

BLACK ROSE

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Volume 2

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En quo discordia cives produxit miseros

This is the seventh issue of Black Rose, and the second "Editor's Introduction" to begin with an apology. Regular readers will have noted that our publishing schedule has been interrupted over the last several months and perhaps have noticed that the composition of the Black Rose group has changed with this issue. The cause of both is the same: disagreement within the group that prevented the progress of the project and which led to a series of resignations from the group. I wish I could say that the source of the disagreement and subsequent resignations was one of political principle, but I can not. While some political issues were of course involved, the root issue was one of personality, and the conflict thus unfortunate, unnecessary, and wasteful.

Those of us who did not resign have joined with others and will continue to publish Black Rose as regularly as we can, the only mitigating factor being the ubiquitous, but too often absent one—money. Black Rose over the first six issues has established an identity for itself and steadily increased its readership. Black Rose is clearly concerned with bettering the human condition, is tied to no one particular political or social movement, and is seriously committed to increasing freedom in the world. The responsibility to ourselves, our readers, and our beliefs overrides any petty personal differences and is the source of our continuing commitment.

O as frothing wounds of roses
Harry summer over a wintry sea,
So does thy very strangeness
Bring me ever nearer thee

—Kenneth Patchen

Our age is one of paradox and reversal, where the reasonable has become irrational, where progress seems regressive, where enlightenment brings with it darkness, where barbarism flows from civilization, where material plentitude creates spiritual poverty, where mass organization suffocates individuality, where ideologies of liberation become rationales of domination. It is an age of achievement and wonder, an age of violence and uncertainty. It is an age in which the place of humanity in the universe is unsettled. It is our age, but we are scarce at home in it.

Is it any wonder, then, that creeds, sects, movements, and ideologies abound, all claiming to make sense of an inchoate, though organized, world? Creeds, sects, movements, and ideologies of left, right, and center, secular and religious, materialist and idealist, all promising security, a place in the world, a barrier however fragile against dark fear. These creeds, etc. fill a need; they aren't necessarily harmful in most forms. But they are myths, partial truths, and, in organized form, potentially dangerous, enemies of tolerance, freedom, and open thought.

Black Rose, on the other hand, preaches no dogma; it merely publishes a variety of articles on a number of subjects from sundry, though not all, points of view. For some this indicates a lack of coherence or commitment. Black Rose provides no "theory" to key "practice", no guide to choose the correct "tactics" and "strategy", is tied to no one "movement". But this is to make no criticism at all, or at least no telling criticism.

I have seen capitalist (or developed or whatever) nations commit great atrocities. I have seen socialist countries do the same. I have seen liberal politicians move to reduce freedom and maximize dependency, and conservatives do the same. I have seen atheists do horrible things and religious people do as bad. I have also known good capitalists, socialists, atheists, and theists. I have thus concluded that whatever the ideology, the most important factor is that people be good-hearted. Capitalism or socialism, liberal or conservative, atheist or theist, these are genuine differences in some important ways. But at root these ideological differences pale before the fact that all these ideologies create forms of misery and that none of them matter before basic decency. Thus, while questions of belief and organization are important, the most important thing is values: the framework around which political and social action should be constructed ought to be values, a set of principles which allow for the widest possible scope of activity, application, and discussion.

"Political ideals must be based upon ideals for the individual life. The aim of politics should be to make the lives of individuals as good as possible." (Bertrand Russell, Political Ideals) After all, why not? This certainly sounds reasonable. But in fact this approach runs counter to that prevalent in our century, that being to first consider the claims of the "totality" and then the individual, the assumption being that social good entails individual good. In the end this usually means that society has to be organized properly, with goods to be apportioned, each to get a proper share, though not usually the same share. But if so-called "social justice"

is achieved and you still aren't happy, what good is "social justice" to you? If society is a fiction, being composed of individuals, then why not start with individuals, see that good is first to be had for them, and let social good follow?

It seems to me, quite simply, that the authoritarian principle is inherent in the very fact of looking at the community, with regard to political and social problems, only in terms of the totality and considering only the conceptual and mechanical congruence of the parts and the efficient functioning of the whole. In fact, the preoccupation with totality implies that human society is an organism whose laws we know, and by implying this it also implies that we can, indeed, that we must, modify it by means of more or less violent external intervention.

Now it is obvious that if we set out with this postulate that we will never arrive at the autonomous individual, the free, self-assured man who is the bulwark, not a "part"—not a cog or even an organ—of any community that wants to be both civil and orderly.

Nicola Chiaromonte, *The Worm of Consciousness and Other Essays*

The things that make an individual life good are in outline very simple and I feel generally agreed upon. First would be material security, the securing of the means of life through work. Beyond that we would want to encourage diversity, to prevent each from being alike and to provide the widest possible tolerance for individual differences. "It is not one ideal for all men, but a separate ideal for each separate man, that has to be realized if possible." (Russell) Development of individuality means freedom, that aside from only necessary social obligations individuals ought to be free to choose their own options. This freedom entails the absence of arbitrary authority and unnecessary control, meaning that power over others ought to be minimal. Freedom, however, is not an absolute. It is affected, or limited, by responsibility to others. Respect for others is the necessary "qualifier" to any consideration of individual freedom. Humans live in communities, with life being in a real sense a cooperative effort. We would want to develop a real sense and awareness of mutual aid not to limit individuality but to enrichen it and make it possible.

*It is a question of mutual being
a question of congruence not identity
of proximity occupying the same
space at a different time
a similar breathing in a common atmosphere.*

—with apologies to Kenneth Rexroth

In previous times individuality was emphasized to the detriment of social needs. Our age goes the opposite way. Our age is the age of the mass person, one in which what it means to be an individual is a burning problem. We seem lost at sea. The situation needs to be rectified without falling into either of the extremes of collectivism or of individuality, avoiding the bad points of each extreme while retaining their virtues. The answer, I feel, is contained in the well-known phrase, "Small is beautiful," or decentralization.

Large scale organizations don't work any longer, leave the individual adrift, promote an ethical nihilism. Small scale organizations, on the other hand, do work, though not perhaps in the same way large scale ones do. In a small scale organization the individual can clearly matter, with a share of sovereignty that would have some weight. In the small scale organization a real sense of community can develop because each can easily see how the other is more than a mere part but rather something meaningful. Thus, in a small scale organization value is important, and decent behavior more easily the norm. In a small scale society, or a society composed of small scale organizations, what is good for the individual (that is, the ideals I sketched out before) can become a reality. In large scale or mass society the chances are rather less.

*Small scale organization is not unfeasible, unrealistic, or impossible. There is an impressive literature of decentralization which demonstrates its practicality and possibility. Kropotkin's *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, Mumford's *Myth of the Machine*, Kohr's *Breakdown of Nations*, Bookchin's *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, Hess's *Dear America*, just to name a few off the top of my head. Thus, decentralization makes sense from the point of view of the individual, of what is good for the individual, and from the point of view of what would be a good form of social organization.*

All this shows that only the small state fulfills the requirements of both individualistic and democratic existence. It is individualistic because it fits the small physical size of man so much better than the colossal robes of large powers which, far from clothing and protecting the individual, smother him. And it is democratic because of its physical inability to overwhelm the citizen, who is at all times capable not only of participating in government but also of resisting governmental encroachments without the intermediary of powerful organizations.

—Leopold Kohr, *The Breakdown of Nations*



In practical terms small scale thinking means focusing on what is near at hand, on the neighborhood, the city, the area, the region, even when considering matters of national or international import. This does not at all exclude there being groups of groups, or groups of neighborhoods, and so on from getting together. But if America, for example, could devolve its political and economic power, currently so huge and so centralized, into neighborhood, city, and regional control, there would be no necessary barrier to functioning better than at present and with potentially fewer abuses. Thus, small scale doesn't mean isolated, self-sufficient communities. There is no reason why as large a body as this country couldn't be composed of a whole series of communities joined together and inter-related economically, politically, and socially.

*Our task is not to clean the padded cells
Or heal volcanic pity. We shall live
In no cathedral: our country is the careless star in man.*
—Kenneth Patchen

Small scale society is, at least it seems so now, hardly likely in North America in the near future. But small scale ways of doing things and ways of thinking about things can certainly be instituted, and will just as certainly be important in bringing about the devolution of power in North America. In a sense it would be "building the new society in the shell of the old". But small scale involves a major shift in the way things are looked at and understood. If large scale approaches don't work, then they can't sensibly be opposed by large scale approaches, whether in terms of analyses of situations, of political movements, or even in the way we approach daily activities such as work. We have to begin to think and do things differently, even if the changes are only oh so small.

This explains, perhaps, why there is so little prospect of overcoming the defects of the power system by any attack that employs mass organization and mass efforts at persuasion; for these mass methods support the very system they attack. The changes that have so far been effective, and that give promise of further success, are those that have been initiated by animated individual minds, small groups, and local communities nibbling at the edges of the power structure by breaking routines and defying regulations. Such an attack seeks, not to capture the citadel of power, but to withdraw from it and quietly paralyze it. Once such initiatives become widespread, as they at last show signs of becoming, it will restore power

and confident authority to its proper source: the human personality and the small face-to-face community.

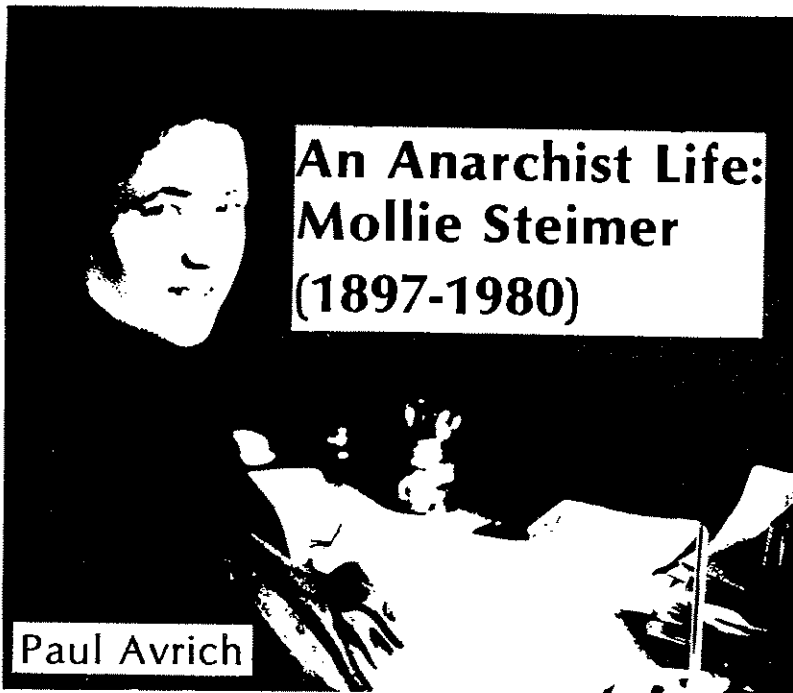
—Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine*, Vol. 2,
The Pentagon of Power

A small scale social movement is thus hardly one of the usual sort, and is more akin to some of the religious movements of earlier years that were also social movements. A small scale social movement is more of a flowering than anything else. It involves organizational forms, but it is just as much a cultural phenomenon, expressing itself in a variety of ways every day. It is more, much more than the usual understanding of a political or social movement. The development of this approach remains wide open. It does not in any way preclude political or social action, but does affect first the way in which such action is undertaken, and second the way in which such action is understood. It holds the possibility that there will be a community and a culture based not on hatred, rancor, and power but one that would center on happiness, mutual aid, and common concerns, in which the individual will matter and be at home, in which goodness is something both common and valuable.

*We do not affirm delight: would you
Have the signature of the sun itself to stay the dawn?
This enterprise is earnest ballooning flowering
Of brain and all the wonder blowing good like grain.*
—Kenneth Patchen

Black Rose is a flower and a flowering, something real and something imagined, not yet existing but conceivable and common sense, a thought, an action, a motion, an ideal, brainful flowering yet rooted like good grain, delightful, blowing, enticing, a dream and yet real, to be created yet being created, a movement that gives pause without pausing, an enjoyable enigma.

—Clym Yeobright



**An Anarchist Life:
Mollie Steimer
(1897-1980)**

Paul Avrich

Mollie Steimer, the well-known anarchist militant, died of a heart attack on July 23, 1980, at her home in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Mollie was 82 years old, and throughout her long life she was consumed with a passion to work for the good of the people. One of the last of the old-time anarchists with an international reputation, she was also one of the last of a remarkable company of Russian political exiles in Mexico that included such diverse figures as Jacob Abrams, Victor Serge, and Leon Trotsky. She is survived by her lifelong companion Senya Fleshin and by a younger sister in New York City, to whom our heartfelt condolences are extended.

Born on November 21, 1897, in the village of Dunaevtsy in southwestern Russia, Mollie emigrated to the United States in 1913 with her parents and five brothers and sisters. Only fifteen when she arrived in the New York ghetto, she immediately went to work in a garment factory to help support her family. She also began to read radical literature, starting with

Bebel's *Women and Socialism* and Stepniak's *Underground Russia* before discovering the works of Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Emma Goldman. By 1917 Mollie had become an anarchist, the creed to which she dedicated her life. With the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, she plunged into agitational activity, joining a group of young anarchists gathered around a clandestine Yiddish journal called *Der Shturem* (The Storm). Plagued by internal dissension, the Shturem group reorganized itself towards the end of the year, adopting the name of Frayhayt (Freedom) and launching a new journal under that title, of which five numbers appeared between January and May of 1918, with cartoons by Robert Minor and articles by Maria Goldsmith and Georg Brandes, among others.

The Frayhayt group contained a dozen or so young men and women, all of them workers of East-European Jewish origin, who met regularly at 5 East 104th Street in Harlem, where several of them, including Mollie, shared a six-room apartment. The most active figure in the group, apart from Mollie herself, was Jacob Abrams, 32 years old, who had immigrated from Russia in 1906. In 1917, as secretary of the Bookbinders' Union, Abrams had worked to prevent the extradition of Alexander Berkman to San Francisco, where the authorities were seeking to implicate him in the famous Mooney-Billings dynamiting affair.

The group, as a collective, edited and distributed their newspaper in secret. This was necessary because it had been outlawed by the federal government for its opposition to the American war effort, not to speak of its anti-capitalist, pro-revolutionary, and pro-Soviet orientation. ("The only just war is the social revolution," proclaimed its masthead.) After printing the paper on a hand press, the group folded it up tightly and stuffed it at night into mailboxes around the city. Federal and local officials soon became aware of their activities, but were unable to track the group down, until an incident occurred which catapulted Abrams, Steimer, and their comrades into the headlines—and also landed them in jail.

What provoked the incident was the landing of American troops in Soviet Russia during the spring and summer of 1918. Viewing the intervention as a counterrevolutionary maneuver, the members of the Frayhayt group resolved to stop it. With this object, they drafted two leaflets, one in English and one in Yiddish, appealing to the American workers to launch a general strike . . . "Workers, our reply to the barbaric intervention has to be a general strike!"

Each of the leaflets was printed in 5000 copies. Mollie distributed



most of them at different places around the city. Then, on August 23, 1918, she took the remainder to the factory in lower Manhattan where she worked, distributed some by hand, and threw the rest out of a washroom window on an upper floor. Floating to the street below, they were picked up by a group of workmen, who immediately informed the police! The police in turn notified American Military Intelligence, which sent two army sergeants to the building. Climbing from floor to floor, they encountered a young worker named Hyman Rosansky, a recent recruit of the Frayhayt group, who had been helping with the distribution of the leaflets. Rosansky admitted his involvement, turned informer, and implicated the rest of his comrades. Mollie was quickly taken into custody, along with others of her comrades. The same day, police raided the headquarters of the group on East 104th Street, wrecking the apartment and arresting Jacob Abrams and Jacob Schwartz, who were beaten with fists and blackjacks on the way to the station house. When they arrived, further beatings were administered. During the next few days, the rest of the group were rounded up and questioned. A few were released, but Abrams, Steimer, Lachowsky, Lipman, and Schwartz were indicated on charges of conspiracy to violate the Espionage Act, passed by Congress earlier that year. Rosansky, who had cooperated with the authorities, was granted a postponement of his hearing.

The Abrams case, as it came to be known, constitutes a landmark in the repression of civil liberties in the United States. The first important prosecution under the Espionage Act, it is cited in all standard histories of the subject as one of the most flagrant violations of constitutional rights during the Red Scare hysteria that followed the First World War. The trial, which lasted two weeks, opened on October 10, 1918, at the Federal Court House in New York. The defendants were Abrams, Steimer, Schwartz, Lachowsky, and Lipman. Schwartz, however, never appeared in court. Having been severely beaten by the police, he was removed to Belevue Hospital, where he died on October 14, while the trial was in progress. Official records attribute his death to Spanish influenza, an epidemic of which was raging at the time. In fact, he had been brutally murdered. His funeral became a political demonstration, and on October 25 a memorial meeting, chaired by Alexander Berkman, was held in his honor at the Parkview Palace. It was attended by 1,200 mourners, who heard moving speeches by John Reed, who had himself been arrested for condemning American intervention in Russia, and Harry Weinberger, the defense attorney in the Abrams case, who had

previously represented Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman in their trial for opposing military conscription in 1917.

The Abrams case was tried before Judge Henry DeLamar Clayton, who for 18 years had represented Alabama in Congress. Clayton proved to be another Gary or Thayer, the judges in the Haymarket and Sacco-Vanzetti cases. He questioned the defendants about their "free-love" activity, and he mocked and humiliated them at every turn.

Weinberger, the defense attorney, tried to show that the Espionage Act was meant to penalize activities which hindered American conduct of the war, and that since the American intervention in Russia was not being directed against the Germans or their allies, then opposition to it by the defendants could not be construed as interference with the war effort. This argument, however, was thrown out by Judge Clayton with the remark that "the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la, have nothing to do with the case." The *New York Times*, praising the judge's "half-humorous methods," declared that he deserved "the thanks of the city and of the country for the way in which he conducted the trial." Upton Sinclair, by contrast, said that Clayton had been imported from Alabama to make Hester Street safe for democracy.

Before the conclusion of the trial, Mollie Steimer delivered a powerful speech in which she explained her political beliefs. "By anarchism," she declared, "I understand a new social order, where no group of people shall be in power, no group of people shall be governed by another group of people. Individual freedom shall prevail in the full sense of the word. Private ownership shall be abolished. Every person shall have an equal opportunity to develop himself well, both mentally and physically. We shall not have to struggle for our daily existence as we do now. No one shall live on the product of others. Every person shall produce as much as he can, and enjoy as much as he needs—receive according to his need. Instead of striving to get money, we shall strive towards education, towards knowledge. While at present the people of the world are divided into various groups, calling themselves nations, while one nation defies another—in most cases considers the others as competitive—we, the workers of the world, shall stretch out our hands towards each other with brotherly love. To the fulfilment of this idea I shall devote all my energy, and, if necessary, render my life for it."

With a judge like Clayton on the bench, the outcome of the trial was predictable. The jury found all the defendants guilty. Replying to one of

the defendants, who had begun to address the court about democracy, Judge Clayton said, "You don't know anything about democracy, and the only thing you understand is the hellishness of anarchy." Clayton sentenced the three men, Lipman, Lachowsky, and Abrams, to the maximum penalty of twenty years in prison and a \$1,000 fine, while Mollie received fifteen years and a \$500 fine. (Rosansky, who gave State's evidence in a separate proceeding, got off with a three-year term.) The barbarity of the sentences for the mere distribution of leaflets shocked liberals and radicals alike.

Meanwhile, the four anarchists were released on bail to await the results of their appeal. Mollie immediately resumed her radical activities. As a result, she was continually hounded by the authorities. Over the next eleven months she was arrested no less than eight times, kept in the station house for brief periods, released, then rearrested, sometimes without charges being preferred against her. On March 11, 1919, she was arrested at the Russian People's House on East 15th Street during a raid by federal and local police which netted 164 radicals, some of whom were later deported on the *Buford* with Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. Charged with inciting to riot, Mollie was held for eight days in the notorious Tombs prison before being released on \$1,000 bail, only to be arrested again and taken to Ellis Island for deportation. Locked up for 24 hours a day, denied exercise and fresh air and the right to mingle with other political prisoners, she went on a hunger strike until the authorities met her demands. "The entire machinery of the United States government was being employed to crush this slip of a girl weighing less than eighty pounds," Emma Goldman complained.

The government, however, was not yet ready to deport the 21-year-old prisoner, whose case remained before the courts. Released from Ellis Island, Mollie was kept under constant surveillance. In the fall of 1919, when Emma Goldman returned to New York after completing a two-year sentence in the federal penitentiary at Jefferson City, Missouri, Mollie took the opportunity to call on her. It was the beginning of a lasting friendship. Mollie reminded Emma of the Russian women revolutionaries under the tsar, earnest, ascetic, and idealistic, "who sacrificed their lives before they had scarcely begun to live." In Emma's description, Mollie was "diminutive and quaint-looking, altogether Japanese in features and stature." She was a wonderful girl, Emma added, "with an iron will and a tender heart," but "fearfully set in her ideas." "A sort of Alexander Berkman in skirts," she jested to her niece Stella Ballantine.

Soon after her meeting with Emma Goldman, Mollie was again arrested. She was imprisoned in the workhouse on Blackwell's Island, where she remained for six months, from October 30, 1919, to April 29, 1920. Locked up in a filthy cell, isolated once more from her fellow prisoners and barred from all contact with the outside world, she protested by singing "The Anarchist March" and other revolutionary songs at the top of her lungs and by staging another hunger strike. During this period, word came that the Supreme Court had upheld the conviction of Mollie and her comrades. Two justices, however, Louis Brandeis and Oliver Wendell Holmes, issued a strong dissenting opinion. "In this case," wrote Holmes, "sentences of twenty years' imprisonment have been imposed for the publishing of two leaflets that I believe the defendants have had as much right to publish as the Government has to publish the Constitution of the United States, now vainly invoked by them."

When the Supreme Court announced its decision, Abrams, Lipman, and Lachowsky jumped bail and tried to escape to Mexico from New Orleans, but they were spotted and captured. Mollie, who had been informed of their escape plans, refused to cooperate because it meant forfeiting \$40,000 in bail contributed by ordinary workers. To deceive the men and women who had come to their aid, she felt, would be a dishonorable act. In April 1920 she was transferred from Blackwell's Island to Jefferson City, Missouri, where Emma Goldman had been confined before her deportation with Berkman in December 1919.

Mollie remained in Jefferson City for eighteen months. Since the time of the trial, her life had been full of tragedy. Apart from repeated incarcerations, one of her brothers had died from influenza and her father had died from the shock that followed her conviction. Yet she refused to despair. Indeed, her devotion to her ideals was stronger than ever. Weinberger, meanwhile, with the support of the Political Prisoners Defense and Relief Committee, had been trying to secure the release of his clients on condition of their deportation to Russia. While Abrams and Lipman favored such an arrangement, Lachowsky and Steimer were on principle opposed to deportation. Mollie was particularly adamant. "I believe," she told Weinberger, "that each person shall live where he or she chooses. No individual or group of individuals has the right to send me out of this, or any country!" She was concerned, moreover, for the other political prisoners in American who must remain behind bars.



"They are my comrades, too, and I think it extremely selfish and contrary to my principles as an Anarchist-Communist to ask for my release and that of three other individuals at a time when thousands of other political prisoners are languishing in the United States jails."

Abrams, exasperated by Mollie's stubborn adherence to principle, offered Weinberger a word of advice. "She must be approached like a good Christian," he wrote, "with a bible of Kropotkin or Bakunin. Otherwise you will not succeed." In due course, an agreement was concluded, and Weinberger obtained the release of the four prisoners, with the stipulation that they would leave for Russia at their own expense and would never return to the United States. The Political Prisoners Defense and Relief Committee took up a collection to pay for their transportation, and in November 1921 Mollie and the others arrived at Ellis Island to await deportation. They were not in the least upset about leaving America. On the contrary, they were eager to return to their homeland and to work for the revolution. As their comrade Marcus Graham wrote: "In Russia their activity is yet more needed. For there, a government rules masquerading under the name of the 'proletariat' and doing everything imaginable to enslave the proletariat." Although Mollie's friends and entire family were in the United States, her heart was light at the prospect of returning to Russia. "I shall advocate my ideal, Anarchist Communism, in whatever country I shall be," she told Harry Weinberger five days before her deputation.

On November 24, 1921, Mollie Steimer, Samuel Lipman, Hyman Lachowsky, and Jack Abrams, accompanied by his wife Mary, sailed for Soviet Russia on the S.S. *Estonia*. The *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (Free Voice of Labor) issued a warning. Despite their opposition to American intervention and their support of the Bolshevik regime, the paper predicted, they would not receive the welcome they expected, for Russia was no longer a haven for genuine revolutionaries but rather a land of authority and repression. The prediction was soon borne out. Victims of the Red Scare in America, they became victims of the Red Terror in Russia. Arriving in Moscow on December 15, 1921, they found that Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman had already departed for the West, disillusioned by the turn the revolution had taken. (Mollie's disappointment in missing them, she wrote Harry Weinberger, was "very deep.") Kropotkin had died in February, and the Kronstadt rebellion had been suppressed in March. Makhno's insurgent army had been dispersed, hundreds of anarchists

languished in prison, and the workers' and peasants' soviets had become instruments of party dictatorship, rubber stamps for a new bureaucracy.

Amid the gloom, however, there were some bright spots. In Moscow, Mollie met Senya Fleshin, who became her lifelong companion. Three years older than Mollie, Senya had been born in Kiev in December 1894 and had emigrated to the United States at the age of sixteen, working at the office of Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth* until he returned to Russia in 1917 to take part in the revolution. He had been active in the Golos Truda group in Petrograd and afterwards in the Nabat (Alarm) Confederation in the Ukraine. In 1920 he had returned to Petrograd to work at the Museum of the Revolution. It was here that he met Mollie Steimer shortly after her arrival from America, and the two fell immediately in love.

Deeply disturbed by the suppression of their movement, Mollie and Senya organized a Society to Help Anarchist Prisoners, traveling about the country to assist their incarcerated comrades. On November 1, 1922, they were themselves arrested by the GPU on charges of aiding criminal elements in Russia and maintaining ties with anarchists abroad (they had been corresponding with Berkman and Goldman). Sentenced to two years' exile in Siberia, they declared a hunger strike on November 17 in their Petrograd jail, and were released the next day. They were forbidden, however, to leave the city and were ordered to report to the authorities every forty-eight hours. Before long, Mollie and Senya resumed their efforts on behalf of their imprisoned comrades. On July 9, 1923, their room was raided by the GPU, they were again placed under arrest and charged with propagating anarchist ideas, which was contrary to the Soviet Criminal Code. Sequestered from their fellow prisoners, they again declared a hunger strike. Protests to Trotsky by foreign Anarcho-Syndicalist delegates to a congress of the Red International of Trade Unions (Profintern) soon brought about their release. This time, however, they were notified of their impending expulsion from the country. On September 27, 1923, they were placed aboard a ship bound for Germany.

Landing in Germany, Mollie and Senya went straight to Berlin, where Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman were awaiting them. They arrived half-starved and penniless and without a permanent passport. For the next twenty-five years they lived as "Nansen" citizens (i.e. people without a passport), anarchists without a country, until they acquired Mexican citizenship in 1948.

In Berlin, and afterwards in Paris, Mollie and Senya resumed the relief work which had led to their deportation. Together with Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Alexander Schapiro, Volin, and Mark Mratchny, they took part in the Joint Committee for the Defense of Revolutionaries Imprisoned in Russia (1923-1926) and the Relief Fund of the International Working Men's Association for Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists Imprisoned in Russia (1926-1932).

In Paris, to which Mollie and Senya moved in 1924, they lived in a room with Volin and his family, before moving in with yet another Russian anarchist fugitive, Jacques Doubinsky. In 1927 they joined Volin, Doubinsky, and Berkman in forming the Mutual Aid Group of Paris to assist fellow anarchist exiles, not only from Russia, but also from Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Bulgaria, penniless, without legal documents, and in constant danger of deportation, which in some cases would have meant certain death. At the same time, they joined Volin, Berkman, and others in denouncing the Organization Platform drawn up by another Russian exile, Peter Arshinov, with the encouragement of Nestor Makhno. To Mollie and Senya, the Organization Platform, with its call for a central executive committee, contained the seeds of authoritarianism and clashed with the basic anarchist principle of local autonomy and initiative.

In order to earn a living, Senya had meanwhile taken up the profession of photography, for which he exhibited a remarkable talent, becoming the Nadar of the anarchist movement, with his portraits of Berkman, Volin, and many other comrades, both well known and obscure, as well as a widely reproduced collage of the anarchist press. In 1929 Senya was invited to work in the studio of Sasha Stone in Berlin. There, assisted by Mollie, he remained until 1933, when Hitler's rise to power forced them to return to Paris, where they continued to live until the outbreak of the Second World War. During these years of exile in the 1920s and 1930s, Mollie and Senya received a steady stream of visitors—Harry Kelly, Rose Pesotta, Rudolf and Milly Rocker, among others—some of whom recorded their impressions of their old friends. Kelly, for example, found Mollie "as childlike in appearance as ever, and as idealistic too." Emma Goldman, however, thought her too "narrow and fanatical," while Senya was always "ill and broken." Emma again compared Mollie to Berkman as a young militant and "a fanatic to the highest degree. Mollie is a repetition in skirts. She is terribly sectarian, set



in her notions, and has an iron will. No ten horses could drage her from anything she is for or against. But with it all she is one of the most genuinely devoted souls living with the fire of our ideal."

The outbreak of the war in 1939 found Mollie and Senya in Paris. At first they were not molested, but before long their Jewish origins and anarchist convictions caught up with them. On May 18, 1940, Mollie was placed in an internment camp, while Senya, aided by French comrades, managed to escape to the occupied sector of the country. Somehow, Mollie secured her release, and the two were reunited in Marseilles, where they saw their old friend Volin for the last time in the autumn of 1941. Soon afterwards, they crossed the Atlantic and settled in Mexico City. "How my heart aches for our forsaken beloved ones," wrote Mollie to Rudolf and Milly Rocker in December 1942. "Who knows what will become of Volin, of all our Spanish friends, of our Jewish family! It is maddening!"

For the next twenty years Senya operated his photographic studio in Mexico City under the name SEMO—for Senya and Mollie. During this time they formed a close relationship with the Spanish comrades of the Tierra y Libertad group.

Mollie never returned to America. Friends and relatives had to cross the border and visit her in Mexico City or Cuernavaca, to which she and Senya retired in 1963. When deported from the United States, Mollie had vowed to "advocate my ideal, Anarchism Communism, in whatever country I shall be." In Russia, in Germany, in France, and now in Mexico, she remained faithful to her pledge. Fluent in Russian, Yiddish, English, German, French, and Spanish, she corresponded with comrades and kept up with the anarchist press around the world. She also received many visitors, including Rose Pesotta and Clara Larsen of New York. In 1976 she was filmed by a Dutch television crew working on a documentary about Emma Goldman, and in early 1980 she was filmed again by the Pacific Street Collective of New York, to whom she spoke of her beloved anarchism, which Alexander Berkman called "the finest thing that humanity has ever thought of." In her last years, Mollie felt worn and tired. She was deeply saddened by the death of Mary Abrams in January 1978. To the end, however, her revolutionary passion burned with an undiminished flame. Salud, dear Mollie. Salud y Libertad!



The Politics of Liberation: From Class to Culture

John Clark

The following is a revised version of a paper presented last May at a conference at L'Universite Paul Valery, Montpellier, France. The topic of the conference was "The Libertarian Problematic," that is, how the libertarian movement is to define itself, its premises, its composition, and its project for the future.

It was not so long ago that to pose the question of the nature of "the libertarian problematic" must have seemed a rather quixotic undertaking. Where could such a "problematic" be situated? In the dreams of survivors of long-dead labor movements? In the fantasies of concocters of utopian visions? True, libertarian practice had never wholly died, but a once historically momentous movement had certainly dwindled to practical insignificance. The heroic idea that had once moved masses seemed relegated to the realm of nostalgia, if not that of science fiction. Anarchism had never been abolished, despite even the efforts of those dictatorial regimes that had striven so hard to annihilate it and all its adherents. Yet, ironically, it certainly seemed well on the road to withering away.

Yet dormant historical forces have to slumber somewhere, and it is perhaps appropriate that this one retreated temporarily into the sphere of the imagination. It is no doubt better to have imagination without a movement than a movement without imagination. Perhaps now we can have both. For to the surprise of practically all observers (excepting the small remnant of believers and visionaries) the movement began its return to the historical stage in the late 60's. It now becomes possible to speculate that anarchism is capable of being much more than a noble dream, and, in fact, that its future role in history will make its past appear

to be only faltering first steps, a minor episode in its evolution.

What basis is there for such hope?

While it is true that only a generation ago anarchism had been (to use the language of bureaucrats) "taken off the agenda," the time may be coming when it is capable of forcing its way back onto the agenda, perhaps rewriting it, and maybe even tearing it up. It seems that we are now at a juncture in history in which the relevant problems begin to pose themselves, the concrete historical project begins to take form, and the problematic therefore begins to situate itself in the real world. The two reigning world ideologies are now definitively revealing their bankruptcy. For the masses, whether they are subjected to capitalist or socialist systems of domination, the old faith is entering a period of deep crisis. The growing mood of these masses is one of cynicism and hopelessness, dangerous dispositions for all ideologies founded on the myth of unlimited progress and worldly messianism. This is not to say that people no longer accept; but they do it with ill-natured resignation and poorly disguised resentment. They are quickly moving to the point at

which a new set of options arises: not capitalism or socialism, but rather fanaticism or rebellion. They must choose either unprecedented depths of bad faith and self-deception, or the recognition of the brokenness of the old symbolic structures; either the kind of mindless, spiritless dogmatism which is required to perpetuate a dead religion, or the creative negation of illusions which have been revealed for what they are. Perhaps for the first time human beings (and not merely theorists) begin to see the essential opposition not as that between one distorting ideology and another, but between ideology and reality. As Nietzsche prophetically saw, the naked power relationships which underlie all ideologies, no matter how "democratic," "humanist," or "socialist," are finally being revealed, and the terrifying prospect of conscious choice lies before us.

In the context of this decay of traditional ideologies, both of the Right and of the Left, the task of formulating the libertarian problematic takes on increasing urgency. The question is whether the libertarian movement will shake off its own attachment to the remnants of these moribund ideologies, and give some sort of conscious direction to the construction of a new social reality, or whether it will pass up this opportunity for making its contribution to the break with past forms of domination. While we can point to both "objective" and "subjective" factors which constitute the material social and psychological basis for the



developing crisis of the dominant world systems (depletion of resources, ecological stress, economic stagnation, resistance to neocolonialism, internal social disintegration, decline of repressive structures of motivation, weakening of institutional legitimacy, etc.), the importance of the emerging struggle cannot be underestimated, since there is no assurance that alternative liberatory possibilities will be developed, except in so far as adequate theoretical and practical agents of social transformation are created. We cannot rely on some inexorable march of history to save us if our own historical self-transformation is a failure. Furthermore, as the prevailing patterns of domination become increasingly threatened by internal disintegration and external challenges, the amount of overt psychological and physical force which will be used to maintain them can only be expanded. For this reason there is growing truth in the old saying that the new society must be created within the shell of the old—both because the old must be transformed as rapidly as possible into a mere shell, which is increasingly perceived as a contrivance, a mechanism, and a barrier to human development; and because this relative unreality must be placed in contrast to the new society's growing fullness and reality.

If this does not occur, we will once again revert to the patterns of the past, although perhaps in even more destructive forms. On the one hand, a critically unconscious and underdeveloped radicalism, which is itself a mere reaction, will generate an entrenched reactionary dogmatism that will secure itself through even greater repression. On the other hand, should such a radicalism succeed in harnessing the energies of fear and frustration, we will see more "revolutions" which themselves turn out to be the most advanced transformations of the old forms of domination. After having observed the history of this century we should not be at all shocked by the idea that underdeveloped and onesided "revolutionary" activity can be a powerful contributor to the conquest of power by the authoritarian forces of both Right and Left. In fact, we must recognize that the fetishism of "the Revolution" has itself been one of the most powerful mechanisms of domination.

What, then, is the libertarian response to this historical predicament? It seems to me that there are two lines of development within the libertarian left, or, more specifically, the social anarchist movement, which have deep historical roots, and which are presently reemerging. On the one hand there are those who continue to conceive of the project of

social emancipation primarily in terms of the mode of production, economic class analysis, and class struggle. On the other, there are those whose approach is more multidimensional, and might be described as a cultural orientation. Both perspectives find numerous adherents at present within the libertarian political movements of both the United States and Western Europe, although the relative strength of the two factions varies considerably from country to country.

In the United States the libertarian tradition of class-based organization and strategy can be traced back to the European immigrant labor movements of the late 19th century and also to the largely native-American revolutionary syndicalism of the IWW. The ideas of these movements coincided on many major points with the principles of European anarchosyndicalist and revolutionary syndicalist movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The roots of domination are seen to lie above all in capitalism and the state. The essential project is to organize the working class into a force which can successfully overthrow the state, the effective power behind economic exploitation, the paradigm for, and root cause of, all forms of domination. When the workers succeed in fulfilling their historical mission, either through insurrection ("the Revolution") or economic class action ("the General Strike") a new economic order based on self-management can be established, and with it a society of equality, freedom, and justice. The story is quite familiar, for this faith once exerted powerful force in much of Southern Europe and Latin America, in the days before the labor movements in these areas became dominated by Marxism and reformism, or were crushed by Fascism. The unique American contribution was the version presented by the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World), who sought to develop an even more radically economic program based entirely on economic class analysis, and in which the religious and political questions so central to European anarchosyndicalism were rather unrealistically (yet appropriately for an American movement) relegated to the domain of "private opinion." For the Wobblies, the picture presented of the future society was that of a world organized economically by the workers according to the IWW system of industrial unions. Thus there was no antistate line—members were free to participate in political activity, to refrain from it, or to oppose it, so long as their political stance did not intrude into the One Big Union. The IWW thus sought to form a broadly-based class alliance, a kind of radical version of American pragmatism,



DON'T DENY YOURSELF
NORMAL LIFE!



Would you like to speak to a priest about anything? Yes ____ No ____

A DIABOLOGICAL LAUGH

MAKE YOUR SECRET DREAMS COME TRUE!



•• A man who buried 100
people in sand up to their
heads and then conducted
them in a chorus of patriotic
songs.



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Without it, no one can be thoroughly well bred.

Without it, no one can be thoroughly well bred.

Without it, no one can be thoroughly well bred.

25

attained at the expense of coherence and comprehensiveness on the levels of both theory and strategy. Yet despite these problems and ambiguities, for a long time it was (and to an extent, still is) within the IWW that numerous libertarians chose to work, especially after the possibilities for organizing large and enduring immigrant anarcho-syndicalist movements failed to materialize.

The second current, which I have called the cultural orientation, has always existed as part of the American libertarian tradition, and, given the relative weakness of class-based organizations in the United States, it has been disproportionately strong in comparison to its place in the European movements. Thus in the Nineteenth Century the communitarian movement was an important sphere of libertarian activity, in which a myriad of problems of everyday life, including many issues related to sexuality, childraising, and small group decision-making were confronted. Although the Nineteenth Century communities remained peripheral to American society, they have been a continual source of inspiration for the renewal of the movement for communalism. In the twentieth century, this tradition was carried on by a number of groups which emphasized cooperative production, decentralization, and, often, non-violent patterns of living. Movements like the Catholic Worker and the School of Living were among those that perpetuated such values. Yet it was only in the 1960's, with the emergence of the Counterculture, that this tendency became once again a central focus of libertarian creative activity. The explosive growth of communalism was only one area in which libertarian cultural developments began. In addition, strong libertarian impulses underlay much of the activity in the many movements for liberation which then proliferated—the free school and alternative education movement, children's liberation, women's liberation, gay liberation, radical psychiatry, ecology, black liberation, the Native American movement, the antiwar movement, the student movement, the co-op movement, the alternative media, and the development of neighborhood organization. Although these movements were diverse in makeup, they all contained significant currents emphasizing participation, decentralization, cooperative modes of interaction, and liberation from entrenched patterns of domination. Furthermore, the Counterculture itself (which might be seen as a more generalized movement for social recreation, only partially overlapping with these more particularized movements) exhibited a strong cultural dimension, stressing the

importance of consciousness, values and personality structure, and raising questions about the repressive/liberatory implications of forms of language, communication, music, art, and the symbolic dimension in general.

In short, a kind of libertarian proto-culture began to develop, and it was in many ways one of the most advanced foreshadowings of what a future libertarian society may be. Yet it was, unfortunately, merely a foreshadowing—more a revelation of possibilities than an achievement of actualities. Its roots were not deep in American society. It was too much a product of fortuitous events and ephemeral conditions. It embodied a positive vision to a degree, but on the whole it was still shaped by immediate negativity, by a largely unreflective, undeveloped (as it said, "gut") reaction against the dominant culture. It lacked a sense of history to the extent of a failure to grasp ever, the very forces which created it, or those with which it contended. It failed to comprehend the magnitude of the power of commodification, and the dominance of the code of values of the spectacle. It was therefore an easy prey for absorption into the spectacular system. (For striking evidence of how thoroughly the themes of the Counterculture have been absorbed into this system of commodity consumption, we can take the depressing example of the film *Hair*. In this 1980 vision of the Counterculture, there remain no traces of a liberating "new sensibility" or a quest for community, but instead the picture of the most egoistic self-indulgence. We are presented the image of rebellion as radical conformism—for the amusement of the spectator.) The Counterculture was theoretically impoverished and incoherent, as is not surprising given its fragmented, rather than totalistic, nature. It was capable of giving rise to brilliant insights and brave experiments, yet could not reach the needed synthesis that would give it strength and durability. In short, it developed many of the materials necessary to create a libertarian culture, but could not become such a culture.

The result was the 70's, and its disintegration and recuperation. It is possible to argue that many of the gains of the 60's were preserved, or that some of the values which emerged took root and even developed further during the next decade. And it is true that we cannot judge historical evolution by the content of media coverage. Yet for those who saw intimations of a movement toward a culture founded on libertarian



and communal values, the 70's could only be pervaded by a sense of failed possibilities: the period of humanization of work, black mayors (and even black Republican mayors!) women executives, "decriminalization" of marijuana, porno theaters, Gov. Jerry Brown, Quaker natural Cereal, and Friends of the Earth; in short, the confrontation between the old reality and, as it has been aptly put, "artificial negativity." If we are fortunate enough to fight off the old patterns of domination—nationalism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.—which seem to be making a powerful comeback lately, we are confronted with the alternative of a perfected society of commodity consumption—one in which all achieve the equal right to be commodity consumers and to offer themselves as commodities to be consumed.

What is the libertarian response to this dilemma? Is it a revival of class politics, a new attempt at cultural transformation, or some synthesis of the two?

First, it should be understood that the traditional politics of class struggle had in its own way a cultural dimension, and, even more, that it embodied an implicit view of humanity and nature. From its perspective, the person is above all a worker, a producer. The great tragedy of history is therefore seen to lie in the fact that the workers, who produce all the good necessary for life and well-being, and on whose activity the future progress of society depends, are robbed of the benefits of their production. Work is the essential means toward social progress, the liberation of humanity from want, from bondage to nature. Being a worker is therefore a virtue, while being a non-worker is a vice, inseparable from exploitation. The problem is to transform all people into workers, and to gain for these workers control over production—to establish universal self-management. When this is attained the utopia of production will be achieved. As the IWW put it, "all the good things in life"—meaning products and services, the "goods"—will no longer be monopolized by the capitalists, but will be shared by all.

This ideology, while encompassing a bitter attack on capitalism and those who benefit from its system of exploitation, is, in spite of itself, a particular formulation of the productivist ideology of developing capitalism—the version formulated from the perspective of the working class, (and it should be remembered that the proletariat, like the bourgeoisie, is an eminently *capitalist* class). On almost all key points it is identical with the early capitalist project of salvation through material production. In a sense it is the protestant version of the religion of

production—the hierarchy is to be overthrown, yet the faith remains firmly embedded in the consciousness, the conscience, and even the unconscious of each believer.

This faith still lives on; yet the irony is that it is an ideology that capitalism is itself in the process of transcending. It should therefore be no surprise that its proletarian version is increasingly confronted with reactions ranging from unclassconscious yawns to class-collaborationist sneers on the part of the toiling masses. For late capitalist society has increasingly passed further into the realm of the values of consumption, and into the sphere of domination by the commodity. The cult of the working class and salvation through honest labor appears increasingly less appealing in a society in which work becomes more and more fragmented and abstract, in which class membership becomes less clearly defined and less central to social identity, and in which privatized consumption becomes the ultimate refuge for a desocialized individual.

In a society in which the will to power is increasingly channeled in the direction of commodity consumption, not only the old class politics but even the most seemingly radical social theories have quickly revealed their impotence. For example, Wilhelm Reich was able to confront capitalism with the explosive issue of instinctual repression, bringing into question not only the reigning economic system, but also the state and patriarchy. Yet, capital has shown itself to be quite capable of moving beyond the stage of instinctual repression, at least on its own terms, and achieving what Marcuse called "repressive desublimation," as has become especially clear in the 1970's. So it can sponsor its own versions of sexual revolution, not to mention its own varieties of women's liberation and minority rights. Liberation comes to mean rebellion against all the obsolete social forms which restrain the process of commodification. In its most radical forms it demands equality—the right to consume and be consumed without discrimination.

The prevailing system of domination seems to have almost infinite capacity to co-opt or recuperate critical thought and practice. Should we therefore fall into the mood of despair and resignation that seems to be so fashionable lately? Should we seek to profit from the current market value of the kind of chastened idealism that can even masquerade as a new "philosophy?" I believe that before we succumb to disillusionment or begin to market our lost illusions, we should consider the possibility that our critique has often been less than critical, and that



our practice has been left lamentably underdeveloped. For the mainstream of the Left, while it challenged the system of domination in many ways, still defined its problematic in terms of the politics of class struggle, and therefore still accepted many of the presuppositions of authoritarian society. Thus, even in its best historical moments it remained largely uncritical of the industrial system of technology and the project of human domination of nature.

The libertarian problematic today is, of course, to develop a coherent, systematic, and thoroughly critical view of reality, and a practice adequate to transform reality in accord with this vision. If we are to successfully challenge the system of domination, we must achieve an understanding of reality as a whole, including the whole symbiotic universe by which we interpret and indeed construct reality. Consequently, we must confront a multitude of questions of ontology, social theory, and psychology.

Fortunately, libertarian thought has been moving slowly but consistently in the direction of such an all-embracing vision in recent years, especially as it has come to see the ecological perspective as the macroscopic correlate (indeed, the philosophy of nature) of the libertarian conception of a co-operative, voluntarily organized society. It has been moving toward a fully-developed, organic theory of reality, a theory which proposes a distinct view of nature, of human society, of the group, and of the self or person. Further, it points toward a coherent practice which can successfully found a new libertarian culture which challenges the official culture, with its values of atomistic individualism, egoistic consumption, and the will to power. In the place of this view of the world as a collection of fragmented, antagonistic parts (whose metaphysics, ethics, and social philosophy are epitomized in the deterrence theory used by "criminal justice" specialists) the organic, ecological worldview delineates a reality in which the whole is a unity-in-diversity, in which the development and fulfillment of the part can only proceed from its complex interrelationship and unfolding within the larger whole. The universe is seen not as a lifeless mechanism but rather as an organic whole, a totality consisting of non-discrete, interpenetrating processes. Society must become, like nature itself, an organic, integrated community. Human beings can only realize their personhood, their individuality in the fullest sense, through non-dominating interaction, or as Martin Buber



put it, in a society which is a community of communities. The existence of such a society depends on the growth of a multitude of small personalistic groups which are the organic fabric of the organic society. These groups must be founded on human social instincts and needs, on the one hand, and offer a framework for the development of creative desire and social imagination on the other. And underlying all must be a new vision of the self—a self which is itself organic, and having the nature of a process. It must be a self which is not objectified, or divided against itself, but rather is a harmonious synthesis of passion, rationality, and imagination. Such a self is a social creation, an embodiment of our common human nature in its process of historical development, yet also the most individualized and unique self-expression of reality, and therefore the most ultimately creative process.

What does this imply on the level of concrete practice? It means that the libertarian problematic in the field of action and organization is above all a problematic of social regeneration. Confronted with the final truths of Western Civilization—disintegration, atomization, egoism, and domination—the libertarian movement must place the highest priority on creating libertarian (and even more, *communitarian*) patterns of interaction at the most basic level, the affinity group. This means that organizations like anarchosyndicalist unions and anarchist federations will be, at best, incapable of social transformation, and, at worst, frameworks for reproducing the system of domination, unless they are rooted in a firmly established libertarian culture, in libertarian human relationships, and in a libertarian perception of reality.

The problem is thus in a sense to again take up the task of the Counterculture of the 60's, but this time within the framework of a self-conscious libertarian cultural movement. None of the concerns of the 60's have lost their relevance. Therefore the movement must not only be firmly rooted in the affinity group, and concern itself with the development of libertarian primary relationships, but it must also strive toward building a larger cultural and organizational structure. While discarding the fatal illusion that any mere organizational form can lead to liberatory social transformation, it must regenerate the impulse toward the establishment of cooperatives, collectives, and communes as necessary elements in the evolution of a libertarian culture. It will continue the development and application of decentralist, liberatory technology. It will once more grasp the centrality of libertarian education, an area of

the most advanced libertarian practice from the time of Tolstoi to the most mature and historically conscious experiments of the 60's. And it will never forget the importance of the esthetic dimension, continuing the rich tradition of libertarian self-expression, for anarchism is as much as anything the synthesis of art and life, and as Murray Bookchin has said, the conception of the community as a work of art.

In this confrontation between the values of egoism, commodification, and domination and those of libertarian communalism the struggle is no longer a struggle of classes in the traditional sense. It is rather the struggle of the community against *class society*, the society of division, the society of domination. It is therefore not the struggle of socialist *worker* to succeed the bourgeois *individual* as the subject of history. Rather it is emergence of the *person*, the organic social self, who must through social, communal self-realization combat those forces and ideologies which reduce this self to asociality (individualism, privatism) or being a producer (productivism).

Whatever the impression may be that I have given so far, it should be understood that none of the foregoing means that class analysis and class struggle in the broadest sense of these terms have lost their meaning. In fact, one of the key elements of the libertarian problematic is the development of a more adequate analysis of the class structures of both contemporary and past societies. Libertarian theory has already begun to show great promise for considerable contributions in this area. Not being tied to the fetishism of the working class, it can show the creative role which peasant societies and tribal cultures have played in history and even prehistory, and their amply manifested potential for the development of libertarian and communitarian social forms. Furthermore, it can continue to document the fact that the working class itself has been most revolutionary, most libertarian, most critical, and most socially creative in its transitional stages, rather than at the points at which it has been most classically "proletarian" and "industrial." This is exemplified in the past by those groups which were torn out of traditional, communal society, and were only beginning to be socialized into the industrial system, and can be expected to reoccur in the future only in so far as the classic working class continues to disintegrate and a growing number of its members come under the influence of, or begin to participate in, a developing libertarian communitarian post-industrial culture. Furthermore, recognizing the irreducible reality of political power, libertarian theory



can more fully delineate the role of the developing technobureaucratic class in state capitalist and corporate capitalist society. Substituting the more adequate concept of the *system of domination* in the place of obsolete reductionist, economicist conceptions, it can contribute to understanding the interaction between such forms of domination as patriarchy, political power, technological domination, racism and economic exploitation, thereby showing the interplay—both the contradictions and the mutual reinforcement—within the total system between economic class, sex class, political class and ethnic class. Such a formulation turns out to be especially fruitful in linking the structure of domination in classical capitalist society to that existing in pre-capitalist, late capitalist, and post-capitalist societies.

Corresponding to this expanded conception of class analysis, there must also be an amplified practice of class struggle, though certainly not in the traditional sense of finding the most suitable present-day strategies for the messianic working class. Rather, the task of the libertarian movement must be to combat the material and ideological power of all dominating classes, whether economic, political, racial, religious, or sexual, with a multi-dimensional practice of liberation. Such a practice must integrate within the framework of this mansided fight against domination a variety of sorts of activity. It must certainly include economic actions, like strikes, boycotts, on the job actions, occupations, organization of direct action groups and federations of libertarian workers' groups, and development of workers' assemblies, collectives, and cooperatives. It must also entail *political* activity, including not only anti-electoral activity, but in some cases strategic voting, especially in referenda and local elections. In addition there must be active interference with implementation of repressive governmental policies, like non-compliance and resistance against regimentation and bureaucratization of society, including technological surveillance and control of the population; and participation in movements for increasing direct participation in decision-making and local community control. There must also be *ideological* struggle, including the development of arts, media, and symbolic structures which expose the forces of domination and counterpose to them a system of values based on freedom and community. And in all cases there must be a practice of *psychological* transformation, in which all groups functioning to combat domination self-consciously seek to maintain their basis in personalistic human relationships, direct

participation, non-hierarchical internal structure, and respect for the integrity and individuality of each member. One lesson of the 60's is the futility of any attempts to merge, or rather submerge, the libertarian presence into basically non-libertarian mass organizations or vague ecumenical "Movements." If the libertarian movement is to experience organic growth it must fiercely defend the libertarian character of primary groups, and realize the fundamental nature of all libertarian organization, not as mere forms of mobilization for struggle against any or even "all" kinds of domination, but above all as elements in the more comprehensive process of cultural recreation.

The libertarian problematic is indeed a problematic which entails negation—the negation of all forms of domination, alienation, and social disintegration. Yet a movement which degenerates into pure negativity—into mere collective resentment on the part of the alienated—is condemned to impotence and lack of creative energy. The revolutionary subject was once described as a class with radical chains—one which says "I am nothing. I should be everything." Yet the attempt to move from total nothingness to a fullness of being is something that might be accomplished by the Absolute Idea, and perhaps even by the Proletariat, but it is beyond the capacities of mere mortals. Our need is therefore not merely a *class* with radical chains, but a *culture* with radical freedom.

The most radical bonds are not those of class oppression but those of free community.



Be realistic: demand the impossible!
—slogan, Paris, May 1968, attributed to

Jean Duvignaud and Michel Leiris

I am of no nationality ever contemplated by
the chancelleries
—Aime Cesaire

My brief glimpse of just one star
Just one stripe
In the flag which unseen as an old woman
Lies flat on so many windows
Did not admit me to patriotism
That room where tickets are collected every day and cost
nothing

I saw one star clearly for just a moment
White as a virgin's desire
In a blue field
Which will turn green no sooner than the sky
It had no politicians in it
And the girl all in white was black as often as not

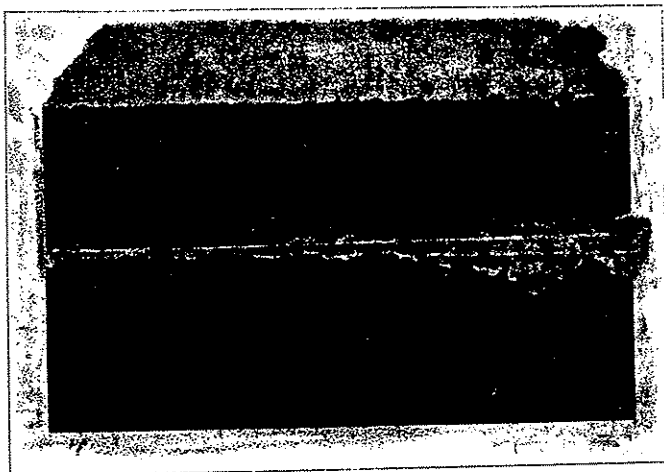
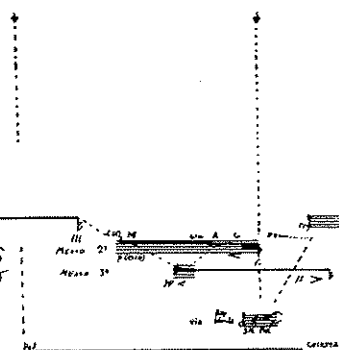
I saw a long red stripe
A river of blood
In which everyone bathed without permission
It will turn green when the only blood
Is in weeds on our graves

I am of no nationality ever contemplated
But I have a flag
One star in a blue field
And the river of human life
The living flag of an impossible nation
Which I intend to demand

—Pete Winslow

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Nadie advina
 el lugar donde se esconden las fatigas
 después de que la lluvia ha refrescado
 al mundo.
 Nadie advina
 su color inventado,
 sus grietas múltiples,
 sus frejos tan terribles,
 y sus tantas armas asesinas.



Reviews:

RED YEARS BLACK YEARS: A Political History of Spanish Anarchism, 1911-1937. By Robert W. Kern. Institute for the Study of Human Issues. 335 pp.

THE SPANISH ANARCHISTS: The Heroic Years, 1868-1936. By Murray Bookchin. Free Life Editions. 345 pp. \$12.50.

Anarchists are perennial losers. Defeated in political battles, they have been neglected by those who study political thought, and virtually ignored or forgotten by historians. When they have managed to sneak into popular consciousness, the image that comes to mind is of bomb-wielding terrorists. When the black flags of anarchy flew in France during May, 1968, they seemed only symbolic of the apparent chaos. And current characterizations of the Red Brigades in Italy, or the Red Army Fraction in Germany as anarchist only confirm that conventional wisdom.

But anarchism seems synonymous with chaos only when the sole recognized form of organiza-

tion is hierarchy; and it seems to imply terrorism only when the sole permissible mode of action is reformism.

It is our vision that is limited. We have created for ourselves two either-or choices. First, to work through existing hierarchical political institutions, or to join a revolutionary organization which will lead to its own version of hierarchy. Second, to engage in reformist politics, in hopes of winning moderate gains, or to reject parliamentary forms in favor of potentially violent confrontation. Anarchism at its best, however, offers us an alternative both to hierarchy on the one hand, and to reformism or violence on the other: the spirit and practice of direct action.

By acting independently of legally-constituted authority, anarchists argue, people can create their own institutions, and new ways of being. When they join together to exert control over workplace or community, people experience the changes they make as their own. Instead of reinforcing the powerlessness which often accompanies modest improvements granted from above, a strategy of direct action empowers people. It increases their self-confidence, and fortifies them to continue to act.

This alternative derives from the claim that people can live together without domination and subordina-



tion. Anarchists argue that people can coordinate themselves on the basis of mutuality and cooperation, rather than hierarchy and centralization; and that political power, aside from being unnecessary, corrupts those who exercise it, and demeans those over whom it is exercised. Furthermore, they insist that the strategy for creating this society must be consistent with these principles. People cannot create an egalitarian society through reformist activities which grant legitimacy to the very practices they oppose. Nor can they do so through centralized, bureaucratized, revolutionary organizations which recreate in different form — i.e. leaders and followers, vanguards and masses — long-standing patterns of domination and subordination. Rather, they must be able to take control of their own work-places and living situations, to feel their own powers, to recognize their needs, and their ability to join with others to satisfy them. Centralized decision-making, whether that of governmental bodies or of revolutionary vanguards, deprives people of the opportunity to experience choice and action. It can never prepare them to create, and then to be self-directing members of, a communalist, egalitarian, society.

Simple enough, some would argue, for a relatively primitive society. But how viable could a strategy of direct action be in a soci-

ety as complex as our own? As a first step in evaluating these issues, we can look to the experience of the Spanish anarchist movement, which achieved massive followings between 1868 and 1936, played a major role in organizing elements of the Spanish working class (including heavily-industrialized Catalonia), and contributed significantly to the initial defeat of the Generals' rebellion in Barcelona, Madrid, and elsewhere in July, 1936. Even more intriguing, perhaps, from the contemporary vantage point (although, until recently, much the most ignored or suppressed aspect of the history of the Civil War), was the inspiration and support provided by the anarchist movement for widespread experimentation in popularly-based collectives (both agricultural and industrial) which involved hundreds of thousands of people.

Two recent books examine that experience: Bookchin's recognizes the significance of the direct action strategy. Kern's views anarchism through hierarchical spectacles.

The Spanish Anarchists examines the growth and organization of the anarchist movement from its inception until the outbreak of the rebellion in July, 1936 (Bookchin promises another volume on the collectives). Bookchin's focus is on strategy, on the relationship between theory and practice in the growth of the movement, and, in particular, on the tensions between terrorism and revolu-

tionary organization. He builds a case for the "ability of the Spanish anarchists to patiently knit together highly independent groups into sizable, coherent organizations, to coordinate them into effective social forces when crises emerged." And his evaluation of their trials is simply stated: the movement represented "the most magnificent flowering . . . of the century-long history of proletarian socialism."

Robert Kern, on the other hand, seems unable to look at the movement except with limited vision. His "political history of Spanish anarchism" misses the significance of the anarchist attempt to develop non-political, non-hierarchical modes of organization. Not surprisingly, his study pays little attention to the growth and development of the popular movement, which marked the real success story of the anarchists in Spain. Instead, he focuses on the biographies of some of the major anarchist leaders, on their maneuverings for control or influence over the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist organizations, and on the consequences of these maneuverings for the *political* success or failure of anarchism in Spain. In concentrating his attention on politics, however, he neglects the day-to-day activities of militants — those actions which, in fact, build a popular movement. In short, he ignores what is, for anarchists, the strategy of direct action.



But simply to say that anarchism offers us direct action is not sufficient. Historically, direct action, or “propaganda by the deed,” has had two rather different meanings. On the one hand, many activists-theorists (among them Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, and Alexander Berkman) have taken it to mean “bombs.” Hence, the popular image of anarchists as terrorists and assassins. On the other hand, it has also been taken to mean exemplary action, which recruits adherents by the power of the positive example it sets. Thus, these same theorists ultimately recognized that bombs carry ambiguous messages, at best, and that a far better, and more effective, means of persuasion is the “demonstration effect” of real changes in the fabric of social life. Even a theorist as far removed from anarchism as Hannah Arendt has repeatedly noted that people who truly experience freedom do not give it up without a fight.

The key question then becomes, under what circumstances is direct action of the “exemplary” kind likely to be effective, and what can be done to create an environment which would make it so? Conversely, are there any circumstances in which terrorism is justified, and how are these to be identified?

Surprisingly, perhaps, our own society may constitute an environment where direct action of the first sort is possible. Our freedoms

of speech, press, and action allow us considerable room for experimentation. Food co-ops, networks of communal farms, community controlled day-care, alternative radio stations, worker-controlled or self-help health clinics, the Clamshell occupation at Seabrook—while all on a relatively small scale—provide examples of the ways in which people can begin to organize to meet their own needs, and to federate with others in networks of mutual support. Even in this context, however, traditional patterns of domination and subordination must be broken down: people accustomed to keeping in their place need to develop faith in their own ability simply to act before they can even begin to challenge existing structures. Thus—for anarchists—the importance of education (to overcome monopolies of technical knowledge and help to increase self-confidence) and of small-scale organization. Both constitute ways to let people experience their own potential.

But there are problems with this strategy even in a relatively open, democratic society. The past two decades have provided Americans with ample evidence that, when power and privilege are threatened, our government is more than willing to turn to anti-civil libertarian means to keep would-be revolutionaries in check. So the perennial question arises: do such moments call for that other form of direct action? Are these



the times for the politics of violent confrontation?

Herein, again, lies the relevance of Spain. There, in the period preceding the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936, civil liberties were far from firmly established, and the political process was subject to continual manipulation and instability. Between 1868 and 1936, Spain passed through monarchy, republic, restoration monarchy, military dictatorship, monarchy, and republic once again. What role could—or should—anarchists have played during those years?

As both these books report, the Spanish anarchists and anarchosyndicalists had maintained throughout this period a fairly consistent, anti-reformist, policy of direct action. They developed a unique blend of anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism which succeeded in uniting, in one broad-based organization, the rural laborers of Andalusia and the industrial workers of Catalonia. In marked contrast to the extensive bureaucracy of the marxist socialist unions, the anarchosyndicalist labor confederation (CNT) had only one paid official—even when its membership exceeded one million workers. Strikes tended to be long and bitter; the right to organize was never safely established. Power had continually to be tested—and taken.

But such a strategy did entail a potential for violence; and both

writers attempt to come to terms with this issue. Bookchin treats anarchist terrorism primarily as a response to repression. "The anarchists," he claims, "had been goaded from a generous humanism into a vengeful terrorism." His perspective is made most explicit, perhaps, in his discussion of *pistolero* (the terrorist "politics" of hired gunmen):

When the Captain manufacturers turned to *pistolero* after World War I, there could be no other answer than the counter-*pistolero* of the anarchists . . . *pistolero* and a militant anarchist policy in the CNT emerged as a result of defeats suffered by the moderate trade-union wing. A policy based on acquiescence would have demoralized the labor organization completely.

He goes on to argue that, in later years, anarchist organizations performed the "risky and thankless tasks" of exposing reformism by engaging in a deliberate policy of destabilizing the regime and contributing to the polarization of right and left. At times, Bookchin seems wary of this strategy. Yet his own obvious sympathy for the FAI (a militant organization formed to preserve the anarchist purity of the CNT)—and for its refusal to accept a less militant stance—belies that warning:

To condemn the Anarchists for producing "anarchy" is simply silly; . . . One can snicker at their tactics, naivete, recklessness, but more than any other single force in Spain

they had shattered the facade of liberalism and paved the way for an historic confrontation between the great contending social classes in the peninsula.

Perhaps so. Confrontationist tactics do force people to choose sides. And in the context of such polarization, liberal reformers cannot function: nor could they in Spain. All sides learned the limits of reformism. But at what price? Further destabilization of the regime, a civil war, and forty years of Franco. What criteria can we use to judge whether the costs were too great? Can a policy which encourages violent confrontation ever make a positive contribution to social change? If so, under what circumstances? How do we recognize them?

The limitation of Bookchin's perspective is his failure to recognize in this context that violent confrontation is not the only possible form of direct action, nor the only alternative to reformism. For example, anarchist militants could conceivably have continued to work within a union structure (as many did) without engaging in the counter-violence which fed into the hands of the right. Direct action need not mean counter-terror. Nevertheless, Bookchin does point out clearly both the limits of reform politics, and the difficulties of maintaining even a strategy of militant (but peaceful) direct action when the opposition is powerful and violent.

Kern, however, misses the point entirely. He denies that a militant, anti-reformist, syndically-oriented policy could have any strategic or organizational validity. And he characterizes those who favored such a policy as "intransigent."

For him, the answers to our questions are simple: confrontation is always counter-productive; reformism is the only "mature" form of social-political action. Militants, he writes, made it difficult for the anarchists to engage in "normal political life." As if anarchists *wanted* to engage in "normal political life." Even so, Kern's own evidence documents the failure of anarchists to make gains through "normal" political channels when they chose to do so. Thus, although some members of the CNT joined the government of the Republic in hopes of protecting gains previously made by collectivists and others, they were unsuccessful. The collectives had been established by direct action, and had grown up without government support. They were destroyed by government and Communist Party-inspired repression. Participation in the government only implicated the anarchists in the counter-offensive which George Orwell chronicled so movingly in *Homage to Catalonia*.

But the anarchists, as Bookchin reminds us, achieved real gains in Spain—whether because of, or in spite of, terrorism. They succeeded in

organizing large numbers of workers (both members of the traditional proletariat, as well as those Marx dismissed as *lumpens*, or "old shit") in an effective trade-union federation which was crucial to halting the initial fascist offensive. And, before they were crushed by Communist party and Republican collusion, they managed to sustain one of the most extensive attempts at self-management and popularly-run and coordinated institutions which has yet existed. Their success—however limited it may have been in time and space—was not in their politics, but in their creation of new forms of organization and of social life. The program of direct action may not have proved a guarantee against defeat. Nevertheless, the Spanish experience suggests that—even in the face of powerful opposition—there are alternatives, both to traditional reformist politics and to Leninist-style communist organizing. In order not to see chaos, we need only change our lenses.

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Last Writes

BLACK ROSE LECTURE SERIES WINTER/SPRING 1981

- Feb. 27: *Religious Anarchism: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* - Robert Ellsberg
- March 13: *"Mental Health" and the Therapeutic State* - Judi Chamberlin
- April 10: *Human Scale: Is a Decentralist Future Possible?* - Kirkpatrick Sale
- May 8: *The New Right, the Family, and the State* - Allen Hunter
- MIT • ROOM 9-150 Free
105 Mass. Ave., Cambridge Friday Nights - 8 pm.

- The Free Voice of Labor—The Jewish Anarchists, the well-received film documentary by Pacific St. Production, will have a free showing at the Boston Public Library, April 9 at 7 pm.

- We would like to point out a newly-issued pamphlet to our readers, *The first Mayday: the Haymarket speeches 1895-1910*. It contains eight memorial orations of Voltarine de Cleyre for her comrades who fell in the Haymarket affair. These speeches "constitute a classic of anarchist literature" according to Paul Avrich, who wrote the introduction and notes. Striking design and graphics include a powerful series of lithographs by Siporin and cover art by Flavio Costantini. Congratulations to Cienfuegos Press; the Libertarian Book Club, and Soil of Liberty, who collaborated in its publication. (price \$3. In US write Libertarian Book Club, PO 482, Gen. PO, NY, NY 10016, and Soil of Liberty, PO 7056, Powderhorn Sta., Minneapolis, Minn. 55407.)

- Black Rose is not the only group with a lecture series. In Montreal "la groupe de la pensee sauvage" is also sponsoring a discussion series. For those who are interested, the schedule is Feb. 15, "Anarchists and the Mexican Workers' Movement", March 8, "Women and the State", March 29, "Growing Militarism and the Contemporary Quebec State", and April 26, "May Day: Yesterday and Today". The discussions will take place at Le Noeud, 2075 boulevard St. Laurent in Montreal. Admission is free and unfortunately all the talks are apparently in French.

- Also in French for those who are interested is the newsletter "Le Q-lotte" which presents a pro self-management perspective on events in Quebec. The address is 64, rue Maisonneuve, app. 4, Quebec, Quebec G1R 2C3.

- Montreal also has some interesting English publications. Black Rose Books, 3981 boulevard St. Laurent, H2W 1Y5, have been publishing libertarian and left wing books for some ten years now. Latest titles include an expanded reprint of *Bakunin on Anarchism*, a translation of Edith Thomas' biography of *Louise Michel*, the 19th Century French anarchist, a new edition of Murray Bookchin's *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, and a new collection of Bookchin's writings entitled, *Toward An Ecological Society*. With their connections to the bookstore Librarie Alternatifs they have access to a wide variety of books on all sorts of left wing interests. They would gladly respond to any and all letters, sent att. Jean Nataf.

- Finally, *Our Generation*, the oldest independent radical quarterly in Canada, gave us a plug in their last issue, and we ought to return the favour. *Our Generation* is on sale for \$2 per copy and can be bought by writing to them at the same address as Black Rose books. The last issue included an assessment of the Boston Group Root and Branch by Dimitri Roussopoulos, Murray Bookchin's "Open letter to the Ecology Movement", articles on the telephone system, uranium mining, the Teamsters, a memorial to Jean-Paul Sartre, and book reviews. *Our Generation* is by far the best magazine on radical efforts in Canada and we recommend it to our readers.

- We have mentioned *Comment*, the newsletter published by Murray Bookchin, before and would like to again. The new address is PO Box 158, Burlington, Vt. 05402. Each issue is 80¢, with seven issues for \$5. *Comment* presents new perspectives on libertarian thought in a lively fashion, that is, in Bookchin's flowery style. It is worth the investment, though when reading *Comment*, one often asks oneself in French, "Comment?" (How?)

- *Black Rose* will hold a poetry fundraiser, March 14, with poets Raffael DeGruttola, Vincent Ferrini, and Elizabeth McKim. Come help the magazine and enjoy yourself. Admission will be the purchase of one *Black Rose* magazine (\$1.50)—Location to be announced.

- *Black Rose* is also in the process of arranging benefit performances of *The Bread and Roses Play* by the Modern Times Theatre of NYC. See events of the Lawrence 1912 strike dramatized and accompanied by music from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Performances will be during April 25-27 in Boston and Cambridge. Watch for them!