among other items, the beginning of a summary of the main thesis of Rosa Luxemburg's *Accumulation of capital. Masses* is a 20-page monthly, of medium format, with a fairly sophisticated layout and some pictures, particular care being lavished on the front cover.

Contributors to *Masses* are in their great majority young members of the study groups. But the editorial staff will quickly change: in May 1933, *Masses* briefly quotes an announcement from the *Cercle communiste democratique* that Victor Serge, who had been living in the Soviet Union

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[7] Otto Maschl (1898–1973). An Austrian Communist, he acts as a correspondent in Berlin for *I'Humanite* from 1921 to 1923 at the request of Boris Souvarine, then teaches economics in Moscow for the International until 1927, when he resigns.

[8] Hippolyte Etchebehere (1900–1936), an Argentine revolutionary, expelled from the Communist party in 1925 for his support of the Left opposition. Leader of a POUM militia column, he dies in August 1936 fighting Franco's troops. His testimonial on the Nazis' accession to power is still available *(1933: la tragedie du proletariat allemand,* Spartacus, Paris, 2003).

since 1919, had been arrested. He was among the writers who supported *Monde.* In July, *Masses* publishes a letter from Victor Serge in which he spells out the principles of his opposition to the regime. Rene Lefeuvre requests *"that authorized sources inform the Western proletariat of the reasons which justify Victor Serge's punishment and why he has been refused for so many years the passport he needs to leave Russia.'"* Compared for instance to what the *Cercle communiste democratique* was writing at the time, this is very moderate indeed. The same issue includes a new report from Rustico, on those events in Berlin which, from January to March 1933, have led to the Nazis' victory, the outlawing of the Communist party and the repression of its members. *Masses* does not publish the letters in which Rustico takes to task the leaderships of the Communist party and of the International. Nevertheless, this is more than those contributors to *Masses* who are Communist party members can take. In a communique published by *YHumanite,* the Party daily, they question the stand taken by *Masses* in favour of Victor Serge, against, according to them, the opinion of the editorial board, and also the "*controversy about events in Germany*' and warn readers *"that the* Masses *periodical is bound to become a tool in the hands of counterrevolutionaries."* They will be made to leave the editorial board.

New contributors make their appearances in the next issues. They are former members of the Left opposition of the Communist party, some of them quite experienced, like Marcel Body.[9] And as *Masses* had initiated an inquiry on German fascism, Kurt Landau gives his opinion, as do spokesmen for the SAP and for German communist workers groups, heirs to council communists. *Masses* is much less a product of the study groups, and more of a meeting place for activists looking for answers to the challenges of the times. Current affairs, including debates within the SFIO (the French socialist party), and theoretical insights take pride of place. In January 1934 — the fifteenth anniversary — *Masses* publishes Rosa Luxemburg's last newspaper piece and Karl Liebknecht's last speech. In May 1934, as it had done for German fascism, the editorial board launches an inquiry on the dictatorship of the proletariat and democracy, with an excerpt from Rosa Luxemburg's *The Russian revolution* as a primer. Amilcare Rossi's[10] contribution to that debate is published in the next issue, the 18th, in June 1934. But other contributions, if they have ever been written, will not be published: in issue number 19, which is the last, it is announced that they will be the material of a special issue, which has never appeared.

Rene Lefeuvre has had to discontinue *Masses* because, having lost his job, he can no longer meet its costs. The *Amis de Monde* have suffered from the split between Communists and opponents. *Monde* itself, initially flourishing in its first two years, now faces difficult circumstances. In addition, Rene is now committed to a new environment: in August 1934, with other contributors to *Masses,* he has joined the Socialist party.

It is at first sight surprising that revolutionaries, steeped in Marxism, should join such a party, with a significant industrial worker membership in only a few parts of France, and focused primarily on elections. But the SFIO has experienced a number of shocks over the past few months: it has renounced its alliance with the Radicals, who now participate in a government of National

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[9] 1894–1984. A typesetter, he's an avid reader and learns Russian. During the First World War, he's a member of the French military delegation to Russia. In 1918, he refuses to take part in military operations against the Soviets and joins the *Groupe communiste frangais* in Moscow. He is then employed during several years by the International and, an opponent to the regime, returns to France in 1927. After a year spent in opposition in the Communist party, he launches in Limoges a *Union des travailleurs revolutionnaires.*

[10] Angelo Tasca, one of the founding members of the Italian Communist party. Made a member of the Executive of the Communist International in 1929, he is expelled that same year. He was on the editorial board of *Monde.*

union. Its right wing has been expelled, but the debate it had started on the subject of planning has led the Party to consider an action program. Its left wing, the *Bataille socialiste,* led par Jean Zyromski and Marceau Pivert and in favour of joint action with the Communists, has lost the out-and-out pacifists among its supporters. Feeling it had to race against the fascists, it has started to develop new organisations and new methods: youth movements, uniformed self-defence units, action groups, new propaganda media. Also, Trotsky has ordered his French followers, the Bolshevik-Leninists, to join the SFIO, which they do this same month of August 1934.

But it is the bloody events of February 1934 and their aftermath that have convinced Rene and his comrades to join the socialist organisation. On the morning of 6 February, the day of the right-wing anti-parliamentarian demonstration, Marcel Cachin was writing in the *Humanite:* "*One cannot struggle against fascism without struggling also against social-democracy*." If, on 12 February, left-wing activists had gone on strike and demonstrated jointly, it was not due to the national leaderships of the parties. The *Bataille socialiste,* for its part, is clearly in favour of joint action. In May 1934, the Communist International changes tack and declares in favour of a united front with the Socialists. On 27 July, an agreement is signed by the two parties. Aime Patri,[11] in the last issue of *Masses,* may be mistaken about the reasons of this change when he writes: "*It is the French working class, by demonstrating spontaneously and through its deeds that it aspires to unity, which has obliged the Communist International as well as the French section of the Labour and Socialist International to act accordingly*." However, for the activists, there is now a real prospect of efficient action on the ground, in joint committees.

In putting together *Masses*, Rene Lefeuvre had been trained in publishing techniques by the typesetters, and he was now able to earn a living also as a proof-reader. In December 1934, with members of the last team at *Masses,* he launches a new weekly: *Spartacus,* for revolutionary culture and mass action. It is said in its first issue that *Masses* will continue, but only as special issues. The

first of those specials — indeed, the only one — is a brochure on the Berlin Commune of 1918–1919, the work of Andre[12] and Dori Prudhommeaux. It is made up mainly of the League Spartacus' program and of Rosa Luxemburg's speech on that program. For Rene, it is of primary import to disseminate the political writings of Rosa Luxemburg, which have not been widely translated and published in France. This concern is clearly apparent in pieces which are published in *Spartacus.*

Andre Prudhommeaux, briefly a Communist party member, had been active in 1929–1930 in the *"Groupes ouvriers communistes,"* inspired by German council communism, entertaining a relationship with Karl Korsch and rejecting the Leninist view of the party. He had been to Germany and had brought back documents. In 1930, his *Librairie ouvriere,* in Paris, had published as a brochure a French translation of Herman Gorter's 1920 *Open letter to Comrade Lenin* in which he objected to the tactics foisted upon Western communist parties by the new International. In 1933, he is one of the French organisers of the committee for the defence of Marinus Van der Lubbe, who had set fire to the Reichstag. The collapse of the German workers' movement makes him reject Marxism and become an anarchist. From1936, he is very active in defence of the Spanish revolution, even if he grows critical of the CNT taking part in government. A publisher and

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[11] Andre Ariat (1904–1983). A teacher, he had been a member of the Communist party, then in succession of Opposition groups, of the *Cercle communiste Marx et Lenine,* of the first Trotskyst groups and most recently of the *Gauche communiste*, with Alfred Rosmer and Kurt and Katia Landau.

[12] 1902–1968. He writes in *Masses* under the name Jean Cello. He will also use that of Andre Prunier.

printer (based in Nimes, he has launched a printing co-op) as well as an activist, he provides Rene with material and practical advice, and sometimes loses his temper when Rene appears to be too slow in making use of both.

Spartacus won't last as a weekly; in April 1935, the masthead of issue number eight recognizes that it is at best a monthly. The last issue, the tenth, is published in September 1935. It has only four pages and is dedicated to the matter of the exclusion of the Trotskyists from the Socialist Youth, to which it objects and asks instead for the Youth to be made autonomous from the national party leadership.

In May 1935, France and the Soviet Union enter into a pact of mutual assistance. Stalin *"understands and fully approves the policy of national defence pursued by France'"*. The Communist party quickly falls in line with the new policy of the International and reclaims the Tricolour and the *Marseillaise*. The prospect of a new *Union sacree* which, in 1914, has being instrumental in sending the people to the slaughterhouse, looms again.

This new political scene deepens the ongoing disputes within the *Bataille socialiste*. About unity with the Communist party, about national defence, about activism, Zyromski and Pivert differ significantly: Pivert is against a potential merger with the Communist party; he rejects national defence in a capitalist society. In October 1935, Marceau Pivert seeks to unite left-wing groups within the SFIO and launches the *Gauche revolutionnaire*, which is defined by what it opposes and by a prospect — that of the socialist revolution — more than by a doctrine, which is yet to be developed. It merges a number of small groups, among them revolutionary socialists who had been expelled from the SFIO because they were in favour of joint action with the Communist party, the group around *Spartacus,* and also former Communists. Above all, it attracts the younger, more active members of the SFIO.

This new tendency is going to publish a monthly bulletin of the same name, *La gauche revolutionnaire,* and Rene Lefeuvre is put in charge of it. He is also in charge of the trade union column, at the very time when the CGT is reunited.

Rene has sought to resurrect *Masses* by replacing items about internal party matters in *La gauche revolutionnaire* by pieces about doctrine or the history of the workers' movement, but this has been received unfavourably by some of the readers. Back in 1934, he had defined a publishing program aiming at *"providing the proletarian masses with ideological weapons and prepare them for the struggle in all areas":* a periodical like *Masses,* but issued more frequently, providing more reports on daily struggles and more attractive in layout; brochures in which current issues would be dealt with in more depth; and brochures of revolutionary history. It is to the second leg of this program that he will henceforth devote himself. Not only urgent needs have to be addressed, but the *Librairie du travail,*[13] the publisher which, for the past twenty years, has been an anchor to revolutionaries, is in dire straits. It will cease to publish in 1937.

The subject matter of these brochures, the *Cahiers Spartacus,* sub-titled "new series," is indeed of some urgency: reports on the soviet regime, the prospect of a new World war, the support to be provided to the Spanish revolution.

The first *Cahier Spartacus,* published in October 1936, bears as cover title *16 fusilles,* and *Ou va la revolution russe?* as sub-title. It mainly consists of writings by Victor Serge, who has been freed at last and has returned to France during the summer. In the first of them, he reports on the most spectacular of the Moscow show trials, which had led to the execution of Zinoviev,

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[13] See Marie-Christine Bardouillet, *La Librairie du Travail,* Francois Maspero, Paris, 1977.

Kamenev, Smirnov and other Bolshevik leaders. Two other writers contribute pieces against France's policy of "non- intervention" in Spain, in particular against the government's refusal to supply weapons to the Republicans. The next brochure, in November, has as its title *"Union sacree 1914 — 193..."*. It consists mainly in excerpts from Alfred Rosmer's essential *Le mouvement ouvrier pendant la guerre,* which has just been published by the *Librairie du Travail.* Also included are pieces on trade union unity and collectivisations in Spain, reproduced from *L'Espagne socialiste,* the French — language paper of the POUM, to which la Gauche revolutionnaire feels close; and also brief reviews of Souvarine's *Staline, un apercu historique du bolchevisme* and of Trotsky's *La revolution trahie.* The following month, under cover of the *Cahiers Spartacus,* is a brochure by Jean Prader,[14] *Au secours de I'Espagne socialiste,* also published by the *Librairie du Travail.* Rene Lefeuvre has added to it the authorization he has received from Marceau Pivert, as Prader criticizes the *Gauche revolutionnaire*'s stand on the matter of arms supply, and also a warning call signed by Julian Gorkin, of the POUM's international secretariat, about the crimes that the Stalinists are about to commit in Spain. In his brochure, Prader not only discusses the pros and cons of the policy of " non-intervention" and gives his own views; he also deals in painful detail with the question of how are revolutionaries to respond should war break out, a conundrum that is going to undermine them during the next few years.

The next brochure is the first French edition since 1922 of Rosa Luxemburg's *The Russian revolution* in a new translation by Marcel Ollivier.[15] Next will come the *Gauche revolutionnaire's* program and its response to the threat of dissolution it faces from the Party leadership, and, in March 1937, the writings on revolutionary Catalonia published at the same time by Andre Prudhommeaux in his *Cahiers de Terre libre*: a report by Andre and Dori Prudhommeaux on the arming of the people in the Spanish revolution and their translation of *Was sinddie CNTund die FAI?,* written by the DAS *Gruppe* in Barcelona to try and counter Stalinist propaganda in the workers' movement. In June, the *Cahiers Spartacus* release, under the title *Le Guepeou en Espagne,* Marcel Ollivier's report on the May 1937 events in Barcelona. By November 1938, Rene will have published fifteen such brochures.

Until then, Rene Lefeuvre and his comrades had practically never met the anarchists and their doctrines. Rosa Luxemburg, in her pre-war writings, had nothing but harsh words for them. Rene had found them hard to fathom; their groups were fairly closed. It is the recognition of the committees of the CNT's leading role in the early months of the Spanish revolution and the necessities of international revolutionary solidarity which made Rene distribute those writings. In 1938, he will distribute another *Cahier de Terre libre,* a collection of Camillo Berneri's Spanish writings.

Growing disagreements between the majority of the SFIO and the *Gauche revolutionnaire* led to the dissolution of the latter in April 1937. Rene then took charge of the *Cahiers rouges,* the new monthly of what was henceforth an unofficial tendency. At the Royan congress, in June 1938, the tendency's leaders resolve to leave the SFIO and launch the *Parti socialiste ouvrier et-paysan* (PSOP). For Rene, and he's not alone, this is an admission of failure, as the new party

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[14] Edouard Labin (1910–1982). A member of the Communist Youth, expelled in 1930; briefly a member of the *Ligue communiste,* he joins the *Cercle communiste democratique.* He becomes a member of the SFIO in 1934.

[15] Aaron Goldenberg (1896–1993). He attends the second congress of the Communist International as a delegate of the Socialist Youth, and then the fourth congress. Until 1928, he works for the Moscow Marx-Engels Institute and the International, in particular with D. Riazanov, B. Souvarine and V. Serge, and expresses his opposition to the prevailing policies. He then distances himself from the Communist party.

only attracts a minority of the erstwhile supporters of the *Gauche revolutionnaire*, whose influence was still growing. The PUP[16] having joined the SFIO after the 1936 parliamentary elections, the PSOP becomes the French member of the International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity. In September 1938, the Bureau launches the International Workers Front against the War, which advocates a policy of revolutionary defeatism. But, as Prader had remarked in an issue of *Spartacus,* this policy, which Lenin had been promoting in the First World War, does not prevent war.

Rene Lefeuvre is in charge of the PSOP's weekly, *Juin 36.* In January 1939, he starts a new *Masses,* of which three issues will be published.

At the time of mobilization, and in spite of having being sentenced to six months in jail because of his role in the PSOP, he is called up. He will be taken prisoner and as such will spend five years in Germany.

The trap of anti-sovietism

When back in France in June 1945, Rene Lefeuvre has to adapt to a political landscape that has of course undergone significant changes. The PSOP has sunk without traces during the war. The Communist party has now been in a coalition government for a year, and it will remain in it for another two years. The movements born in the Resistance and which, from various standpoints, advocated a "revolution," meaning the advent of a society making a clear break with the defunct IIIrd Republic on the basis of the popular alliances built during the war, have to make way for the political parties. Those have but one goal: to restore as quickly as possible the State's apparatus, and authority in general. For instance, workers who have taken charge of their firms receive no support from any of them.[17]

Thanks to a friend, Rene gets a job in the editorial secretariat of the *Populaire,* the SFIO's daily, and then at the Party's *Editions de la Liberte.* In January 1946, he starts publishing again on his own account: a new *Masses,* and the *Cahiers Spartacus.* He has been able to recover unsold brochures from before the war. Over the next four years, he will add around forty titles to his catalogue, from tiny brochures to sizeable books. His goal is obvious: to contest the Communist party's and its daughter organisations' monopoly of Marxist expression; to supply doubters with the tools of a revolutionary critique of the Russian revolution, the Soviet regime and the Communist party's politics. Significant publications in this period include writings of Rosa Luxemburg *(Questions d'organisation de la social-democratie russe,* published with other writings under the cover title *Marxisme contre dictature, Reforme sociale ou revolution?*, *Greve generale, parti et syndicats),* Anton Ciliga's *Lenine et la Revolution* (excerpts from his *Ten years in the country of the disconcerting lie,* which was published only two years later), Sylvain Wisner's *L'Algerie dans*

I'impasse, which sought to draw attention to the looming crisis in that colony, Ida Mett's *La Commune de Cronstadt,*[18] Guy Vinatrel's *L'URSS concentrationnaire* and historical studies by

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[16] *Parti d'uniteproletarienne,* born from the merger in 1930 of several groups of former Communist party members. It had a significant electoral influence in several cities.

[17] See i.a. Robert Mencherini, *La liberation et les entreprises sous gestion ouvriere. Marseille 1944–1948.* L'Harmattan, Paris, 1994.

[18] Ida Gilman (1901–1973). A Russian anarchist, she took part in Paris in the debate around the *Platform.* In 1938, she had submitted her *Kronstadt Commune* to the group of the *Revolution proletarienne,* which had not wanted to publish it, finding it too harsh on Trotsky.

Maurice Dommanget, among which, in 1950, his *Sylvain Marechal,* 500 pages strong, which cost so much and sold so little at the time that it practically caused Rene to stop publishing.

Masses was meant to be a monthly, but only eleven numbers will be published until its discontinuation in May 1948. Among its contributors are comrades from the first *Masses,* from *Spartacus,* from the PSOP, revolutionary syndicalists and members of the left wing of the socialist party, such as Marceau Pivert; there are regular contributions from abroad, among which those of Victor Serge until his death in 1947.

The leading article of the first issue, under the title *Socialisme et liberte* (which is also the subtitle of the paper) reminds readers that statism and nationalism are enemies of socialism. Starting with the third issue, *Masses* becomes the mouthpiece of the International movement socialism and liberty, launched by Marceau Pivert and which, according to its manifesto, is grounded in libertarian socialism and revolutionary internationalism. But this movement, with no social basis, will quickly disappear.

Rene and his comrades feel the need to transmit the experience gained at such a high price over the past thirty years. But to whom? In 1946, to judge from party and trade union membership, mass interest is strong, even if the hopes raised at the time of the Liberation fade when faced by the hardships of daily life, rationing, spiralling prices and the start of colonial wars. Never had the memberships of the Communist and Socialist parties been so high (the former's being twice as large as the latter's), and never will they ever be again. Another gauge of mass interest for social matters, *Le Libertaire,* the *Federation anarchists* s weekly, prints up to a 100 000 copies. But the SFIO belongs to the government coalition, it will head it several times in 1946 and 1947. It has no tendency to compare with the pre-war *Gauche revolutionnaire.* Its members are not for the most part attracted by a project which charts a route totally different from the Party's, even if it supports them in their hostility to the Communist party. The SFIO is soon caught in a pincer between that party, then the most powerful in France both electorally and socially, and a Gaullist party, the RPF, which is seen as a threat for the parliamentary republic. The opposition between the Soviet Union and the British-American alliance takes centre stage in the political debate, and, with it, the Communist party, whose overarching objective is to "*prevent a Western coalition which would tilt the balance of power to the disadvantage of the USSR.*"[19] The Communist party is setting the terms of the debate for years to come: on the one side (its side), the forces of socialism and progress, the working class, peace; on the other side, all the others (foremost among them the Socialists), the bourgeoisie, imperialism, war.

Those who, between those two poles, try to promote a third way, struggle all the more to get a hearing that "third way" is reminiscent of "third force," the centrist coalition that now governs the country after the sacking of the Communist ministers. Such an attempt will nonetheless be made.

In November 1947, a number of renowned intellectuals, among which Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and David Rousset have signed with Marceau Pivert and a few socialist MPs an Appeal for a neutral and socialist Europe. David Rousset went further down that road and, in February 1948, with Sartre, some journalists, a few left-wing socialist MPs and trade unionists, launched an appeal for a *Rassemblement democratique revolutionnaire* (RDR). Its aim is to move beyond the confrontation between the SFIO, a loyal manager of capitalism, and the Communist party, a tool

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[19] Gilles Martinet, *Partis et mouvements dans la France nouvelle,* Questions d'aujourd'hui n°35, Editions du Chene, Paris, 1945.

of Soviet foreign policy. The RDR is not a party, Rousset explains: *"It is only in the experience and practice of common struggles that the necessary theoretical solutions will be found...The rally...is*

the result of an agreement on more limited, more immediate, objectives, which fit more directly the current situation, in what are its limits and urgency."[20] He is also aware that the RDR is not grounded in the workers' movement: *"A party is also the expression of a social class...Our aim is to unite, at the side of the working class, those elements of the middle classes which are led to struggle by today's social and economic situation."*[21]

In the first issue of *La Gauche,* the RDR's bi-weekly, Sartre calls for "*the rally of this country's men, as consumers and as producers, in neighbourhood committees, in village committees, in factory committees...where they will become conscious of their democratic and revolutionary humanism...The first goal of the Democratic Revolutionary Rally is to bind revolutionary claims to the idea of liberty."* This call for "soviets" to be thus created "on tap" in firms, in the towns and in the countryside is repeated in the RDR's program, which also includes the creation of a democratic revolutionary federation of peoples and a "positive" struggle against the Marshall plan. The RDR attracts a few left-wing socialists, such as Jean Rous and Leon Boutbien, who have contributed to *Masses.* Jules Moch, the Socialist Home Office minister, an old foe of the left who's in the process of bloodily crushing the miners'strike in the North, brands them as *"Stalinist agents."* For the Communist party, the RDR is *"the RPF disguised as a left-wing party,"* *"an appendage of the SFIO."* For *La Verite,* the paper of the *Parti communiste internationaliste* (Trotskyist), it is "*an enterprise in confusion ."*

After one year, the RDR has established branches throughout the country, with total membership something less than 2,000. In the Manche department, for instance, members publish a paper called *Combatproletarien.* The RDR has attracted trade unionists who campaign for trade union unity "on a democratic basis." But it focuses on the organisation of grand meetings to promote that Europe which would be independent from both imperialisms and for which it was set-up. In what appears to be a response to the World Peace Congress held in Paris two weeks earlier, it organises on 30 April 1949 a day of "international resistance to war and dictatorship." But the support it receives from the SFIO and the CGT-FO is too obvious, some of the speakers at its main meeting are too controversial, for the RDR to capitalize on it. Geopolitics on its own rarely attracts support from exploited classes. Sartre, for his part, had already distanced himself from the RDR, assessing it as anti-communist.

The exposure of the Soviet regime's bleakest features, even when widely advertised as is the case in 1949 and 1950 with the Kravchenko and Rousset trials, seems to have little impact on the political orientation of working class activists as long as they haven't directly experienced the consequences of Communist party policies. The war and the Resistance have weakened conservative influences over a new working class generation in areas where they used to be strong, and the case of the *Mouvement de liberation du peuple* may confirm that hypothesis.

The *Ligue ouvriere chretienne* is a family self-help charity sponsored by the Roman Catholic church. In 1941, it changes its name to *Mouvementpopulaire des familles* (MPF).[22] In 1946, its membership is about 150 000 strong. *Monde ouvrier,* its weekly, prints up to 200 000 copies.

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[20] David Rousset, *Autour du Rassemblement democratique revolutionnaire»,* in *Les Temps modernes* n°36, Paris, 1948.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] About the transformation of the *Mouvement populaire des familles* into the *Mouvement de liberation du peuple,* see *Cahiers du GRMF* (Groupement de recherche sur les mouvements familiaux), in particular issue n°9, 1995.

State- financed family support introduced after the war turns it into more of a manager of social services.

A good number of its activists are keen to contribute in a more radical manner to the improvement of workers' lives. In their actions, the reference to the faith fades. In 1948, they actively support striking miners. They also campaign with the Communist party against the Marshall plan.

In 1949, the MPF opens a debate on political action; it widens its membership to technicians and engineers who find it difficult to join trade unions. Recognizing that new orientation, the Church takes away from it the "action catholique ouvriere" label.

In 1950, the MPF changes its name to *Mouvement de liberation du peuple* (MLP) to publicize its new role. No later than the following year, it splits in roughly two equal parts: some of its members want to focus on popular education (they launch the *Mouvement de liberation ouvriere),* while the majority of the MLP wants to turn it into an "organised political force," based on the following principles:

> 1. *The final goal of the Movement is the total fulfilment of Man through the collective advancement of Man based on the sense of History.*
>
> > 1. *To achieve that goal, two means: the downfall of the capitalist regime, the setting-up of a classless society.*
> >
> > 2. *We will contribute to the downfall of the capitalist regime through the class struggle.*
> >
> > 3. *To reach that classless society, there will be a workers' revolution, and the Movement has to conduct it* (l'animer).
> >
> > 4. *In the current period of workers' resistance, the Movement, while retaining its identity, must operate with all working class forces striving for an authentic revolution, including Communist organisations, even if they stand alone.*

Because of the fierceness of social conflict at the time, the MLP's members were convinced that a revolutionary upheaval was imminent. For them, expression of anti-communism (hostility to the Communist party and to the Soviet Union) is anti-workers. The prospect of a revolutionary rising recedes with the improvement of economic conditions in the early 1950s. In 1953, some of the members will leave to resume the family, union, cultural and social work which was once that of the MPF. Others, asserting that there's but one party of the working class, the Communist party, will leave the MLP when it will try to chart its own political course.

The MLP then reaches out to the youth and to students, and joins the anti-colonialist struggle. As for other organisations claiming revolutionary socialist intent, the Algerian war will open an opportunity for strong commitment: the MLP, like the *Federation communiste libertaire,* like the Trotskyist groups, like anti-colonialist socialists, will materially support Algerian nationalists. This involvement, and the condemnation of the Hungarian crackdown in 1956, will distance the MLP from the Communist party. In 1957, it merges with part of the *Unionprogressiste,* itself an association of the *Parti socialiste unitaire* and of progressive Christian movements, until then very close to the Communist party, and with the *Tendance socialiste revolutionnaire*, an offshoot of Trotskyism, to launch the *Union de la gauche socialiste* (UGS). In 1960, the UGS and the PSA,

an anti-colonialist scission of the SFIO will merge with other smaller outfits to create the *Parti socialiste unifie* (PSU).

The last golden age?

After 1950, Rene Lefeuvre will cease to publish until the end of the 1960s. He has left the SFIO, which is on its way to oblivion. He has kept unsold papers and books. In 1968, Rene, now retired, and supported by the small group operating the *Vieille taupe* (Old mole) bookshop which sells the writings of non-Leninist Marxist revolutionaries, starts publishing again. The first new *Cahier* of that age, Ida Mett's *Lepaysan dans la revolution russe,* is released in 1969. Over the next ten years, Rene will add about fifty new titles to the *Cahiers*' catalogue, not including books supplied by other publishers and new editions of past titles. From 1975 to 1979, he will also publish fifteen issues of a periodical called *Spartacus,* sub-titled "*Socialisme et liberte*": the continuity of the editorial project is obvious.

In the aftermath of May 1968 comes a boom in publishing of workers' movement and revolutionary writings. Revolutionary ideas and history attract the interest of a wider range of social groups and individuals than ever. All major publishers vie to meet this new demand. New, activist, non-for profit publishers also crop up, sometimes for a brief existence, concerned only with contributing to the debate by publishing as quickly as possible writings they deem to be essential. In 1969, for instance, Belibaste releases, among others, Archinov's *Makhnovchtchina,* Rosa Luxemburg's *Letters from prison* and a collection of documents on the Kronstadt Commune; Champ libre publishes Krouchtchev's report to the XXth congress of the Soviet Communist party, followed by Lenin's *Testament.* Available in the *Cahiers Spartacus* are Rosa Luxemburg's major political writings, to the exception of the *Crisis of social-democracy.* In that same year, the *Cahiers Spartacus* release again Herman Gorter's *Reponse a Lenine* and publish, among others, Louise Kautsky's *Souvenirs sur Rosa Luxemburg.* They reissue Karl Kautsky's *Les trois sources du marxisme,* with a critique of Lenin's theory of class consciousness by the comrades of the bookshop.

This abundance of publications about revolutions and revolutionaries will increase in the following years.

At the same time, it seems that it is the groups which claim the Leninist inheritance, and the Communist party foremost among them, that are increasing their memberships the most. Various Trotskyist groups, others claiming to be Maoists, are gaining in visibility and influence, particularly among the young. For Rene Lefeuvre, as was the case twenty years earlier, it is necessary to try and propagate not only the works of the diverse historical strands of non-Leninist socialism, but also viewpoints on current events broadly in continuity with those strands. His achievement will be to gather around this project small groups, and individuals of all ages, who accept a plurality of viewpoints, a diversity of experience, and who have understood that sectarianism is often the product of thought no longer exposed to practice. Events in Poland, the capitalist development in China, the Portuguese revolution of 1974, the findings of collectives on trade union practice or the ways to the abolition of wage earning, will enrich the catalogue together with historical studies and works by Karl Marx, Max Stirner or Anton Pannekoek.

Again, who are the intended readers of those publications? It is true that the interest kindled by the resurrection of the idea of revolution explains the general increase in sales of revolution-related books, without their readers necessarily being activists in any way. Because of their

singularity, the *Cahiers Spartacus* indeed face a peculiar phenomenon: anarchists will generally not consider "Marxist" writings, and few, at the time, will recognize the *Cahiers* as "libertarian." For Trotskyist tendencies, the *Cahiers* breed "confusion." Their more knowledgeable members know that the "Old man" had designated the PSOP as "centrist" and that Rene Lefeuvre had been a member of the SFIO after World War II.

But the groups and individuals who, in that period, offered their writings or support to Rene had a feeling that the reach of his publications was not circumscribed to a hypothetical "council communist" constituency which had never had any influence on social movements in France. It was unthinkable that the mobilization in 1968 of a large part of the French people, in particular of new social categories, and taking new forms, would not spawn new political projects: it was necessary to provide all those who were taking part in that process with as many tools as possible to identify and avoid the traps laid for them by those whose aim was above all to gain and exert power.

This is Alain Guillerm's[23] purpose in his 1974 foreword to the *Marxisme contre dictature* brochure of Rosa Luxemburg writings: "...the grand workers' party that could arise from the merger of the Socialist party, of the *PSU,* of the *CLAS*[24] and of other members of the *CFDT* cannot be anything — let's say it clearly — but 'luxemburgist.' Without a distinctive theory, it can only be either a reformist and conservative party...or an ideological and practical appendage of the Communist party... The comrades who work towards that merger... are fully conscious of that danger. They believe they can counter it by putting forward the rousing rallying call of „ *autogestion' ...*The word has taken so many meanings that it has become confusing . For some, it means the management by people of society at every level, the withering of the State and of wage earning, while for others it is only a variety of economic management...leaving Capital and State unchanged."

Alain Guillerm was probably mistaken about the class nature of the Socialist party. But he was stressing the specific political phenomenon that had emerged in May 1968: the formulation, outside anarchist circles, of a political prospect designated as "self-management." At the time when he writes his Foreword, an appeal has been launched by well-known union leaders for the convening of "Assizes for socialism" which could result in the birth of a unified self-management socialist *("socialiste autogestionnaire*") movement.

How did that prospect emerge? Outside some anarchist groups, "self-management" used to refer more specifically to the management system that Yugoslavia had introduced for firms after its break with the Soviet Union in 1948, and then by Algeria, in particular for some of its farms, after having gained its independence in 1962. Such self-management "actually existing" in countries where most social activities were controlled by the State did not help to clarify the notion. In France, *Autogestion,* a periodical launched in France en 1966, is dedicated to surveying its various meanings.

It is the CFDT trade union federation which, as early as 1968, puts forward self-management as a radical, society transforming project. The notion itself may be vague, but its meaning is

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[23] 1944–2005. A member of the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group, then of the PSU. His writings include *Le luxembourgisme aujourd'hui,* Spartacus, Paris, 1970; *L'autogestiongeneralisee,* Christian Bourgois, Paris, 1979; *Rosa Luxemburg, la Rose rouge,* Picollec, Paris, 2002; and, with Yvon Bourdet, *De l'autogestion,* Seghers, Paris, 1975.

[24] *Comite pour L 'Autogestion Socialiste,* a forum of the PSU, the Alliance marxiste revolutionnaire, the Centres d'initiative communiste (set-up by former Communist party members), Objectif socialiste, and non-party movements such as La vie nouvelle and the Groupes d'action municipale (GAM).

easy to understand: if socialist revolution becomes once again a prospect for social forces, the CFDT makes it clear that it will oppose the advent of state socialism. It rejects State control of firms and the subordination of trade unions to the State. Its stand is not a product of theorization: in May, the longing for self-management has been much in evidence in a good number of branches and activities, in the economy and in the wider society. In 1970, the CFDT fleshes out this prospect at its congress. It comes out in favour of a democratic socialism resting on three "pillars": selfmanagement, social ownership of the means of production and exchange, and democratic planning. It does not deny that power has to be wrested from the ruling classes, but it firmly opposes monopoly power by a revolutionary organisation. From then on, in the French workers' movement, a new socialist project, self-management socialism, is joining battle with the old democratic socialism and state socialism. The Communist party, and Leninist revolutionaries of all stripes, are quick to reject what they denounce as a new idealistic or opportunistic deviation. For his part, the PSU will endorse self-management in 1971, but only painfully, by a small majority of its members. In the immediate aftermath of May, its membership, although still minute compared to that of the Communist party, had increased significantly and the PSU had become a battleground for a number of tendencies, some inspired by Trotskyism and several others by Maoism. The self-management socialist majority was mainly united by its rejection of the competing proposals for the construction of a Leninist-type vanguard organisation put forward by other tendencies.

If, by 1972, the PSU had reformulated its project as self-management socialism, the Socialist party was also making references to self-management. Later on, the Ligue communiste revolutionnaire, and even the Communist party will also embrace self-management.

The Assizes for socialism will prove an opportunity for nearly half the membership of the PSU to negotiate their entrance in the Socialist party. The rump of the PSU then has to clarify the exact nature of its political project. A minority will demand in vain that self-management socialism be recognized as the project for achieving power of a new, emerging, class within wage-earners; and as facing this new potential ruling class, an emerging exploited class much larger than the industrial working class which it was necessary to help achieve political expression.[25]

As the PSU went on to support the government of the Left, it sunk in irrelevance and folded. As of today, the self-management socialist heirloom is being claimed only by the Alternatifs,[26] with a membership in hundreds, and no clear political project beside anti-liberalism.

Bearers of tradition, or bearers of the future?

Having worked for many years as a proof-reader in newspapers, Rene Lefeuvre was fully acquainted with the workings of the press. In France, the NMPP, a publisher cooperative, was in charge of distributing all papers and magazines throughout the country. Through it, his publications could be found at newsagents,' much more numerous and more accessible to a popular audience than bookshops. But to benefit from this network, the *Cahiers Spartacus* have had to maintain the fiction that they were a periodical[27] and meet two requirements: a minimum fre-

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[25] See contributions of the PSU's "Courant communiste autogestionnaire," or "courant 'C,'" to its IXth, Xth et XIth congresses (1974, 1977 and 1979) or, for a synthetic approach, Andre Fontaine, *Les socialismes: l'Histoire sans fin,* Spartacus, Paris, 1992.

[26] The Alternatifs publish a periodical, *Rouge et vert.*

[27] This is why, and to this day, each book carries a chronological number.

quency of eight issues per year, and print runs high enough to supply a significant proportion of all newsagents. To reach the required number of issues, previous publications have had to be repackaged as new; high print runs have meant significant upfront costs and also returned quantities for which handling charges had to be paid.

In 1979, a combination of health trouble and straightened circumstances led Rene to set up a formal collective to help him more and, in due course, to ensure that his publishing endeavour would live on. In the 1980s, new authors were added to the catalogue and a number of important titles were published, as for instance a new edition of Anton Pannekoek's *Workers' councils,* the translation of which by ICO had originally been published by Belibaste; under the cover title *Trotski, le Staline manque,* writings by Willy Huhn analysing Trotsky's political project; *A la recherche d'un communisme libertaire,* a revised collection by Daniel Guerin of his writings in the perspective of the reconciliation of the "twin brothers, feuding brothers"; Larry Portis' *IWWet syndicalisme revolutionnaire aux Etats-Unis,* the only book in French dedicated to the history of the wobblies. Altogether, about twenty new titles.
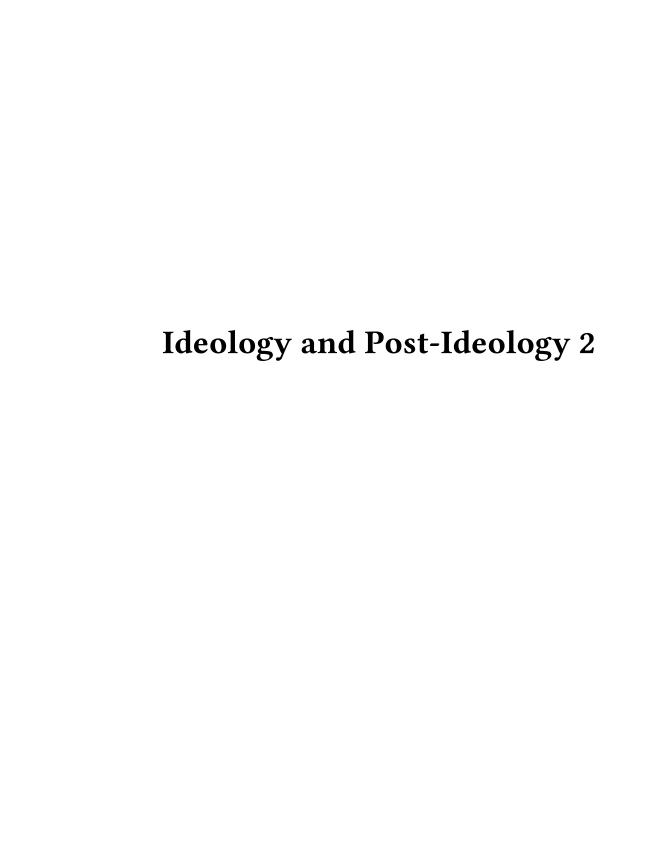
Rene died in 1988, shortly before the break-up of the Soviet empire. This downfall may have rendered the fight against Marxist-Leninist theories and projects less necessary. The *Cahiers Spartacus* carry on, faithful to the history of their catalogue.[28] But their editorial work is not fed anymore by revolutionary attempts in Europe, as had been the case in the 1970s. In France, the publication of writings on social revolution and revolutionaries remains lively. Several dozens of publishers keep them available and add to the list. But for the *Cahiers Spartacus,* it seems that once again the libertarian socialist current which gave them birth and that legitimates their existence has gone back to sleep. Hence a number of questions, which may be so many research topics:

1. Assuming that the history of the *Cahiers Spartacus* may be backed by less visible data, such as the internal debates of political organisations and trade unions, could it be:

   - That doctrines of social revolution do not exist before revolutionary crises, but that they are produced by them?

   - Therefore, even if teachings can be drawn from previous revolutionary episodes by those who could live through new ones, that the doctrines themselves will have lost a good deal of their relevance because of the changes wrought into the social structure between episodes?

   - That once the revolutionary wave has broken, the social groups that have ridden it will not necessarily maintain the doctrine which they have formulated during it, either because they are now ensconced in the new power structure and in need of a new doctrine (re. the Bolsheviks) or because the doctrine is of no use outside the revolutionary moment (re. the *autogestion generalisee)?*

2. Political currents of the workers' movement have as often as not expressed themselves in writing and their travails are also a subject matter for historians. Is it at all possible to gauge the influence that may have had, or can still have, writings such as those once published by Rene Lefeuvre, or published today by publishers of the social revolution, on their intended readers?

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[28] The list and description of available titles can be found on http://atheles.org/spartacus/livres/index.html

Mayday magazine on Red and Black theoretical perspectives

Trevor Bark
    Not available.

Ideology and Post-Ideology 2

Beyond the working-class: the politics of the excluded

Andy Robinson

The intersection of "Black and Red" has historically occurred around the common feature of orientation to the working class and related ideas of socialist anti-capitalism. In this paper, I shall argue that the division of the working-class into included and excluded necessitates a new orientation to the excluded. The paper will begin by exploring how the question of the excluded drove a wedge between Bakunin and Marx, before looking at the growth of exclusion today and the types of social movement to which it gives rise. It will attempt to map a 'politics of the excluded' to inform the revitalization of anarchism and autonomous neo-Marxism while deepening the insights of Bakunin's critique of Marx. Bakunin believes that people change their class position by becoming part of the state (excerpt 1) and fears a 'barrack regime' coming from the project of regulated reform.

My sense of Bakunin's relevance today is that, in contrast to Marx's theory of included workers as vanguard, he called for an orientation to the excluded or 'rabble,' the repressed Other of Marx's category.

In contrast to Marx, Bakunin treated the state as itself a kind of class. "Here, then, is society divided into two categories, if not yet to say two classes, of which one, composed of the immense majority of the citizens, submits freely to the government of its elected leaders, the other, formed of a small number of privileged natures, recognized and accepted as such by the people, and charged by them to govern them." (Ch. 3). Bakunin refers here to the state-class as such, and treats everyone else as excluded. But one could radicalise this theory with Bologna's view (in Tribe of Moles) that sections of the included are incorporated into processes of governing. For Bakunin, Marx's approach, in assuming an enlightened state, necessarily reproduces the division into included and excluded; the state has to be protected from the ignorant and illiterate masses who might destroy everything it achieves (Ch. 3).

State socialism leads only to a 'bourgeois revolution' producing a 'bourgeois socialism' leading to a 'new exploitation' more cunning but no less oppressive than the present (ch. 6) or we might say, a socialism of the included, persisting in the forms of alienated life, failing to eliminate the mechanisms of in-group formation. The antagonism of class against class renders participation by the 'masses' or excluded class in 'the political action of the State' impossible (Ch. 6).

Notoriously, in his works on colonialism in India, Marx accepts the view that capitalism is a civilising process. Also of relevance is the Marxist attachment to ideas such as secularism of the state, and compulsory education. For Bakunin such demands subordinate socialism to the programme of bourgeois politics. Mazzini and Marx are agreed that proletarian emancipation requires a 'strongly Centralised state' which 'in order to be able to give them education and social welfare, must impose on them... a very strong government' (Ch. 6). Bakunin thus sees Marx falling into the trap of bourgeois civic republicanism. Hence he ends up favouring the

'''intelligent," respectable... duly bourgeoisified minority of the town proletariat to the detriment of the mass of the proletariat' (Ch. 6).

Bakunin does not write of included and excluded as such, but of the people, the masses or the working-class. However, Bakunin's way of constructing this stratum is rather different from Marx's. The people are taking to be an 'elemental force sweeping away all obstacles' (Statism and Anarchy, excerpt 1), capable of 'total rebellion' (excerpt 1), a 'brutal and savage horde' capable of 'instinctive, chaotic, and destructive' insurrection (excerpt 2), a mass and not a class (Ch. 4). An impression is given of radical antagonism, rather than constitution within the existing system.Bakunin argues that Marx privileges the 'upper layer' of 'civilized' and 'comfortably off workers, penetrated with bourgeois social prejudices and narrow aspirations, whereas revolutionary potential instead resides in the 'non-civilized, disinherited, wretched and illiterates' (Ch. 4). 'There does not exist in Italy, as in most other European nations, a special category of relatively affluent workers, earning higher wages, boasting of their literary capacities, and so impregnated by a variety of bourgeois prejudices that, excepting income, they differ in no way from the bourgeoisie... Marx speaks disdainfully, but quite unjustly, of this *Lumpenproletariat*. For in them, and only in them, and not in the bourgeois strata of workers, are there crystallized the entire intelligence and power of the coming Social Revolution.' (excerpt 2). '[T]hat great rabble which being very nearly unpolluted by all bourgeois civilization carries in its heart... all the germs of the Socialism of the future' (Marxism, Freedom and the State 48). There are strong echoes here of Crisso and Odoteo's insurrectionist critique of Hardt and Negri, celebrating the rise of the 'new barbarians' *(Barbarians: The DisorderedInsurgence).* The category is taken explicitly to include the so-called 'peasant "rabble"' and the subordinate nationalities (excerpt 1). Even against the *Mir*, the peasant commune, Bakunin upholds the brigand and opposition to authority. He denounces reactive tendencies in the *Mir,* patriarchy, dominance by adult males, despotism and the absence of horizontal connections between communities (excerpt 3). Similar ideas can be found in some strands of neo-Marxist thought, especially Black Panthers such as Huey Newton, as well as in social movements such as Abahlali and theorists such as Fanon.

The importance of the excluded has an almost psychoanalytical, proto-Deleuzian significance. Bakunin's thought, unlike Marx's, has a psychological dimension. Radical antagonism, despair at the present and its intolerability, is crucial. The urge to revolt, or to liberty, is the source of 'vital power,' a primordial energy existing in different quantities in each person, varying in intensity, and operating as the source of all emancipations (Ch. 4).

An almost religious belief in one's rights is the necessary condition for widespread insurrection (excerpt 2). This is reminiscent of Chakrabarty's (2000) observation that people claim rights before they are subjectified as modern subjects.

[Dipesh Chakrabarty, Keynote Address and Floor Discussion, in WeAsians: Between Past and Present, A Millennium Regional Conference, 21.23 Feb 2000, Singapore: Heritage Society Publication, 2000, 15–41.]

Bakunin's critique of Marx was based principally on his hostility to the assumption that the workers — particularly the better-off and better-organised workers — would take power and rearrange society to the exclusion of others. As well as fearing the usurpation of workers' power by false representatives, Bakunin was also concerned that the better-organised workers would try to dictate to those they deemed more 'backward' and stupid. The reason for this was partly that Bakunin was worried about herd moralities among these workers, who are too well-integrated into capitalism, too "decent," and who have too much to lose (psychologically as well as materi-

ally) from thoroughgoing social change. Hence their willingness to turn against the "criminals" and the "unruly" elements. The 'rabble' stands out as the Bakuninist revolutionary agent because of its difference, the sharpness of its antagonism with capitalism and its separation from the 'herd.' To be for "the rabble" is to be against the herd, and vice-versa: to be for the false universality of the herd, of those included in the social "we," is to be against the rabble and the socially excluded. To be for the rabble is to be a revolutionary. To be for the herd is to be subsumed within a subordinated mass and therefore complicit in one's own unfreedom.

There is also an epistemological dimension to Bakunin's critique. Bakunin was an early critic of epistemological privilege, both in the self-perception of the German state as civilising force, and in the positivism of authors such as Comte. He treats those who seek to encompass social life in science as akin to imposers of religion, and hence prefigures later critiques of essentialism. He is concerned that the epistemological privilege involved in science leads to domination by scientists as a small elite. 'Give them full power and they will begin by performing on human beings the same experiments that the scientists are now performing on rabbits and dogs' (excerpt 1). This suggests an early awareness of the risks of the reductive scientific gaze. He also denounces the view that the rise of the despotic state was progressive (Ch. 4), effectively rejecting historical teleology. Bakunin implicitly challenges Marx's assumption of a link between capitalist development and the possibility of revolution (Marx's Conspectus).

What is lacking in Bakunin's work, and leading to risks of authoritarianism, is a distinct social logic pitted against the dominant theory. What is clearest here is what an alternative should *not* be. The politics of the excluded is implicit, but not strongly defined. Hence, he tends to idealise the actually-existing excluded. Bakunin does seem to assume that concerns about existing mass beliefs are simply prejudices of minorities who wish to rule based on epistemological privilege. One can see here the seeds of another danger, the glorification of oppressive social forms which, by interpreting every 'commonsensical' or hegemonic idea as progressive, prevents the emergence of critique. He has not rejected the idea of sacrifice, nor compulsive work, and his vision of destruction is nihilistic. And his approach can be seen in retrospect as prefiguring aspects of leftist anarchism. The danger in this approach is that federations become quasi-parties, political activists become substitute scientists, or the coercion wielded by the state is simply taken up by the community or the federation of communities. These are dangers that have been seen time and again in organisationalist and workerist strands of anarchism, which have often outdone Marxists in reproducing the dangers of Marxism.

Left-anarchism has constructed itself as a subset of a broader ideology, aiming for a seizure of power by the working class and sometimes going as far as to idealise or rationalise reactive prejudices to maintain its fantasy-frame. It has not always been consistent in challenging epistemological privilege, rejecting capitalism and the state but reinforcing hierarchies such as metropolitan-indigenous, included-excluded (against the so-called "anti-social") and habituated aspects of modernity. As a social function, therefore, it is a radicalised expression of the standpoint of the exploited within the system, thus taking an ambivalent stance towards the system itself. More recently, this has been challenged by post-left anarchy, which offers a deeper critique of the basis of the dominant system and is more sympathetic to more subversive kinds of critique of hierarchy such as mad, children's, ecological, indigenous, and animal liberation. Post-left anarchy reconstructs anarchism as a theory of the excluded and the autonomous, rather than the included-but-exploited.

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Growing exclusion in contemporary capitalism

Exclusion replaces exploitation when the powerful no longer need the poor enough to foster goodwill (Scott, Weapons of the Weak, 76–7)

Contemporary Marxists and anarchists have increasingly conceptualised divisions between included and excluded as central to political struggle against neoliberalism, as power is concentrated in a few core sites, inequalities widen and the included working-class is fenced- off by discourses of employability.

DIRLIK The Local and the Global — capitalism has enough resources that it needn't control all people, but rather, can simply ignore and exclude four-fifths of the world (54–5)

The formal sector of the economy is shrinking, leaving behind it swathes of social life marginalized from capitalist inclusion. Much of the global periphery is in effect being forcibly 'delinked' from the world economy.

Samir Amin refers to a massive extension of pauperisation, precarity and social exclusion to the point where over half the global population is now precariously situated, and the precariously situated make up 40% of the centre's popular classes and 80% of the periphery's (Amin, 2004).

Harvey argues that such exclusion is crucially political: citizenship is restricted to the economically included, and regions are awarded if they display pro-capitalist everyday beliefs (Harvey, 2006: 182, 85).

Moore (2006) shows the importance of selection of workers by criteria of 'employability,' which creates a division between included and excluded or marginalised workers. Employability is a political criterion which restricts the entry of workers into the formal workforce based on degrees of conformity.

Watkins similarly argues that the capitalism of 'information society' puts the creation of 'human capital' or capitalist subjectivity at its greatest ever position in social life (Watkins, 1998: 170–1).

Altvater 2002 — four classes including a fourth, forcibly delinked excluded class (The Growth Obsession, Socialist Register 2002)

'Sub-Saharan Africa has almost dropped out of the formal international economy' (Mann, Incoherent Empire, 55–6)

Collapse of policy implementation in much of Africa and replacement with religion, militia and informal econ org (19) — 'whole regions have now become virtually independent, probably for the foreseeable future, of all central control' (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, Criminalisation of the State in Africa, 19–20)

In Zambia, formal sector employment as a percentage of the total available labor force has declined from 17 percent in 1992 to 10.4 percent in 1999.

(What Has Happened to Organized Labor in Southern Africa? M. Anne Pitcheral, International Labor and Working-Class History, Vol. 72, No. 1, September 2007)

Works such as Mike Davis's "Planet of Slums" reveal the emergence of entire lifeworlds shaped by exclusion and marginality.

Gill — global panopticon

Hence an 'ever-widening gap' between formal polyarchy and 'authoritarianism in everyday life deriving from the increasing powerlessness of people to control. the conditions of social life' (William Robinson, Promoting Polyarchy, 376). Robinson refers to a new stratum of 'supernu-

meraries' in countries like Haiti, who are completely marginalised from production (342). The 'supernumeraries' have no direct use to capitalism and pose a constant threat of revolt (378).

Poverty as a political choice the world has made — mainly the privileged, by a series of small risk-avoidance decisions and maintenance of a habitus (Pieterse, Globalisation or Empire, 813).

Political construction of exclusion

We are witnessing the destruction of liberal democracy as state engage in ever more vicious micro-regulation and social war against minor deviance and nonconformity. The fantasmatic frame of this social war reconstructs citizenship around an ingroup-outgroup binary which forms the core of a social project or frame. It is a regime of *gleichschaltung,* of top-down coordination of the whole of society by the state, the coordination of social space as if it were a single machine with the state at its head. Hence it is not simply an extension of authoritarian elements within liberal-democracy but entails a direct rejection of the separation of state and society and the idea of a 'right to have rights.' Beyond the shifting issues invoked by apologists for repression, there is an overarching principle driving the shift to authoritarianism, an almost totalitarian attitude to everyday life. Its exclusionary discourse has become the 'touchy nodal point' of the current regime, the point at which a master- signifier is formed by means of the demonisation of a repressed Real.

Discourses of exclusion dehumanise those they label and construct oppressive social relations. By denying the experience of oppression and blocking the capacity to 'name the world,' such discourses create a strong discursive asymmetry between included and excluded, creating a situation where the excluded gain voice only through resistance. The in-group's identity is constructed through Barthesian myths. In Barthesian theory, myths introduce a transcendent element or 'second-order' meaning into signs in such a way as to operate outside of immanence, projecting an additional sphere of essential meaning. Hence, paradoxically, it is often what things 'really are' in terms of their usual discursive inscription which is mythical, as opposed to how they 'appear,' their immanent relationality. In the current field, the included, constructed as a conformist bloc, defines itself as the exclusive locus of ethical value, the only group which matters, and identifies its perspective so exclusively with 'reality' that other voices are completely shut out — defining itself, for instance, as having a right not to be disrupted, inconvenienced, 'alarmed or distressed' by others, a right to 'security,' a right to 'feel safe'; in contrast, the Other is treated as rightsless. Hence it ends up waging a constant war to silence those who reject its dominance or who are forced to seek survival beyond its rigid parameters. The violent othering of perceived deviants leads to an especially strong "us and them" where "they" are defined as a race apart and where the basic laws of causality are suspended, with the other treated as an extra-causal daemoniac evil — hence the assumption that the other is somehow outside society, which is misconceived as a whole rather than a set of relations. This leads to the disappearance of any possibility of consistent ethics, particularly of ethics in a Levinasian sense. Hence, the importance of critical literacy has increased; it is now necessary in order for one to avoid a very pervasive systemic ideology.

As Negri recognized in his early work, the locus of the current situation is an increasingly violent shift from value to command as the basis of capitalism. This contributes to the mythologisation of politics. Indeed, for the early Negri, there is a close relationship between mythology

and command, connected to the reduction of the law of value to tautology in the era of real subsumption. In this society, the loss of the boundary between capitalism and the society it exploits, creates a problem for value because there is no outside standpoint from which to measure. Today's crisis is that 'value cannot be reduced to an objective measure' because of real subsumption, which eliminates capitalism's dependence on a social Other (Negri 1996:151–2). Real subsumption is the realisation of the law of value, but also passes beyond it into mere tautology (Negri 2003: 27.). The condition of immeasurability means that real subsumption is a permanent crisis of capitalism (Negri 1998b: 221).

Exclusion hardens social conflicts, as horizontal conflicts are misrepresented as unilateral violence by the excluded and hence rendered insoluble. This is a triumph of what Kropotkin terms the 'political principle,' unmediated statist command pitted against horizontal social connections (Kropotkin, 1897).

The onslaught of state violence creates a situation of everyday insurrection. *Gleichschaltung* in its original meaning refers to pushing an electric flow through a material which resists it; this was developed as an analogy for the attempts by fascist regimes to push state control through everyday life. To deal with the problem of lack of compliance or regime penetration despite the relative scarcity of political resistance, historians of Nazi Germany such as Broszat and Mommsen formulated a concept of *resistenz.* Posited against *gleichschaltung,* this term refers to a pattern of actions in everyday life which, through noncompliance, impeded the pushing-through of top-down imperatives and constructed everyday life as a relatively impermeable space. Similar resistance is documented in Kotkin's recent work on Stalinist Russia, while Scott's research that peasant societies constructed similar patterns of everyday resistance (Scott, 1985, 1990; Kotkin, 1995). Peter Huttenberger claims that liberal-democracies do not face resistenz simply because these kinds of everyday activities are not in any case treated as deviant, because an autonomous civil society exists (Kershaw, 1993). This may well be true of certain kinds of liberal democracy, but it is not true of the kind of neo-totalitarian regimes of control I am discussing. Everyday deviance becomes resistance because of the project of control which attacks it; it also becomes necessarily more insurrectionary in direct response to the cumulative attempts to stamp it out through microregulation. What the state gains in coercive power, it loses in its ability to influence or engage with its other.

The effect of social closure is to drive dissent which would otherwise take open forms underground; denied the status of voice, it emerges in the guise of apparent inert effects. Thus, rather than an absence of resistance, there is in fact a constant subtext of resistance which is not perceived as such because it is mis-categorised as social problems, deviance, criminality, apathy, problems of "culture" and so on. Arguing against this tendency in totalitarianism, Gramsci argues that by reducing political questions to 'technical ones of propaganda and public order,' struggles are constantly fought against adversaries rendered invisible by their lack of official voice, and 'political questions are disguised as cultural ones, and as such become insoluble' (Gramsci, 1971). This should be remembered whenever politicians come out with rhetoric about for instance 'yob,' gun, knife, or drug culture — the impermeable 'culture' is itself a product of political exclusions.

The state and conformists are engaged in a constant warfare against the excluded — a warfare of which they themselves are often unaware. For there to be dialogue there must be ceasefire; and for there to be ceasefire there must be a general awareness of the existence of social war. This requires an awareness of the discourse of the other, of the ways in which the unquestioned privileging of certain discourses is a violence against the discourse of the other.

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The excluded

The excluded as a stratum (or formal grouping of social positions similar in their structural position) includes:

Radical activists and subcultures, anarchists and autonomists/autonomen Emarginati

People deemed unemployable, nonincorporable (psychologically different, deviant, etc) "Ethno-classes" and ethnic groups with "social symptom" status

People located in the marginal, survival, subsistence and usually also informal economies Hopeless and alienated people, especially youths

In the global south and the margins of the north:

Shanty-towns, "encroachers," squatters

Landless poor and marginal peasants

Peasants involved mainly in subsistence production

Indigenous groups resisting displacement, extermination or incorporation

Also a stratum of disaffected intellectuals who turn up repeatedly in dissident movements. Standpoint of excluded intersects with critical standpoint:

Guattari (Molecular Revolution 200) placing oneself as far as possible outside the system, and "what is going on"

Barthes (Mythologies 157–8) on discourse-analyst as socially excluded Barthes (Fashion System 290) to open to the world one must become alienated; to comprehend the world one must withdraw from it

A wave of network-based social movements — some emancipatory, others less so — drawing on a particular sub-group of the excluded, namely young people (often young men, sometimes educated) with no place in social life. A particularly crucial subsection of the excluded

http://www.friendsofcameroon.org/2008/03/04/cameroon-crisis-continues-as-inflation-surges/

Cameroon crisis continues as inflation surges The Financial Times

By Matthew Green in Douala, Cameroon Published: March 4 2008

Much of the anger comes from a younger generation who see few career options beyond driving motorcycle taxis, known as "Bendskins" after a dance approximating the hip-swaying motion of swerving round potholes.

Entire population groups who transgress legality to live — to access land, water, electricity, transport, etc (40) — views these things as rights when the state does not because it stresses order and resources (40) — seeking legitimacy and support, governmental agencies have to engage and compromise with popular demands (41) CHATTERJEE POLITICS GOVERNED

Giustozzi has investigated the origins of the Pakistani Taleban, revealing that it flourishes mainly among young people who do not receive 'peace, income, a sense of purpose, a social network' from the established structure of tribal power (Giustozzi 2007:39).

In a different context, Slackman (2008) suggests there is a clear link between the stifling of young people with limited opportunities is a crucial factor behind 'Islamic fervour' in Egypt

Watts (2007) has referred to what is known locally as the 'restive youth problem' as central to conflict in the Niger Delta.

> 'a tectonic shift in inter-generational politics in the region that has occurred over the last two to three decades driven by the consequences of structural adjustment and

state authoritarianism... Youth as a social category of great historical and cultural depth, provides an idiom in a gerontocratic and authoritarian setting in which power, secrecy and sometimes violence can be harnessed as a sort of counter-movement, built on the ruins of failed oil development (Watts, 2005). Youth organisations have multiplied and metastasized: they often refigure cultural traditional institutions like egbesu, agaba or mutual support clubs.2 Since the 1980s they have directly attempted to capture organs of community power (for example Community Development Committees), but also challenge directly gerontocratic rule; not least they have adopted an increasingly militant stance acting as the erstwhile liberators — vanguard movements in effect — for the oppressed of the region. As Gore and Pratten (2003:240) properly put it, youth represent 'shadow structures'

(Michael Watts, Petro-Insurgency or Criminal Syndicate? Conflict & Violence in the Niger Delta, Review of African Political Economy, Volume 34, Issue 114 December 2007 , pages 637 — 660)

Aug 09 — uprising by Boko Haram (literally "western education is sinful"), a sect opposed to western education, western commodities and the Nigerian state, ostensibly religious but targeted mainly at state targets such as prisons and police stations.

Greek revolt — controversy — while mainstream press blames unemployment and youth exclusion, activists (eg CrimethInc) focus on police abuse and capitalism — but the two are linked — perspective of excluded bridges the two

It is a sickness that starts not so much at the top but at the bottom of Greek society, in the ranks of its troubled youth. For many these are a lost generation, raised in an education system that is undeniably shambolic and hit by whopping levels of unemployment (Helena Smith, The Guardian)

Iran revolt — mainly urban young

In Iran, there is an entire dissident counterculture emerging from a similarly situated stratum of young people (Zanganeth ed 2006).

A Freeter ("a Japanese expression for people between the age of 15 and 34 who lack full time employment or are unemployed, excluding homemakers and students" — Wikipedia). Although the Japanese have coined a term for the group, they exist all over the world, and are a social force of underestimated and growing importance. The Japanese are unusual in giving it a name. This is the stratum which provides most of the participants in autonomous activism throughout the global North. In Japan, the Freeters General Union is a political body with a broadly autonomist and anti-neoliberal perspective, which organizes initiatives such as Mayday demonstrations and anti-government protests (see http://freeter-union.org/mayday/index-en.html). Many of those participating in similar protests in European countries doubtless come from a similar social position.

Whatever its name, this stratum is politically important. It is one of the most common constituencies of radical and insurgent political movements across the spectrum, and its peculiar situation — slipping outside the segmentary linear functioning of identity-narratives of paid work, consumer affluence and (nuclear) family — places it at the forefront of historical transformation.

Graham Harrison: "youth" (specially defined) as agents of revolt in Africa

Robert Wade — result of inequality is 'a lot of unemployed and angry young people' able to disrupt societies (cited Pieterse, Globalization or Empire, 68–9)

A growing number in the periphery are not only excluded from the role of full-time family-wage worker but may not get official employment at all, despite being bombarded with images of family and consumerist lifestyles (Gledhill, Power and its Disguises, 79)

Slavoj Zizek has coined the term 'social symptom' to refer to those groups excluded by such social processes — refugees, the urban poor, and so on — 'the part which, although inherent to the existing universal order, has no 'proper place' within it' (Zizek, 1999, p. 224).

Unemployed people are prevented both from actualising and renouncing work (Zizek, Revolution at the Gates, 290–1), hence show an excess in capitalism

In LatAm the 'overclass' plants itself behind 'high walls' of suburban dev (John Gray, cited Pieterse, Globalisation of Empire?, 69)

Chatterjee makes similar claims regarding India.

Marxism does not go far enough because its figures of resistance reproduce aspects of the dominant system common to capital and the exploited.

The conflict between included and excluded is superseding class conflicts among the included as the source of social antagonism today. Hence, a new division emerges which no longer follows lines of exploitation but rather of inclusion and exclusion. Alfredo Bonanno reconstructs the issue of class struggle in terms of "the division of classes between dominators and dominated, between included and excluded" (Bonanno 1993).

No longer a matter of 'passing through' capitalism, exclusion now creates opposition which amounts to a radical antagonism.

As Caffentzis puts it, 'Once again, as at the dawn of capitalism, the physiognomy of the world proletariat is that of the pauper, the vagabond, the criminal, the panhandler, the refugee sweatshop worker, the mercenary, the rioter' (1992: 321).

The stake between included and excluded movements is not about distribution or power within the system, but between ways of seeing, being and relating — scarcity vs abundance, state vs network.

Relates to underpinnings of alienation

As command replaces value as the basis of the dominant system, so the antagonism between scarcity and abundance becomes sharper. The crucial insight Deleuze and Guattari share with eco-anarchists is that scarcity has to be *actively produced* by alienated assemblages, by suppressing or warding off excesses and any recreation of (existential/psychological) abundance, a process sometimes termed 'antiproduction' (Guattari 1984: 34). For Situationists, alienated society is a kind of perpetual immiseration through suppression of the forces of life. Due to its basis in an idea of scarcity, capitalism cannot actually provide happiness, only 'force-feeding survival to satiation point' (Vaneigem 1967: 98). The idea of 'planned scarcity' finds practical significance in empirical studies of the ways in which global planners induce material shortages in the global periphery (George, 1976: Chapter 6). Scarcity thus establishes the field in which alienated social forms come into being (c.f. Sartre, 1960; Robinson, 2008). Its 'anti-production' is a perpetual process of social decomposition which actively reproduces division so as to render necessary the reconnections offered by the dominant system. 'Industrial society thus secures unconscious control of our fate by its need — satisfying from the point of view of the death instinct — to disjunct every consumer/producer in such a way that ultimately humanity would find itself be-

coming a great fragmented body held together only as the supreme God of the Economy shall decree' (Guattari 1984: 20). Hence, 'either one's desire comes to desire repression and becomes its collaborator... or it revolts against the established order and comes the under siege on all sides' (Guattari MR 256)

While the system seeks constantly to impose scarcity on the excluded, the network forms arising among the excluded are tendentially forms of abundance, whereas the repressive ideologies of the included construct scarcity as an existential necessity, hence underpinning alienation. This is particularly clear in the cases of indigenous societies and European autonomism. to 'work' in this sense (they may be productively active, but in ludic and subsistence ways). A division thus emerges between what Marshall Sahlins terms 'primitive abundance' (2004) and the existential scarcity which underpins capitalism. The conflict between the two ways of arranging ecological and geographical entities expresses itself in a series of 'resource wars.' Capitalism has to constantly grab resources to render them scarce, constantly continuing 'accumulation-by-dispossession' against a tendency of networks to recompose abundance. Beneath its social production, scarcity is 'chosen' at an existential level, as 'slave morality' and reactive desire.

We have thus moved beneath the struggle within Marxism between exploiter and exploited, to the level of the struggle over the constitution of the field of exploitation itself. We are thus in the field of Baudrillard's "Mirror of Production." Baudrillard has argued that the system now functions by coded markings and exclusions, rather than exploitation, with the key divide running between conformity inside and subversion outside (ibid. 138). The exclusions based on imposition of the code are as central to capitalism as its internal class divisions, and are framed around excluding 'symbolic power' (a Baudrillardian concept similar to Deleuzian active desire) from representational discourse (ibid.137). The truly radical class struggle is, rather, the struggle against being enclosed as a class (ibid.158). It is thus a matter of radical difference, of the kind which Marxism fails to see in indigenous societies and symbolic exchange (ibid.14). Baudrillard calls for a utopia which is totally immanent in its revolt, 'always already present' and in 'radical antagonism' with the dominant system (ibid.162–5). Revolt, therefore, emerges not at the point of exploitation, but at the point of exclusion, below the bar of meaning and at marginal points (ibid.133–4).

Hakim Bey theorises revolt as unregulated life. Capitalism is organised to prevent genuine coming-together; it only supports certain kinds of groups which are functional for it (which means, are for production or consumption), and the rest are faced with massive obstacles, such as the "business" of its members due to the pressure to work — a pressure away from autonomy which for Bey is "the single most oppressive reality we face." Even to succeed in meeting in spite of these pressures is already a victory of sorts. (Bey, Immediatism). Or as the occupiers of the Athens Business School said in December: 'This is the dilemma: with the insurgents or alone.'

`http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/2008/12/12/we-are-here-we-are-everywhere-we-are-an-image-from-the-future/`

We are here/ we are everywhere/ we are an image from the future

11/12/2008 Initiative from the occupation of the Athens School of Economics and Business]

Marxists have begun to recognize the importance of these kinds of issues. Where Marxism goes wrong, and slips into an almost theocratic modality, is in its assumption that the other of alienation is a particular knowable type of entity or essence, which can be identified with labour and progress. Hence, while Marxists rarely assert this essence explicitly, and sometimes even disavow it (while continuing to behave 'as if it still operates), certain of its characteristics can

be easily deduced — for example, that it will be based on 'labour' in some sense, that it will be industrial and scientific, and that it will be highly collective. The attributes of this image of alternative sociality form something like a rival 'trunk' pitted against capitalism, repeating the dangers of representationalism and 'substitutionism.' Marxism could reconstruct itself in a manner which takes account of Baudrillard's critique. Indeed, in autonomism it had already begun to do so. But in this situation, the Bakunin-Marx division reasserts itself.

The problem is that Marxists, and post-Marxists such as Hardt and Negri, tend to assume that the emerging 'Other' of the global exclusionary system will be

- Based on labour

- Highly communal and collectivist

- Industrial, modernist and secular

All rational assumptions if the Other is the included-but-exploited, but incomprehensible if the Other is excluded.

Politics of the excluded: networks

Three figures of excluded, indigenous, autonomous The "excluded" are most often referred to when passive.

Autonomy refers to exclusion or self-exclusion which is valorized — the construction of autonomous spaces.

Finally, indigenous peoples are constructed in binary terms as peoples excluded from or autonomous from the logics of state and capital — societies without the state.

In looking for figures of resistance, one is drawn to the space beyond hierarchical assemblages, where alternative forms of life exist or come into being. This is on the one hand, the space of the excluded, of the people and peoples deemed unincorporable or not worth incorporating by the world system, or consigned to its margins; on the other hand, it is the space of the network form as a form which contradicts, escapes and exceeds the hierarchical forms of the world system, the state and capital. This figure, the 'social logic of the excluded' so to speak, can be viewed from three different angles: as the excluded, defined in negation of the dominant system; as the logic of indigenous or non-state society, defined as a specific type of social form directed against the state and capital; and as the affinity- network form, a specific social form distinct from the hierarchical forms of state and capital.

Excluded as bearers of possibility of otherness; connected to affinity, network form, active desire — these connect to the excluded "class" as abstract machine, even though the actually-existing excluded also get pulled towards the other poles (of reactive networks, included, massification, etc)

Theorists sympathetic to social resistance such as Graeme Chesters make similar claims, attributing the ability of anti-capitalist protesters to mobilise effectively without leadership to a "swarm logic" based on distributed network forms of power (Chesters 2006).

Cf Giorgio Agamben: a new form of political subjectivity is emerging which renders the state irrelevant, and itself irrelevant to the state. 'The novelty of the coming politics is that it will no

longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but a struggle between the State and the non-State (humanity), an insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization' (1993: 85).

Some authors have gone some way in recognising the alternative logic of networks. Hardt and Negri, for example, have typified summit protests and unrest such as in Argentina as examples of a distributed network form of organisation, 'the most fully realized political example we have of the concept of the multitude' (2004: 217). Similarly, anarchist scholar Grubacic has argued that anarchism cannot exist as a stable tendency over time, as this implies parties etc; instead expresses a general tendency to identify hierarchy and seek autonomy from it, and varies with cycles of struggle. It has therefore operated as an organising logic of the WSF and similar phenomena, without being adopted as a hegemonic ideology (Grubacic, 2004: 35–6).

The technological aspect of this view is taken furthest by leftists such as Hardt and Negri (2004), who view the network form of protest movements as an outgrowth of changes in production, of the primacy of "immaterial" labour and the rise of a new kind of capitalism based on network organisation.

Where this leftist reading goes wrong, however, is in linking the network form primarily to high-tech or 'advanced' capitalist conditions. It is certainly the case that high-tech protest groups and countercultural movements use network forms, and that technologies allowing network construction are used in this construction. Hackers, open-source programmers and online protest campaigns are examples of network social forms. It is also the case, however, that similar non-hierarchical horizontal networks arise in almost every situation where people try to mobilise or cooperate outside the framework of the state and of domination. Hunter- gatherers and other indigenous societies, peasant movements, and the urban poor of the shanty-towns and ghettos are among the most obvious examples.

Networked forms among hunter-gatherers (Zerzan 1994)

Larissa Lomnitz (1977) studies survival and mutual aid networks in Latin American shanty-towns, revealing that kinship and neighbourhood relations form an entire informal economy enabling a layer of excluded people to survive on the periphery of major cities by means of horizontal relations.

Partha Chatterjee (1993) shows how the formation of Indian national identity leaves a trail of 'fragments' — identities based on class, caste, ethnicity, region, religion, and so on — which provide the basis for entire areas of social life organised beyond the reach of the state, in private associations and homes.

Hecht and Simone (1994) provide a series of examples from African societies of horizontal social forms such as 'popular neighbourhoods' which 'produce informal, and often illegal, associations, alliances, strategies and practice, that provide an infrastructure for the community and a measure of functional autonomy' (Hecht and Simone, 1994: 14–15).

Affinity-network form as global alternative to state and capital

To attach ethical value to the politics of the excluded, one needs to insist on the right to voice. In today's social war, the other does not even have the dignity of an enemy in a fair fight, but is treated as unspeakable. Without overcoming this primary exclusion, social problems will remain intractable, and resistance in everyday life will remain both necessary and justified.

One could, however, theorise the third option of 'chaos' in rather more affirmative terms. In authors such as Graeme Chesters (2006) and Hakim Bey (2003), the idea of 'chaos' is given positive overtones connected to those of Chaos Theory, as a proliferation of nondenumerable

and uncontrollable affirmative forces in a situation of complexity and decentred power. This is the affirmative, active underpinning to the image of chaos or 'anarchy' as terrifying Real. The breakdown of world order could involve the diffusion of power on models similar to those in indigenous societies as theorised by Clastres. The 'capabilities' developed by global resistance movements could then become a new 'organising logic' pitted against the world system, replacing control-systems with horizontal social and ecological relations (Sassen, 2006). Alternative network forms are *structurally different* from dominant hierarchic forms, and the society they form operates differently, by a different social logic.

Need to see the rose that grows from concrete, before seeing the thorns. (Today, only the thorns are seen).

Need to politicize exclusion (anti-sociality etc) into autonomy. Of course, this politicisation of "anti-sociality" is incompatible with any attempts to win over the "decent majority" by appealing to their existing beliefs, attachments, and discourse. The "decent majority" can be faced only with the stark demand that it unlearn its dominance, its impositional discourse, and that it become other.

The revolution-to-come is not a new order but a breaking down of all social orders based on asymmetry, in favour of a horizontality without borders. It is being built, often unconsciously, in the constant everyday resistance to social control. And it is this conflict — between included and excluded, between an implicit politics of affirmation of voice and an exclusionary discourse of ontological privilege — which defines the social conflicts of our era and of our future.

In distinction to Mike Davis's 'planet of slums' (2006), a world where the majority are radically excluded, the coming world is a 'world of squats' (with the social centre as paradigm), or rather of informal diffuse networks distributed transversally, in which the excluded space becomes a space of abundance. The 'world of squats' might be a 'world of slums' with problems of resource extraction addressed and local areas reconfigured as planes of ecological connection.

(Davis even talks about a kind of war between the core world and this kind of peripheral shadow-world);

Maybe enclosure is the rise of scarcity, and unenclosed land/nature is the condition for abundance? The problem being that squats/slums have reclaimed too little to produce more than survival?

Hence, as the Uwa Declaration puts it, 'the coming together of many voices, hands, cries. etc., make people free from aggressors and destroyers.' 'The key points of departure, then, are a strong sense of connectedness to the places we inhabit and one another' (McMarvill and los Ricos, n.d.).

One must thus radically re-theorise wealth and poverty. We believe these are less accurately expressed in western thought than in indigenous conceptions which view wealth as a greater intensity of social and ecological relations on which one can draw for survival, wellbeing and intensity, and poverty is a lesser intensity or extent of such relations. In autonomist terms, one could associate the two poles with social composition and decomposition respectively. Social composition involves the construction of a dense web or network, whereas decomposition breaks down network connections and replaces them with hierarchical dyads of powerful and powerless.

The three alternatives in Barber's *Jihad versus McWorld* (1996), the three possibilities for the world in Arrighi's various works, and other analyses of this type, typically pose an alternative between capitalism, the state and the included, or between neoliberal capitalism and a more inclusive capitalism, or between capitalism, reactive networks and the included. The kind of phenomena we understand in relation to the affinity-network category — autonomous social

movements, indigenous societies, networks of the excluded — are viewed as small-scale, largely irrelevant, extremely marginal or powerless — certainly not as the beginnings of a new world. Why do we assume that these phenomena prefigure a wider alternative?

The invisibility of affinity-networks is a product of a perspectival distortion. Affinity networks by their very nature often pursue invisibility or are rendered invisible by the dominant frame of representation.

In addition, there are strong psychological reasons for those with attachments to the various alienated groups to deny the anxiety-inducing power of excluded networks.

And we would expect emerging logics to be less clearly articulated than dominant logics. As Negri argues, the transformative moment appears as 'fireworks and flares,' not as a clear trajectory (2003: 47).

Today, the same fear of the "rabble " as in Marx

Hardt and Negri's fear of insurrection, in Multitude

Fear of eg Barber and Held, of reactive networks, hence need for global state etc

Reluctance of socialist political groups to denounce unconditionally the new forms of exclusion, the war on the "anti-social" etc

And especially to abandon the assumption of a community with norms, with a desire and a pressure to conform, hence by implication of roles, of false performances, and of the field of fantasy, the split in social life, and the function of the trunk

Possibility of overthrow

For the excluded, insurrection is empowering. It is like something buried, breaking the surface; an ability to speak, to interrupt the social text; empowerment against the bullies and "authority" figures who make people feel disempowered, violated, humiliated and enraged.

The struggle between the excluded and the system is asymmetrical, but it is important to realise that victory IS achievable — to win, the system has to maintain the appearance of order, the invisibility or visible powerlessness of the excluded; in contrast, the excluded (like guerrillas) simply have to persist in preventing the system from realising its goals.

Ultimately the confrontation is won or lost on the proliferation and persistence of forms of life and social relations, but breaking the monologue of the spectacle is a major part of this.

The excluded are locked out of the media (though an included other is occasionally let in, one never hears for instance advocacy of law-breaking or self-defence), and this contributes to the construction of the excluded as "social symptom."

(In contrast, texts of the excluded find their way into academia, but usually with some delay).

To see from the standpoint of the excluded, or of one particular excluded group, including the general positions derived from minoritarianism (particularly regarding open space), leads to the active affinity form (whatever the specifics of the group).

To see from the standpoint of the excluded/one excluded group but with an aspiration to majoritarian status leads to the reactive "predatory" form.

Emergence of organic ideologies of excluded, e.g. Bonanno, Zapatistas. Several distinct groups of texts: post-left anarchy and post-autonomism, indigenous rights movement, various Southern anti-colonial movements, etc.

Problems for network politics

There are three main dangers to active networks:

- Drawn into "masses" in Baudrillard's sense (recuperated, rendered passive)

- Transmuted into reactive networks

- Domesticated through patronage and deference

One rarely finds "pure" excluded — one finds logic of excluded in hybrid articulations with other logics or at least their fantasies — e.g. marginality which is primarily a survival strategy outside the formal economy, but is plugged into it at the margins, and may be connected to fantasies of inclusion.

The excluded don't always develop critique of dominant model which is spread in media images etc. Hence can be pulled back into dominant discourse.

Pitcheral, Storpor — same structural forces which cause impoverishment make consumer goods increasingly available and visible.

The excluded are often tempted by desperation, pulled towards reactive attachments (to an identity which includes) or towards predatory actions against other oppressed people (based on a molar self, or on highly privileged single attachments such as drug use). The radical potential is not in these temptations but in networks and transversality.

Need to see in movements of the excluded the radical potential and not only the reactive distortions.

Media response to Boko Haram: need for MORE education. But the basic insight into exclusion is correct. The problem is its narrow, group-specific articulation.

Emotional appeal is appeal of affinity (small-world network)

Why do networks sometimes take an affinity form and sometimes a reactive form? Our suspicion is that the two kinds of networks exist on a continuum, with situations of abundance and scarcity tending to produce oscillations towards one pole or the other. In G. William Skinner's study of Chinese peasants, the image of peasants as traditionalist and closed is challenged by showing that villagers' responses to external opportunities and dangers led to changes in the normative sphere of peasant life. Whereas an open context led to openness, a hostile situation with external instability led to greater closure and normative intolerance (Skinner 1971). This suggests that a real external threat can generate or at least strengthen local reactive forces, and that a safe 'transversal' context opens up communities whereas a dangerous 'globalised' context closes them.

Reactive networks tend to be a kind of 'group active nihilism,' similar to Vaneigem's idea of 'active nihilism.'

But the question is how they can learn to valorize what they are, rather than mapping arborescent 'norms' onto their movements or scrambling to find a place on the inside.

Capitalism and the state can also incorporate networks as 'roots.' I would dispute the claim that either can be entirely networked, but they can and do incorporate networks and subordinate parts. These are what Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and later Day (2005), term 'radicle' as opposed to 'radical' networks.

NOTE: Bakunin references: chapter references are to Marxism, Freedom and the State. Excerpt references are to excerpts from Statism and Anarchy at Marxists.org.

Some of this is new. Some is modified from Karatzogianni and Robinson, *Power, Conflict and Resistance in the Contemporary World* (forthcoming, Routledge). Some is modified from "The Oppressive Discourse of Global Exclusion," in Mullard and Cole, *Globalization, Citizenship and the War on Terror.*

Post-Anarchism and Marxism

Simon Choat

Power and Subjectivity: A Critique of Post-Anarchism

Prominent post-anarchists include Todd May, Saul Newman, and Lewis Call: they argue both that there is a continuum between classical anarchism and post-structuralism and that the latter can radicalize and reenergize the former. It is claimed by post-anarchists that whereas Marxism is economically reductionist and places its faith in the notion of a vanguard party of the industrial proletariat, both classical anarchism and post-structuralism advance a more subtle analysis of power in its own right, irreducible to the economy, and place their faith in resistance from below, opposing all forms of hierarchy. Classical anarchism is nonetheless criticized for retaining an essentialist concept of the human subject and for focusing too much on the power of the state. It is argued that post-structuralism, with its decentring of subjectivity and its deepening of the critique of power beyond state and capital, can here act as a corrective, leading to a posta-narchism — or post-structuralist anarchism — that can act as an alternative to the authoritarian and anachronistic discourse of Marxism.

This paper challenges some of the assumptions of post-anarchism, arguing that post-anarchists have been too quick to marginalize Marxism. Post-anarchists are correct to claim that the classical anarchist critique of Marxism is valuable — but they are also correct to highlight the naivety of classical anarchism's assumptions about subjectivity and power, and it is precisely here that it is beneficial to turn to Marx. Whereas classical anarchism remains reliant on a conventional concept of human nature, Marx anticipates post-structuralism by analysing the ways in which different forms of subjectivity are produced. Similarly, while classical anarchism tends to view power as purely repressive and confined to the state, it is Marx who widens the scope of power, examining relations of domination beyond the state and conceptualizing power as productive (of subjectivity) rather than merely repressive. I conclude that a contemporary politics informed by post-structuralism can best succeed if it draws on the insights of both anarchism and Marxism.

In this paper I offer a critique of what is sometimes called 'post-anarchism,' focusing on its reading of Marx. I shall argue that post-anarchists have been too quick to marginalize Marxism. My aim is not to prolong or revive the dispute between anarchists and Marxists that now stretches across three centuries, but rather to stake a claim for the importance of *both* anarchism and Marxism to contemporary political thought. I shall begin by offering some brief definitions, before outlining post-anarchist views on both classical anarchism and Marxism, and then going on to present my own arguments about the continuing relevance of Marxism.

Post-anarchism is a broad current within anarchism rather than a unified doctrine or practice of its own: there are numerous disagreements among thinkers within this current. Not the least of these disagreements is about what it should be called. Probably the three most prominent authors in this area are Saul Newman, Todd May, and Lewis Call, each of whom have written book-length studies of the topic: Newman writes of post-anarchism, May of poststructuralist anarchism, and Call of postmodern anarchism. These different labels are not insignificant, in that they reflect different influences: Newman draws upon Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, and Lacan; May upon Lyotard, Deleuze, and Foucault; Lewis Call upon Nietzsche, Foucault, and Baudrillard. Without ignoring or trivializing these differences, it is nonetheless possible to identify common threads, and thus to speak of a coherent, if loose and flexible, movement. For purposes of consistency I shall refer throughout this paper to post-anarchism and post-structuralism.

The crucial common claim that post-anarchists make is that post-structuralism can be understood as a radicalization of classical anarchism: this means both that post-structuralism is in the tradition of classical anarchism — there is 'an ethical continuum' between them, to use Saul Newman's words[1] — and that post-structuralism can act as a remedy to the faults and flaws of classical anarchism without betraying its spirit and aims. Post-anarchism thus posits poststructuralism as both a rereading of classical anarchism and as a development within the tradition of anarchism. Classical anarchism here refers to the work of nineteenth-century thinkers like Bakunin, Kropotkin, Proudhon, and so on, but can also cover twentieth-century anarchists like Murray Bookchin. Post-structuralism is a more problematic term. Rather than trying to develop my own definition of post-structuralism here, what I am interested in is how post-anarchism understands and uses this term. We have already seen the kinds of thinkers who are covered by term: Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, and so on. Post-anarchism identifies two key characteristics that are shared by these thinkers, which justify grouping them together in the first place and form the focus of post-anarchism's interest. First, post-structuralism is anti-humanist: rather than taking the human subject as something that is given, it reveals the textual and material practices that constitute the subject. As Todd May puts it: 'If poststructuralist political thought could be summed up in a single prescription, it would be that radical political theory, if it is to achieve anything, must abandon humanism in all its forms.'[2] Secondly, it is argued that post-structuralism rethinks the concept and analysis of power: the aim is no longer to establish the legitimate boundaries of power, placing limits between the individual and the state, but to demonstrate that power is coextensive with social relations, acting not merely to suppress a pre-existing subject but also and more fundamentally to constitute subjects in the first place.. Analysis of these two concepts — subjectivity and power — is going to frame my argument.

With these brief definitions out of the way, we can now focus on how classical anarchism is interpreted by post-anarchism. Classical anarchism is praised by post-anarchists above all for its understanding of power: wary of the concept and practices of representation, classical anarchism offers a bottom-up analysis of power — meaning both that it recognizes that power invests the entire social field rather than emanating from a single central source and that it privileges political action from below. Characterized in this fashion, classical anarchism is contrasted favourably with Marxism. It is argued that whereas Marxism is economically reductionist, viewing all power

[1] Saul Newman, *Unstable universalities:poststructuralism and radical politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 15.

[2] Todd May, *The Political Theory ofPoststructuralist Anarchism* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 75.

as merely an expression of class domination, classical anarchism correctly saw that power must be analysed in its own right: irreducible to the workings of the economy, power relations exist throughout society and need to be analysed in their specificity, without reference to a uniform model of domination. By isolating a single site of power in this way, Marxism also privileges certain political actors. Just as power emanates from a single source, so there is only one agent capable of resisting and overthrowing this power: the industrial working class is identified as the sole possible instrument of genuine political change, because of its unique place within the only kind of power relations that really matter for Marxism, namely the relation of exploitation between labour and capital. In contrast, classical anarchism does not limit revolutionary potential to a single class, instead supporting agents dismissed by Marx, such as the peasantry and lumpenproletariat. Finally, Marxism not only privileges a particular revolutionary actor, but also a particular path to revolution, supporting an authoritarian party and proposing a dictatorship of the proletariat. In contrast, classical anarchism consistently opposes all state forms and all hierarchies, including those of the party. So far, these are standard anarchist criticisms of Marxism, centred on its supposedly reductive analysis of the political situation and its authoritarian organizational structures. The novelty of post-anarchism lies in its linking of classical anarchism to contemporary post-structuralism. The claim is that the classical anarchist view of power as a decentred field of struggle which refuses to privilege any single political agency or model anticipates post-structuralist views on power. Classical anarchism and post-structuralism are thus seen as united in their opposition to Marxism, which is dismissed as an anachronistic discourse whose diagnoses and prognoses are not merely mistaken but dangerous.

Classical anarchism is, however, not uncritically endorsed or appropriated by postanarchists. It is seen as suffering from some of the naiveties common to most modern political theories, including Marxism. As Saul Newman puts it: 'Anarchism remains buried within an Enlightenment political paradigm.'[3] There are two central and related charges. First, classical anarchism relies on an essentialist concept of human nature, positing a rational, unified subject in possession of stable and immutable characteristics. This concept of a human essence is then used as a standard with which to critique and resist forms of power. Opposed to the naturality of the human subject within an organic community is the artificial power of the state. This leads to a second naivety within classical anarchism: its view that power is repressive and centred mainly in the state. Although it is commended for deepening and broadening the analysis of power, classical anarchism is simultaneously rebuked for not going far enough in this direction. There is an equivocation in classical anarchism between, to use Todd May's terms, a tactical approach which recognizes a plurality of irreducible but intersecting sites of power and a strategic approach that assumes that there is a single site of struggle and therefore a single goal (namely overthrowing the state).[4] While it avoids the economic reductionism that has been imputed to Marxism, it is argued that anarchism remains too focused on the state as the prime agency and site of power in society. In accordance with its conceptualization of political agency in terms of an essential human nature, anarchism understands power only as a suppressive force, constraining and limiting the natural powers and capacities of the human subject. The goal of political practice is therefore to overthrow this repressive force in order to liberate our essential qualities as human beings. These two

[3] Saul Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: anti-authoritarianism and the dislocation of power,* p. 55.

[4] May, *The Political Theory of Poststructuralist Anarchism,* p. 60.

elements of classical anarchism are thus intimately linked: the target of power is human nature, and it is human nature that makes possible criticism of and resistance to power.

Post-anarchists argue that it is here in particular that post-structuralism has something to offer anarchism. Post-structuralism's challenge to traditional theories of the subject undermines the notion that there is a unified human essence. The subject is rethought as the product of competing forces, and the focus of interest shifts to the mechanisms through which the subject is constituted. Correspondingly, power is conceptualized not merely as repressive but as productive: it is practices of power that constitute the subject. Hence as in classical anarchism the themes of power and subjectivity are in post-structuralism intimately linked, but in a very different way: power is constitutive of a subjectivity that is never merely given but is always the result of historically contingent practices.

Although the current of post-anarchism has generated some lively discussion, this discussion has so far largely been confined to the anarchist community. Critics have thus tended to concentrate on post-anarchism's understanding and interpretation of classical anarchism. A number of commentators have argued that the anarchist tradition has been unfairly and misleadingly represented: anarchism, it is argued, is a far more varied tradition than postanarchism claims, and is far less beholden to essentialist and humanist philosophies. This leads to the conclusion either that anarchism already has more in common with post-structuralism than has been acknowledged, or that post-structuralism might have something to learn from anarchism.[5] Because the responses to post-anarchism have so far come mainly from within the anarchist community, its criticisms of Marxism have largely been ignored — not because they are deemed to be of no relevance or interest, but because they are taken as self-evident truths that need no further discussion.[6] I am going to bracket the question of the accuracy of postanarchism's representation of classical anarchism — not because I think it is accurate or because I think it is not an interesting question, but because I would like to pursue a different line of enquiry: I would like to claim that it is Marxism that has been unfairly and misleadingly represented by post-anarchism. This is not to say that its criticisms of Marxism are wholly without justification or merit. Rather, it is to claim that Marxism has more to offer than has been acknowledged. In fact if we are looking for forerunners of post-structuralism then Marxism seems a far more convincing candidate than anarchism. At the very least Marxism deserves more than the cursory dismissal it has received at the hands of post-anarchism. Post-anarchism has argued that classical anarchism provides naive analyses of power and subjectivity — but it is precisely in these areas that it is beneficial to turn to Marxism, which is what I would like to do now. Rather than drawing from the entire history of Marxist theory I suggest we turn to Marx himself. Anarchists and post-anarchists alike have tended to conflate Marx and Marxism, seeing the failures of Marxist regimes in the twentieth century as confirmation of the failings of Marx's own work, and characterizing Marxist theory after Marx as little more than a perpetual and necessarily hopeless attempt to justify the unjustifiable.[7] The

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[5] The first conclusion is reached by Jesse Cohn, 'What is Postanarchism "Post"?,' *Postmodern Culture* 13(1) (2002) <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/v013/13.1cohn.html>, last accessed 31 July, 2009, and Jesse Cohn and Shawn Wilbur, 'What's Wrong with Postanarchism?'

[6] An exception is Benjamin Franks, 'Postanarchism: A critical assessment,' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 12(2) (2007), 127–145, who while reviewing some of the common anarchist critiques of post-anarchism also offers a short defence of Marx and class politics (137).

[7] Todd May, for example, suggests that we should go 'in the direction not of Marx's writings, but in that of their legacy in political philosophy. It is Marxism, rather than Marx, that we must address.' May, *The Political Theory of Poststructuralist Anarchism,* p. 18.

distinction I want to make between Marx and Marxism is not a desperate attempt to save Marx or absolve him of responsibility. The aim is not to effect a return to a truer Marx, untainted by the events undertaken in his name, but to turn to Marx as the most original thinker and potent resource in the Marxist tradition. It seems to me that this approach is far more in the spirit of post-structuralism than is the repudiation of Marx undertaken by the post-anarchists: thinkers like Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze consistently and repeatedly distinguish between Marx and Marxism — not as a way of effacing the connection between Marx and Marxism, but as part of an insistence that any connections must be studied in their specificity and with care, and a recognition that Marx still has much to offer.

A central claim of post-anarchism is that post-structuralism undertakes a decentring of subjectivity and offers a subject without metaphysical grounding, which contrasts favourably with classical anarchism's conventional notion of human nature. It is clear that to an extent Marx shares with classical anarchism this conventional notion of human nature. The concept of alienation, which is present throughout Marx's work, certainly seems to rely on the idea that there are certain essential human attributes. But alongside this conventional view, there is something much more novel in Marx: in contrast to his anarchist contemporaries, Marx fatally undermines the concept of human essence. As early as the 'Theses on Feuerbach,' he displaces 'the essence of man' into 'the ensemble of the social relations': in effect, there is no human essence, because what was taken as essential is shown by Marx to be mutable and historically contingent.[8] Some post-anarchists have argued that the anarchist Max Stirner might be seen as a forerunner of post-structuralism ideas about subjectivity: in arguing that the concept of 'Man' is nothing more than a form of power, an abstraction that enslaves the individual, Stirner completely rejects the idea that there is a fixed human essence. This reappropriation of Stirner is not wholly convincing, however. As Marx points out in his lengthy critique of Stirner in *The German Ideology,* Stirner sees the concept of 'Man' — along with those of God, emperor, fatherland, and so on — as nothing more than an abstraction, and as such believes that one need only personally decide to rid oneself of this abstraction in order to be free. He thus commits the error that Marx attributes to all Young Hegelians: believing that the world is ruled by ideas, Stirner thinks that one need only combat these ideas in order to achieve liberation. But as Marx argues, if one destroys the idea of the emperor, one still has the real, actually existing emperor to deal with. Likewise, if we rid ourselves of the concept of Man, we will still be left with the actual social relations that underlie this abstraction.

For Marx the aim of criticism is not merely to refute abstraction but to explain its genesis: to show how abstract ideas are related to material conditions. It is this argument that aligns Marx rather than Stirner or any other anarchist with post-structuralism. As Saul Newman correctly argues, whereas structuralism tended to dissolve the subject into a determining structure, the novelty of post-structuralism is that it shows that the subject is not merely determined but constituted at the intersection of various relations and practices.[9] This is precisely what Marx seeks to do: rather than simply dissolving the subject, making it the empty, shifting centre of a network of social relations, Marx demonstrates how the subject is *produced.* A substantial part of volume one of *Capital* is dedicated to this aim. The central chapters of that book show that

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[8] Karl Marx 'Theses on Feuerbach,' in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works Volume 5* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), p. 4.

[9] Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan,* pp. 13–14.

the individual is not simply an abstraction, as Stirner thinks: the individual is not merely the invention of liberal ideology or the ideal precondition or result of the exchange process; the individual is produced in a series of concrete material operations that Marx catalogues in some detail. Marx is clear that in order to maintain the exploitation of labour, it is not enough to rely on 'the silent compulsion of economic relations': capitalism needs individuals who have been disciplined and moulded so that they fit into the production process like cogs in a machine.[10] Marx thus describes the production of what Foucault calls 'docile bodies': bodies augmented in economic force but diminished in political force.[11] This explains why Foucault explicitly and repeatedly cites *Capital Volume One* in *Discipline and Punish*, and why certain passages in both books are practically interchangeable.

Related to this rethinking of subjectivity, there is in Marx a reconceptualization of power. Just as Marx continues to rely on conventional notions of human nature, so to an extent he remains caught within a traditional way of theorizing power. The classic definition of political power that is found in the *Manifesto* — where it is characterized as 'merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another'[12] — clearly remains indebted to the kinds of naiveties that poststructuralism seeks to expose and undermine. It suggests that power is the property of a single group, emanating from a single source and operating solely through repression. But in the same way that Marx undermines the very notions of human nature that he simultaneously continues to rely upon, so too does he destabilize the conventional view of power that he appears committed to. When Marx details the operations through which the capitalist mode of production produces the kinds of individuals that it needs to function he is describing operations of power: a power which is productive more than it is repressive. Post-anarchists sometimes argue that there is an equivalent naivety in Marxism and anarchism here: just as Marx reduces power to the economy, so classical anarchists tend to reduce all power to the state. But Marx's move is quite different from that of anarchism. Marx agrees with post-anarchism that classical anarchism focuses too much on the state. (This is one of the accusations that he levels against Bakunin, for example.) By demonstrating that the apparently free and equal exchange between worker and capitalist sustains and is predicated upon relations of domination — and that it relies upon practices of power that are productive of different subjectivities — Marx is not offering a reductive view of power in which the political field of power relations is reduced to the economy and power is given secondary status with respect to economic relations. He is instead expanding the analysis of power, demonstrating both that power cannot be reduced to a single institution and that it permeates relations previously thought to be outside power. In classical political economy the economic realm is one of natural and spontaneous order and harmony to be left largely free from the artificial political constraints and interferences of the state: Marx's novelty is to demonstrate that this supposedly neutral field of interaction is in fact invested with relations of domination. This is not a reduction of the political to the economic but a politicization of the economic, and thus the imbrication of politics and economics, creating what Etienne Balibar has called a 'short-

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[10] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One,* trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 899.

[11] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 138.

[12] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto,* ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 26

circuit' between the two.[13] It is not Marx who reduces politics to economics, as both anarchists and post-anarchists have suggested: on the contrary, what Marx shows is that capitalism itself reduces politics to the economy, as it constantly undermines traditional political institutions and transforms all relations into mere economic transactions.[14] This is what Deleuze recognizes in Marx when he claims that capitalism functions through an axiomatic instead of through coding or overcoding.

We thus find in Marx an analysis of power not unlike that found in post-structuralism: power not as a possession used by one social group to repress another, but power as a field of conflictual social relations that is productive of different subject positions. Necessarily connected to this rethinking of power, we find in Marx a new way of thinking about subjectivity that anticipates post-structuralism. It might be objected that while it may be possible to find these things in Marx and therefore characterize Marx as a forerunner of post-structuralism, we can only do so if we ignore much else that is in Marx, picking and choosing from his work and discarding parts that we do not like. Two points can be made in response to this objection. First, the nature of Marx's work makes it inevitable that this approach is used whether we like it or not: the forms and content of his work are so varied that we cannot help but be selective; any reading of his work will always be a partial interpretation. Marx himself does not offer his work as some kind of grand, unified system, and explicitly criticizes those who view his writings as some kind of 'master key' that can unlike the secrets of all societies regardless of geographical or historical context.[15] Secondly, this selective approach to Marx is no different from the approach that postanarchism itself takes toward classical anarchism: rejecting the residual essentialism in classical anarchism, post-anarchism nonetheless finds much else that is valuable in this tradition. This approach is inspired by post-structuralism, and indeed we find that post-structuralist thinkers themselves read Marx in this way: Derrida, for example, is insistent that there are many Marxes to choose from, and hence that any reading of Marx must be an 'active interpretation': 'a critical, selective, and filtering reaffirmation.'[16] It seems to me that in its dismissive attitude towards Marxism, post-anarchism risks not only contravening the spirit of post-structuralism but also placing itself in a rather strange position whereby it values classical anarchism in spite of classical anarchism's failure to recognize the productivity of power and the decentring of subjectivity, while simultaneously rejecting Marxism even though Marxism does recognize these things.

In post-anarchist theory, Marxism acts as a foil: it is both used as a contrast to highlight the strengths of anarchism, and at other times aligned with classical anarchism to be contrasted with the sophistications of post-structuralism. The effect is to render Marxism irrelevant to our contemporary situation, exposed and surpassed by the advances of post-structuralism but unlike classical anarchism incapable of redemption. My purpose in eliciting certain connections

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[13] Etienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx,* trans. James Swenson (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 138.

[14] In his recent book on Jacques Ranciere, Todd May suggests that Iris Marion Young usefully argues that capitalism reduces politics to economics. He does not, however, acknowledge that this argument is made by Marx, instead dismissing Marx as an example of what Ranciere calls 'metapolitics,' i.e. the dissolution of politics into a non-political realm (in Marx, the economy). See Todd May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Ranciere: Creating Equality* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), pp. 28, 44–46.

[15] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), p. 379

[16] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International,* trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 91–92.

between Marxism and post-structuralism is to challenge this view not by simply reversing it and demonstrating that it is Marxism that has contemporary relevance and anarchism that should be condemned as an anachronism. Rather I have tried to show that Marxism deserves an equal hearing alongside anarchism. This is not an uncritical endorsement of Marxism in which we take it as it is and incorporate its insights as they stand. On the contrary, just as it has been argued that post-structuralism can offer a rereading of anarchism, so it is to be hoped that Marxism can be transformed by an encounter with post-structuralism. It is one of the many merits of post-structuralist thought that consideration of the questions it raises may initiate and facilitate the development of a more productive relationship between Marxism and anarchism.

<http://info.interactivist.net/node/2471>, last accessed 31 July, 2009; the second conclusion is reached by Allan Antliff, 'Anarchy, Power, and Poststructuralism,' *SubStance* 36(2) (2007), 56–66. A slightly different viewpoint, with criticisms of post-anarchism from a position much more sympathetic to poststructuralism, is provided by Michael Glavin, 'Power, Subjectivity, Resistance: Three Works on Postmodern Anarchism,' *New Formulation* 2(2) (2004) <http://www.newformulation.org/4glavin.htm>, last accessed 18 August, 2009.

Hardt and Negri: Anarchists or (Post)Marxists?

David Bates
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