

Anarchists in Eastern Europe



THE RAVEN ANARCHIST QUARTERLY 13

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Editorial

Most of this issue of *The Raven* is a report of a conference *East: A Freedom Workshop* organised by the **Germinal Anarchist Group** of Trieste with help from other Italian groups as well as the FAI (Italian Anarchist Federation), from the 14th - 17th April 1990. To quote the organisers:

The purpose of the conference was to provide a forum for anarchists from Eastern European countries to meet and organise among themselves as well as with comrades from the West.

The conference was attended by more than 350 comrades from East and West Europe, Canada and the United States. Every Eastern European country was represented with only a few exceptions: Albania and Lithuania.

In July FREEDOM PRESS were approached by the **Gruppo Germinal** with a view to our publishing the English text of the reports, discussions and debates that took place, which was being drafted by an American comrade from tapes and notes and translations etc . . . We accepted with enthusiasm to make it into an issue of *The Raven*.

Unfortunately, for a number of reasons the typescript did not materialise until the end of last year. Having read it through it was clear to us that it could not be published as it stood. We are glad to say that the American comrade responsible for the text recently called at FREEDOM PRESS and agreed with us about the deficiencies of the manuscript and welcomed the fact that we had secured the services of our Nottingham comrade Andrew Hedgecock to go through the 103 pages of typescript and produce what is now in fact a new manuscript. We hasten to point out that he has added nothing! What he *has* done is to cut out repetitions and passages which were incomplete, where the meaning could not be made clear. Also chatty pieces which were picked up by the tape but of no relevance. He has also contributed a valuable Introduction. We think our readers will agree with us that the final version is both readable and interesting.

The remaining space has given us the opportunity to include Serge Cipko's essay on 'Nestor Makhno: A Mini Historiography of the Anarchist Revolution in Ukraine, 1917-1921' which will be appreciated both by our regular readers as well as our new friends in the Eastern countries. As many as 500 will be receiving this issue by arrangement with the Trieste comrades. We also think that the other two contribu-

tions; Paul Marshall on 'Chomsky's Anarchism' and David Koven's open letter to a Communist friend whose 'God' has failed will be of special interest to our comrades in the East because with their inevitable Marxist indoctrination we imagine they will appreciate the anarchist critique of Marxism. David Koven is an anarchist; Noam Chomsky most anarchists would probably describe as an 'anarcho-marxist' — to use our old friend F. A. Ridley's description of his own ideas, his philosophy was a combination of the best in Marxism and Anarchism.

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The next issue of *The Raven* will be 'On Voting', just in case the government imagines that an early, jingoist, general election will be in its favour. If it waits another year then this issue will be just as topical and useful in putting forward the anarchist case against the ballot box. We already have a number of contributions and promises. We welcome more articles please, not later than the first week in April.

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Many thanks to those readers who have responded to an appeal for donations towards the Deficit incurred in publishing *The Raven*. As valuable a contribution is to introduce our quarterly to potential new readers.

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Andrew Hedgecock

Introduction

In April 1990 an international conference in Trieste, Italy brought together more than 350 anarchists from Eastern Europe, Western Europe and North America. *East: A Freedom Workshop* was organised by the Gruppo Germinal of Trieste and the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI).

Claudio Venza of the FAI highlighted the significance of the meeting when he pointed out that anarchists from East and West last came together at a conference in Amsterdam in 1907.

The main aims of the conference were as follows:

- To foster international co-operation among anarchist groups;
- To exchange information about the aims, problems and strategies of anarchists in a variety of political climates. Particular attention was given to the differences between organisations in Eastern Europe and those in the Western 'democracies';
- To enable western anarchists to set up lines of communication with — and material support for — the emerging movements in the East.

The main theme of the meeting was supplied by the collapse in 1989 of repressive governments in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania.

Eastern Europe 1989: The Triumph of Capitalism?

In the space of a year the Polish Communist Party had control wrenched from their grasp by Solidarity; the 35 year rule of the Bulgarian dictator Zhivkov was ended; the Communists in Hungary were so unpopular that they had to change their name; the rule of the tyrannical Ceausescu family came to a bloody end in Romania; and the writer Vaclav Havel, whose opposition to Stalinist bureaucracy had led to persecution and imprisonment, was elected President of Czechoslovakia. The fall of the Berlin Wall, which accompanied demonstrations against the East German Communist Government, provided an enduring symbol of the courage of the Eastern workers who demanded their freedom.

But what are the implications of this astonishing turn of events?

Western media, political and academic pundits had few doubts. The

demise of Stalinism provided a total vindication of the values of Western capitalism.

The British tabloids seemed to believe the people of Eastern Europe had overthrown their repressive governments to open up new markets for fast food giants McDonalds.

This argument was presented in a more up-market form by right-wing philosopher Francis Fukuyama in his notorious article 'The end of history'. Fukuyama, deputy director of policy-planning at the US State Department and former consultant with the Pentagon-backed Rand Corporation, says that the history of ideas is over. He claims we have witnessed the final victory of liberal democracy and market organisation: 'The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism'.

Unlike Francis Fukuyama I can't demand a 'telephone number' salary for my analysis of political events — but, to me, his reasoning seems obviously fallacious. It is at best foolish, and at worst dishonest, to suggest that the collapse of the *state capitalist* regimes in the East demonstrates that there is no alternative to capitalism.

One of the most cogent dismissals of Fukuyama's theory comes from a group of workers in Eastern Europe. Polish miners (from Silesia) wrote in a 1980 edition of their bulletin: 'Our system has nothing to do with socialism: it is state capitalism in which there is no concern for workers' well being. Miners are not important; the only thing that counts is the coal that can be exchanged for Dollars.' [Reprinted from *Socialism for Beginners* by Anna Paczuska and Sophie Grillet, 1986].

From State Capitalism to the Free Market

Street protests alone did not lead to the dismantling of state capitalism: the need for the Warsaw Pact states to modernise their economies was a crucial factor. H. I. Jones (writing in *Freedom* 13/1/90) suggested that in permitting change in the USSR, Gorbachev's motive was to enable the 'Eastern Bloc' to keep up with the rapid technological development of the West. The changes have, of course, gone much further than Gorbachev anticipated.

When the American consumer campaigner Ralph Nader visited Russia in 1989, he was astonished by the people's uncritical acceptance of free market capitalism. He said: 'They're swinging from Marx to Friedman . . . moving from being hypercritical about everything Western to being hypersycophantic toward everything Western'.

Those people in Eastern Europe who believe free market capitalism

will transform their lives for the better are in for an unpleasant surprise. Capitalists see them merely as a new market to exploit.

After the change in Eastern attitudes to capitalist economics, there was a massed invasion by Western companies. One feature of this economic imperialism was an influx of environmentally destructive industries into countries like Hungary.

Western capitalists aren't investing in the East out of the good of their hearts. Many believe that it will be the new Korea: in other words, Eastern workers will provide cheap labour. 'Scorpion', writing in the January 1990 edition of *Socialist Standard*, reported Fiat and Volkswagen's plans to open plants in Russia and East Germany respectively. It was pointed out that this development could result in redundancies for workers in Spain and Portugal, who had previously been Europe's most 'cost effective' workforce.

The myth that the free market is about wealth for everyone will soon be exploded. Workers in the East will be pitted against their Western counterparts in the battle for capital investment.

There are many workers in Eastern Europe opposed to the introduction of a free market economy. They don't want to suffer its exploitation and its endless cycles of boom and bust. The Soviet socialist Boris Kagarlitsky has pointed out that many workers are more interested in social justice, social welfare, human rights and education than the opportunity to purchase videos, wrangler jeans and 'Big Macs'.

These workers have already rejected the values of Western capitalism: in the next few years it will become another 'God that Failed' for many of their more gullible colleagues.

The Case against Vanguard Socialism

While we can safely dismiss the notion that the transformation of Eastern Europe represents the ultimate triumph of capitalism, it does challenge the validity of vanguard socialism.

In the winter of 1989-90 many left-wing periodicals carried smug editorials arguing that the overthrow of Stalinist governments posed no particular threat to their ideology. After all, the argument ran, we're not Stalinists so we don't have to defend our kind of Socialism. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) have taken this line. They attribute the repressive regimes of Eastern Europe to Stalin and his particular form of elite leadership of the working class.

In his SWP tract, *The Case for Socialism*, Paul Foot accepts that socialism cannot be instituted from the top-down by 'well-meaning parliamentarians or by blind and brutal Stalinists'. But don't raise your

hopes — he hasn't accepted the anarchist view that people should be free from authority. Foot believes that socialism must come from an 'active minority' — an enlightened elite prepared to lead the rest of us to the Trotskyist Utopia. Foot says: 'The passive majority accept most of the time what they are told, what they read in the papers and see on television'.

I'm sure many anarchists despair at the gullibility of their fellow human beings — particularly during the present campaign of disinformation on the Gulf war. The difference is that, unlike Paul Foot and the SWP, we do not feel we have the right to *impose* our beliefs upon others. The events of 1989 should have buried for ever the idea that a revolutionary vanguard can turn people into socialists and lead us to a free society. If there is to be a genuine socialist revolution then it will be a libertarian one — and any lasting change in the structure of our society must be based upon popular action by a majority of people.

An Endless Parade of Tyrants

The removal of regimes that had controlled every aspect of people's lives since World War II left a huge social and political vacuum. Sadly, power has passed from the old governments to a variety of authoritarian groups.

In some cases the 'new' powers in the East are merely re-packaged versions of the old ones. As it became possible to get the events of 1989 into perspective it became clear that, in some countries, the most prominent members of the 'old guard' had been removed but many of their close supporters were now in control. Parties and trade unions changed names — but they were still controlled by those who led them under the banner of the Communist Party. At the 'East' conference, speakers from Romania and Hungary said that the popular unrest had brought about reform rather than revolution.

Even in those countries where the Communist Party was swept from power, repressive state institutions remain intact. People have always been adept at recognising individual examples of tyranny and slow to identify authoritarian structures and traditions. History is packed with examples of a 'popular' monarch taking over from a tyrant, but how often did a coup d'état bring a fundamental improvement in the lives of the majority? I doubt that many British anarchists can honestly say they weren't cheered by the sudden departure of our Prime Minister last November, even though most of us didn't really expect Major's Britain to be any freer than Thatcher's.

The obsession with personalities in politics has been particularly

powerful in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Too much faith has been invested in personalities involved in opposition movements: Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel and their parties became popular emblems of the people's resistance within their own countries and in the West.

One of the Polish contributors at the 'East' conference pointed out that, while the Solidarity government is less authoritarian than its Communist predecessors, it has continued a number of repressive traditions.

Walesa and other leaders of Solidarity are desperate to attract Western companies to Poland, so they are calling upon workers to 'be reasonable' in their wage demands. They have cut wages in real terms and placed limits on the right to strike.

A Czechoslovakian anarchist at the conference revealed that the new Civic Forum administration has begun to clamp down on the left-wing opposition.

As Poland and Czechoslovakia rush headlong from bureaucratic state capitalism towards a system of monopolistic control by private capitalists, it is difficult to see how Solidarity and Civic Forum merited the trust that workers placed in them or their leaders.

By investing political power in individuals and parties people bring themselves an endless parade of tyrants.

Coming back out of the woodwork . . .

Exploitation of the new political climate has not been confined to the re-packaged communists and those parties working on a broad anti-communist platform. Organisations and movements which were powerful before the creation of the Soviet empire have been able to claw back some of their influence.

One of the main beneficiaries of the loosening of the Communist Party's grip has been the Church. Tyrants all over the Christian and Islamic worlds invoke God and Allah to prop up their earthly authority — notice how often George Bush and Saddam Hussein have made reference to their deities since the outbreak of war. But Britain is a secular state, where politicians occasionally pay lip service to the Church, and it is difficult to appreciate the degree of control that the clergy are able to exert over people's lives in some countries.

In Poland, the Catholic Church had a massive influence on the anti-Communist opposition. A speaker at the 'East' conference highlights the involvement of the Catholic clergy in the Solidarity administration. Lech Walesa once said he would not trust himself to be a leader 'if it were not for the influence of God'.

Perhaps this is the sort of remark that led Bakunin to say: 'If God existed, it would be necessary to destroy him'.

One of the most alarming developments in the 'new' East has been the increasing influence of right-wing nationalist groups. A number of speakers at 'East' expressed concern at the activities of racists and separatist movements.

One of the worst features of the old Communist regimes was that power was centralised on a massive scale. Anarchists would support the aim of greater regional autonomy, but regional separatism based on racial grouping would not be a step towards freedom. It would mean a shift into an endless cycle of border clashes and persecution of racial minorities. The situation in Yugoslavia, described in one of the following presentations, could all too easily become a blueprint for the whole of Eastern Europe. Instead of living in fear of the regime in Moscow, people would be living in societies at war with themselves. Some progress.

Liberation from the power of the Soviet empire is only a small step towards a freer society. As Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer pointed out in *The Floodgates of Anarchy*, nationalism creates new states which employ old forms of repression: 'By obtaining popular consent to the new forms of rule, the new State legitimises oppression'.

To quote Bakunin again: 'The smallest and most inoffensive state is still criminal in its dreams'.

One of the Yugoslavian contributors to the conference was harassed by Italian border guards on his way to Trieste. His experience didn't just show that the authorities in the 'free' West can be just as obnoxious as those in the East — it also demonstrated what national borders are all about. Anarchists are not content to stop at the tearing down of the Berlin Wall: we want to see the removal of *all* frontiers.

Difficult Issues

The 'East' conference included presentations by representatives of anarchist groups with a wide range of attitudes, concerns and methods. Divergent approaches to a number of key issues highlighted the plurality of views that can co-exist under the broad umbrella of anarchism. The only constant theme throughout the presentations was an opposition to all forms of coercive power.

Capitalism: a necessary phase?

There were significant differences of opinion among the East European speakers on the introduction of capitalism. A Yugoslavian contributor

said 'Capitalism is no better than communist dictatorship'. But representatives from Hungary and the Soviet Union saw the free market as an essential stage in dismantling the state's economic monopoly. They felt that Hungary and the USSR need a period of capitalism to catch up with the technological and economic development of the West.

Many anarchists will find it difficult to accept this view. The notion of 'catching up' assumes that there should be international competition rather than co-operation. The continuation of the system of out-producing and outselling your international rivals perpetuates war, and is leading us towards global ecological calamity.

In an open letter to Vaclav Havel last Autumn, Eric Heffer MP addressed the misconceptions about capitalist Britain held by many in Eastern Europe: 'The truth is . . . unemployment has again gone up. There is widespread poverty. More and more people are without homes sleeping on the street.'

The newspaper photographs of people sleeping in the snow on London's streets this February should dissuade anyone from believing that capitalism equates with wealth.

An acceptance of the free market seems to imply that Western capitalism and state capitalism are the only options. Rather than making comparisons in terms of who has the most consumer goods, or who has the wealthiest capitalists, we should recognise that neither system has served the human race particularly well. Only by developing more co-operative forms of organisation, and introducing a system of production for need, will the mass of people enjoy a decent quality of life.

Democracy: should anarchists participate?

Anarchist participation in the 'democratic process' was another controversial issue. There were differences of approach both between and within groups. A representative of *Autonomija* from Yugoslavia describes the groups' mixed feelings about participation in electoral politics: some members feel that anarchists should use every possible method to get their message across, while others say that involvement in the establishment's political system will have a corrupting effect. A member of Yugoslavia's Kamov Group, who has spent time in the West, totally rejects any involvement in the process of parliamentary democracy.

Some anarchists vote in British elections, but not many admit it. Britain is generally believed to be the world's longest established democracy. Next time there is a general election we will have a vast range of parties to choose from:

- The Conservatives, who support the capitalist system and defend British involvement in the Gulf war;
- Labour, whose policies are completely different. They support the capitalist system and defend British involvement in the Gulf war;
- The Liberal-Democrats, who provide an alternative for those who hate the policies of the two main parties. They defend British involvement in the Gulf and support the capitalist system.

The presentations from East European anarchists indicate that their democracies are no more participatory than our own. Putting candidates up for local elections may give you a public platform, but it also legitimates the idea that all shades of political opinion are represented by democracy.

The definitive view of the democratic process is supplied by the American writer Charles Bukowski: 'The difference between a Democracy and a Dictatorship is that in a Democracy you vote first and take orders later; in a Dictatorship you don't have to waste your time voting'.

Anarchism, the Class struggle and Language

The class struggle was so contentious an issue that a special discussion was dedicated to it.

Bruno Waterfield, from the Anarchist Workers Group in Britain, spoke for a working class revolution, in which the state is completely destroyed and replaced by workers assemblies.

Waterfield's comments were mainly addressed to the representatives from Hungary and the Soviet Union. He pointed out that the idea of class struggle has not become the property of Marxist-Leninists. The iniquities of the system of production for profit create class antagonism, and only the working class can create a social revolution.

Another contributor from Britain pointed out that whatever type of revolution or coup occurred in the higher reaches of society, workers would still be needed at the base to keep it going — whether in traditional industrial roles or using new technologies. There always has to be someone to produce the goods that society needs.

The task of anarchists, he went on to say, is to raise the revolutionary consciousness of the mass of people. They should not act as a vanguard, substituting their own activities for a people's movement.

In reply, a Russian representative said: 'the slogan of class struggle is the slogan of civil war'. He went on to point out that many members of the Russian working class would not favour a libertarian revolution since they supported right-wing nationalist groups. He rejected the notion of class conflict on the grounds that the Bolsheviks had claimed

to defend the interests of the working class. One class should not be preferred over another: everyone should be equal.

It became clear in the course of the discussion that the contributors from Hungary and the Soviet Union were using different definitions of working class. They tended to use the term to refer to unskilled workers alone, while speakers from Austria and Britain were talking about everyone who is forced to sell their labour.

Judite from Hungary saw racial conflict as the dominant struggle in post-industrial societies. She went on to point out that revolutionary change tends to be violent: the Russian Revolution was a violent workers struggle. Her feeling was that revolutions put ideology ahead of all other human values, and only give you a new set of rulers.

Judite's companion, Zoltan, said that the revolutions in Eastern Europe after World War I had nothing to do with a real workers' movement. Their end result was the Stalinist brand of capitalism. He suggested that the setting up of counter cultures, based upon self-government and a rejection of production for profit, would be a far more effective strategy than revolution in a post-industrial society.

A contributor from Austria suggested that there were recent examples of class struggle activity in Russia, for example, during the miners' strike. He rejected Judite's suggestion that civil and minority rights struggles were the most important issues, on the grounds that they could not be separated from other class struggles.

A first reading of this discussion and the presentations highlights some fundamental differences of opinion between the contributing groups. But a more careful analysis leads to the conclusion that the differences are linguistic. I am not suggesting that they were based upon misunderstandings fostered by errors in translation of a speaker's use of a second language. Rather that it may be a problem of terminology.

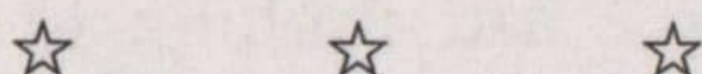
In Eastern Europe the expression 'class struggle' is clearly an emotive one, evoking the horrors of state capitalism: gulags, purges and five-year plans. Several contributors revealed that they had to be very cautious about the terms they used when presenting issues from a public platform. A speaker from East Germany points out that if you call yourself a socialist you are immediately perceived as a supporter of the old Stalinist regime. Libertarians in Yugoslavia have extra difficulties in getting the anarchist message across, since 'self-management' was an idea abused by their Communist administration.

Imagine the problems anarchists in Britain would have if Norris McWhirter and his cronies in the Freedom Association gained greater influence. In recent years this right-wing group has concentrated on protecting the freedom of the South African government to exploit the

majority of its population, but it has also been involved in campaigns against trade unions.

What about our use of the word libertarian? Roger Scruton, Professor of Philosophy at Birkbeck College in London, is often called an 'extreme libertarian' by the press. But the egregious Professor favours taking the free market to its ultimate conclusion. Last year, he wrote in support of the re-introduction of child labour: 'If the pay were sufficiently low — and children are willing to work for quite paltry sums— there would be no lack of employers ready to offer it' (*Guardian*, 13/2/90).

If these kind of views became associated with 'freedom' and 'libertarian', British anarchists would have to find a new language with which to present their ideas.



Anarchists face a massive challenge in the 1990s. Marxist-Leninism is discredited and capitalism has entered another major crisis: boom has turned to bust and Western governments have rushed headlong into a war to secure their supply of oil.

We have to persuade people that the real issue is not state planned economy vs the free market but autonomy vs authority. This is an urgent choice: the world faces ecological collapse, widespread poverty and perpetual war over natural resources. Anarchists have to demonstrate that people have far less to fear from liberty and co-operation than they do from their authoritarian governments and the destructive competition of the capitalist system.

The following presentations from the 'East' conference support the assertion that if you ask 100 anarchists for a definition of anarchism, then you will get 100 different definitions. But there is a common thread here: every single speaker shows a firm commitment to the development of a society where people have control over their own lives.

Anarchists are true internationalists. If we are to co-operate across national boundaries we need to find out a great deal more about the aspirations, hopes, fears and problems of others. The 'East' conference was a welcome step in that direction.

A REPORT

EAST: A FREEDOM WORKSHOP

Czechoslovakia

The Czechoslovak Anarchist Society (CAS) is a successor to the Czechoslovak Anarchist Federation which was established in 1925. It is an open confederation which aims to unite anarchists from all walks of life.

CAS made its first declaration of principles in October 1989. The group believes that individual initiative and co-operation are the two most important aspects of a sane society. Its main aims are:

- *to organise anarchist groups, and to facilitate contact and co-operation between individuals*
- *to publish and collect anarchist literature (both propaganda and theoretical work)*
- *to support anti-militarist and anti-nationalist groups*
- *to oppose terrorism.*

An anarchist group's size is held to be less important than the commitment and quality of thinking of its members.

The kind of problems experienced by anarchists in communist-controlled Czechoslovakia were highlighted by a CAS delegate from Olomouc, the Moravian capital. He told the 'East' conference that he had been barred from entering university as a result of his political activity. When the revolution began he was doing his compulsory two-year military service, and was imprisoned for expressing his anti-government views to fellow conscripts.

At the conference, CAS representatives described the political situation in Czechoslovakia after the fall of the Communist Government and outlined their activities.

Since the revolution in November 1989 the political situation in Czechoslovakia has become very complicated. Thirty different parties are now in operation.

Anarchists have begun to work openly, and legally, for the first time, but there are rumours that we may soon be subjected to a clamp-down by the Home Office.

At the time of the revolution people began to take part in politics. Since Civic Forum came to power they have begun to withdraw from political life, thinking that politics is beyond them. This shows that real democracy cannot be created by giving a political party seats in parliament.

Civic Forum have begun to act like the Communists. President Vaclav Havel's early speeches gave the impression that Czechoslovakia was taking a giant step towards democracy, but CAS believes that his Civic Forum government will take a right-wing stance. For example, the new bill on electoral law is undemocratic, since it limits the activities of smaller parties and groups representing the 'left alternative'.

Libertarian Activity in Czechoslovakia

CAS is a confederation of Czechoslovak anarchist groups, based in Prague. We have 200 members from all over the country, including small towns in Bohemia and Slovakia.

We have close links with other left-wing organisations in Prague. CAS also co-operates with a number of 'green' groups, the Anti-Militarist League and a recently formed gay organisation. We have a good relationship with anarchist groups in Poland, West Germany, East Berlin and West Berlin.

The activities we have taken part in have not been purely anarchist ones, but have involved co-operation between CAS and a variety of other interest groups.

For example, we took part in a large-scale protest against government plans to build a tunnel under a park in Prague. Popular support for this action forced the government to drop the scheme.

Our comrades in Moravia were involved in an action by people in Olomouc against a newly-formed Moravian nationalist/separatist party. This protest was very successful.

The Communists have presented themselves as a party of the left for 40 years. In spite of the fact that they were very right-wing, if not fascist, this has led to a widespread aversion to socialists and other left-wing movements. We are hoping to begin to change public opinion with a rally in the centre of Prague on May 1st (1990) – which will involve a variety of left-wing groups, including CAS.

East Germany

A speaker from East Germany told the conference about anarchist activity and the changing political climate in her country. (The 'East' workshop took place before the re-unification of the two German states.)

People who were involved in anarcho-syndicalism before the rise of Fascism have contributed a great deal to the development of a new movement.

The federation of anarcho-syndicalist groups, *Freie Arbeiter Una Deutschland* (FRUD), has helped to found a libertarian centre in East Berlin. It has also provided printing machinery, computers and other materials for open access to all East German anarchists.

The largest anarcho-syndicalist group in the GDR is based in Saydinnick, about 30km from Berlin. They have around twenty-five members, and are supported by the donation of papers and materials from West Germany.

On May 1st (1990) a fortnight of anarchist events will begin. The festival, called 'Black Days', will involve over thirty events, and 20,000 copies of a FRUD newspaper will be distributed on both sides of Berlin.

Recently, there has been an increase in nationalist and fascist activity all over Germany. We have had problems with 'skin-heads'. On one occasion 300 fascists attacked a squatted house. This has led to co-operation between anti-fascist groups in East and West Germany. A recent demonstration against neo-fascism attracted 3,000 people.

For the first time, anarchists in the GDR can present their ideas in public. In Berlin, 54 houses have been squatted and turned into communications centres, printing shops, meeting halls and cafes. Some contain rooms for children, and some have been turned into women's refuges. In cities throughout Germany most of the squatted housing has been taken over by anarchists.

Many East German anarchists are protesting against the country joining NATO. There have been demonstrations against NATO in Dresden and Potsdam.

At one time many anarchists belonged to the 'Tribalist' tendency, but as the reactionary elements in the GDR got stronger things became difficult for this kind of 'alternative-lifestyle' group.

The growing strength of conservatives in East Germany is partly due to the influence of the West German government. Another factor was the Stalinist government's references to themselves as 'socialist'. Today, anyone involved in socialist politics is assumed to have some connection

with the old government. This problem is making it difficult for us to gain any advantage from East Germany's 'new beginning'.

Romania

The presentation on Romania was made by an anarchist who is living in exile.

Anarchism has not played a major role in Romania. In Bulgaria and the Soviet Union there is a tradition of libertarian thinking in social and political life, but that is not the case here.

Young people have become radicalised in Hungary, Poland, and to a lesser extent, Russia. This has led to the development of libertarian attitudes which can be seen in new fashions and music. In Romania, however, Ceausescu prevented any social experimentation by young people. In the late '60s and early '70s young people with alternative lifestyles (which mainly involved wearing hippy clothing) were persecuted by the authorities.

There is a great deal of confusion about recent political developments. The events of December 1989 did not constitute a complete revolution. The people who took part in the street fighting, and those who organised opposition to the Ceausescu regime, see the present political set-up as an intermediate one.

The revolution was started by the young people who were born after Ceausescu came to power. During the street fighting, youths from rural areas played a vital role. There is a strong student movement, but they tend to be separated from the young workers.

Those who presently hold power have adopted a liberal posture. While this situation has its positive points, it does tend to reduce the impetus for further change.

The ruling National Salvation Front has exploited nationalist feelings within the country and this has led to fighting between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania. Transylvania has suffered from racial conflict for over 1000 years, but Ceausescu made the problem worse by trying to force Romanian culture onto the region. Romanians must begin to respect the needs of the Hungarians in the region if the violence is to end.

There seems to have been a conspiracy of the military, regular police and security police to eliminate Ceausescu. During the street battles in Bucharest some members of the army shot people at random, but many young soldiers supported the uprising. The army is a positive force in

Romania at the moment, in that it is no longer propping up the communist political and economic systems.

The Orthodox Church is the strongest religious group in Romania. The head of the church once sent a letter to Ceausescu, congratulating him on his party's re-election, and thus lost all credibility with the people. At the start of the revolution he appeared on TV, calling for people to accept the Ceausescu regime. He failed, fortunately, and had to flee to a monastery till things had settled down. The Orthodox church is a fascist organisation, and it has a very powerful influence in Romania.

The workers' movement survived the old regime, but they never managed to organise independent unions until Ceausescu had fallen. Today, syndicalism has begun to develop and the trade unions have been re-formed as free unions.

The long period of repression prevented working people from reaching political maturity. Every time they gained strength, there was a clamp-down. Ceausescu's strongest attacks were against those who had set up the most effective workers' groups.

The redistribution of the enormous assets of the official unions that had been controlled by Ceausescu is a complex problem. The new trade unions are not likely to resemble Solidarity in Poland. They will face a very difficult time when industries are privatised as part of the programme of economic re-construction.

Yugoslavia

The discussion on Yugoslavian anarchism was presented by representatives of the A!, Autonomija and Kamov groups.

The Political Scene

The most important political development in Yugoslavia is the dissolution of the federation into six independent states. This process began in the early 1970s, and it is speeding up now. Yugoslavia will not necessarily cease to exist, but each of the member states may try to strengthen their position for negotiating a new national structure. It is difficult to predict what sort of state the new Yugoslavia will be. The political arena is dominated by strong nationalist groups, who seek sovereignty for their national states; and the Communist Party, which offers the best substitute for democracy and takes a wider Yugoslavian view.

The new political pluralism has favoured nationalist groups at the expense of those seeking a united Yugoslavia, and the economic, cultural and social links between the six republics are under threat. This trend is particularly disturbing for anarchists, who would like to see the end of all national borders.

There is a danger of conflict between nationalist groups in some regions. For example, the Albanian and Gypsy communities of southern Serbia have been subjected to human rights abuses. Throughout Yugoslavia there is discrimination against political and sexual minorities. In some towns groups of young people hang around in the streets, waiting to beat up homosexuals.

All over Eastern Europe the forces of conservatism are in the ascendency. For example, right-wing traditionalists have begun to dominate the political scene in the Croatian Republic. In the recent elections in Croatia, one of the strongest parties promised that, if elected, they would make abortion illegal. Members of some anarchist groups have joined the national campaign for abortion rights.

People in Croatia blame the Serbs for everything. In Serbia, the Croats and the Albanians are the scapegoats. Racial attacks are on the increase, and a wave of collective paranoia is sweeping the country.

When people speak of the East as a 'laboratory of freedom' they should bear in mind that the old notions of nationalism have re-emerged as the dominant ideology.

The abuse of various ideas by the Communist Party has been a problem for the anarchist movement. For example, they have totally devalued the term 'self-management'. For thirty years the system of government was known as 'Communist Party governed self-management'. Anarchists now face the difficult task of explaining what self-management really means.

The History of the Yugoslavian Anarchist Movement

Anarchism in Yugoslavia can be traced back to the fight against the tyranny of the Austro-Hungarian and Turkish empires in the nineteenth century.

During these liberation struggles, libertarians in the Balkan Peninsula made contact with figures like Proudhon and Malatesta. Johann Most, the German anarcho-syndicalist, had some involvement with Slavonian anarchists. Serbian anarchists formed an organisation with the help of Bakunin, who they had visited in Geneva. A group in Macedonia, on Yugoslavia's southern border, formed links with a strong anarchist group in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian organisation had fought against Tur-

kish rule, and was involved in the creation of one of the first Balkan republics.

The assassin of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo, in 1914, belonged to an anarchist group called 'Young Bosnia'. This group had links to others on the Balkan Peninsula, such as a Croatian youth organisation, a group called 'Renaissance' and the Serbian Republicans known as 'The Black Hand Organisation'.

Between the first and second world wars, the anarchist movement faded under the monarchy of King Alexander I. After 1945, it had to work under the authoritarian rule of the Communist Party.

There was an anarchist revival in the 1960s, sparked by the student movement. Contacts were made with groups in Amsterdam, France, Italy and Spain, and a representative was sent to the Anarchist Federation conference in Carrara, in Italy, in 1968.

The law has prevented the creation of a formal anarchist organisation so we operate as a network of individuals. We have been involved in fights for civil, political and ethnic liberties. Close links have also been formed with the ecology and feminist movements. Anarchists have also been involved in the efforts to create free trade unions.

Today, anarchist propaganda is spread through professionally produced journals, the youth press and a number of student organisations.

Yugoslavian Anarchism Today

There were presentations from representatives of three Yugoslavian anarchist groups, describing their development, concerns and activities. . .

Presentation by the A! Group (based in Ljubljana, Slavonia)

'A!' is a group of young anarchists from Ljubljana. Last March, four members of A! began working on an initiative called 'Our Project', a study of left-wing groups in Europe and the USA.

We are hoping that comrades abroad will send us information: we would like to receive articles, books, photographs, fanzines and personal anecdotes. The study aims to explore the history of the left, the circumstances in which the left and right can seize power, and the idea that the far-right acts as a balance to the influence of the far-left.

The 'punk' movement has been the most influential youth culture in Yugoslavia over the past decade. Punk bands have made a massive contribution to the spread of anarchist ideas in Slavonia.

Presentation by Autonomija (based in Zagreb, Croatia)

Autonomija is a new name for an old group of friends who have been working together for the past ten years. In Greek, *nomos* means rule of law or principle, and *auto nomos* means you have the freedom to work out your own principles. We chose the name because freedom is our fundamental value.

We have no connection to the Marxist-Leninist group in Italy called *Autonomia*. We are similar to some of the anarchist groups in West Germany.

When the group was formed in the early 1980s, its members were humanities students. We wanted to make it clear that we were a left-wing group, but independent of the official quasi-left organisations.

We were disgusted by the closed academic discussion of our professors, and became interested in the ideas of those who edited the philosophical review 'Praxis'. Soon after its formation, the group began to take part in demonstrations and show solidarity with people put on trial by the state.

Later, we turned to cultural activities, and got involved in political theatre and performance art 'happenings'. For example, we held a demonstration holding blank banners and a reading of our constitution was accompanied by a saxophone.

In its next phase the group went under the name of 'Svarog'. Svarog is an old slavonic pagan deity who personifies sunlight and nature. At this stage we were working in a large organisation, which contained groups other than the one that went on to become Autonomija.

We focussed on ecology, peace and the feminist movement. Svarog was a pioneering organisation – we were the first group in Zagreb to be organised on a libertarian basis. At that time the only other group that young people could join was the League of Socialist Youth, since the government had tried to ban all other independent political movements. Other groups followed our example and began to adopt non-hierarchical styles of organisation.

Today, under the name of Autonomija, we are a small, informal group of friends. We want to stay on this scale, with a recognisable group identity, because we think it is the best way of preventing the development of formal and informal hierarchies. We are happy, however, to form links with other autonomous groups in Zagreb.

The difficult and confusing political situation in Yugoslavia means anarchists have to use a variety of methods to get their message across. Some comrades feel we ought to get involved in electoral politics, and some have chosen to present their views on television. While many libertarians will say that we will be corrupted by getting involved in a

political system controlled by the establishment, it will not necessarily damage our organisation. The awful political situation in Croatia means we have to persuade people to seek the anarchist alternative by any means we have at our disposal.

Our most recent action was against the management of the Youth Cultural Centre in Zagreb. When they tried to throw out everyone who didn't have enough money to make themselves look pretty (such as punks, freaks, heavy-metal fans and skins) we organised a demonstration.

Our next action will take place when 'EuroVision' is held in Zagreb. We will be holding 'CounterVision', a cultural protest.

Presentation by the Kamov group (based in France and communicating with Yugoslavian groups)

The Kamov group consists of anarchists based in France, and those who spend their time between France and Yugoslavia. We take our name from a Croatian anarchist, Kamov, a writer and poet who died in Barcelona at the age of 24.

Kamov was formed by young Yugoslavian anarchists arriving in France, and is an informal group made up of comrades who are members of other organisations, including the French Anarchist Federation and CNT. We have three main aims:

- to help the spread of anarchist ideas in Yugoslavia
- to organise militant actions in response to the situation in Yugoslavia
- to inform the French public, especially the French anarchist movement, about Yugoslavian affairs.

During the present period of nationalist conflict, and the collapse of the centralised state, it is important to get information free of national prejudice out of Yugoslavia. The nationalist groups are not only fighting each other in Yugoslavia, they are engaged in a propaganda war abroad.

The Kamov group is working against all forms of nationalism. We oppose the Croatian, Slavonian and Albanian separatist-nationalists, and the expansionist-nationalists of Yugoslavia and Serbia.

We have supported a variety of human rights and peace committees in Yugoslavia. In 1988, when four Slavonian pacifists were given a military trial in Ljubljana, we set up a French committee to support them. We held the first protest at a Yugoslavian embassy that did not include nationalist flags: it was also the first that had been organised by a left-wing group rather than by nationalist emigrés. The demonstration included people from all the national groups within Yugoslavia:

Slavonians, Croatians, Serbs and Albanians worked in harmony with other Eastern Europeans and French libertarians.

Kamov provides information about Yugoslavia to 'Radio Libertaire', an FM radio station run by anarchists in Paris. We are also actively involved in the libertarian and alternative press, including the French anarchist weekly *Le Monde Libertaire*.

In one month, the Yugoslav army and police killed an Albanian every single day. In response we distributed pamphlets at the University of Paris.

Kamov has symphathisers within Yugoslavia, and we have strong links with opposition groups in Slavonia. We offer support to all libertarian groups, but will not co-operate with Marxists.

We whole-heartedly reject the notions of parliamentary democracy and free market economics, and seek an end to the power of the police, the military and politicians in Yugoslavia.

Our experience of life in the west has shown us that parliamentary democracy cannot solve Yugoslavia's economic problems. Nor would it resolve the nationalist question: consider Northern Ireland and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. Capitalism is no better than communist dictatorship.

After the Croatian elections, the strongest party was a group of ultra-nationalist fascists led by a former General. And yet, many people in Yugoslavia believe that the institution of the multi-party system will solve all their problems. We are pessimistic about future political developments. Libertarians are beginning to get organised but, while most of our work has been on a theoretical level, the nationalist activists are out on the streets.

Soviet Union

In his paper 'Anarchist Stirrings in the USSR', Will Firth described 1989 as a 'boom year for anarchist activity' in the Soviet Union. He went on to outline the development and activities of the KAS, a confederation which links anarchist groups throughout the country.

In January 1989 the only anarcho-syndicalist paper was the Moscow based monthly Obschina (Commune), which had a print run of 200 copies. By September that year publications had begun in Leningrad, Gorky and Khar-kow, with a combined print run of over 30,000.

KAS is particularly strong in the European part of the USSR and some areas of Siberia. Outside Russia and the Ukraine it is less well represented. Will Firth suggests that this may be related to the fact that national minorities in the Soviet Union are involved in a struggle for national identity and independence. While the sovereign states they aim to create may be less monolithic than the USSR, their goals are not compatible with the anarchist rejection of states, borders and the concept of nationalism.

The main activities of the KAS confederation are education and the spread of information. The Moscow group contains many teachers and students, and produces a bulletin on educational issues called 'Kenguru'. During the conference it was announced that KAS plan to set up a Sunday school for young working people.

While none of the groups within KAS have had direct involvement in industrial action, they have liaised with workers' groups and supplied information on the formation of independent unions. Some members recently became involved in discussions on the setting up of a free trade union called 'Soprotivlenie' (Resistance).

KAS has links with members of 'Sotsprof', a reformist organisation which has infiltrated the official trade unions; and SMOT, a small group which has worked underground for many years collecting and distributing labour news.

Another opposition group which is active at present is the Democratic Union. This organisation employs the tactic of provoking the authorities at demonstrations, while KAS members believe that more positive results can be achieved by steering clear of political violence.

Firth points out that some aspects of the KAS programme will surprise western anarchists. The group see the adoption of market-economy ideas as necessary to the development of a system of decentralised self-management.

A reading of the conference transcript suggests, however, that the KAS use of the term 'free market' may have a very different meaning from the idea embraced by the disciples of Milton Friedman. Vladimir Gubarev, the KAS representative, used the term in conjunction with ideas of workers control and the co-operative management of industry. This kind of 'free-market' philosophy would hardly endear him to John Major, Norman Lamont and the CBI!

KAS proposals for the transformation of industry are clearly within an

anarchist framework. The need for state administration and capitalist control of production would be obviated by the introduction of a network of workplace organisations.

The presentation of the Soviet Union and the activities of the KAS was made by Vladimir Gubarev, Moscow-based editor of Obschina. Gubarev outlined the ethos of KAS to Will Firth:

'KAS is not dogmatic. We're with the people: we're not trying to be a vanguard, converting them to our line at all costs.'

The political situation in the Soviet Union is very complex.

It is the world's largest empire and has ecological, social, cultural, economic and nationality problems.

At the moment there is discussion about a new law to defend the honour of the President. Before the 1917 revolution, there was a law to protect the honour of the Tsar.

A Russian anarchist organisation called KAS existed in the early 1920s, but was destroyed by the government in 1926. A group with the same name held their first conference in Moscow in May 1989. The new KAS organisation has 1000 members in branches in 34 cities in Russia, the Ukraine, Siberia and the Far East.

The disappointments after the upheaval of 1917 have taught us that we do not want another revolution of this kind: for us the most important issues are human rights, people's lives and their health. Spreading our ideas has a lower priority.

We are a federalist organisation. Every regional branch is autonomous: we have no central control and each local group creates its own structure. Decisions are not taken on the basis of majority voting, but according to the principle of consensus. The soviet press refers to us as a party, but we are not a party since we do not aim for political power.

Feminism is not well established in the Soviet Union yet, and only about thirty of our thousand members are women.

In some regions, we took part in the local elections. This gave us the opportunity to present our propaganda to many millions of people through TV, radio and the official press. In one town, two of our members were elected to the council.

[Editor's Note: Will Firth has pointed out that this influence on a municipal council could allow KAS greater freedom to organise public events, and give them direct access to communal premises and printing facilities which are presently controlled by the state.]

We called for a boycott of the state parliamentary elections, since it is no longer possible to change things from the centre in this country.

The USSR is too large for decisions to be made from the top: a solution to a problem in the Baltic Republic would not work for the Ukraine, Russia or a Middle Asian state. Effective changes can only be made at a local level.

Last year (1989) we held a celebration of Bakunin's anniversary, at his birthplace near the city of Kalinin. A celebration of the centenary of the birth of Nestor Makhno, in the Ukraine, attracted 1000 people. Those attending this event included the children of some of the original Makhnovist partisans.

For us, all people are workers. The Marxists divide people into workers and intellectuals, and have created a system whose officials are rewarded with privileges and bribes. KAS is against ALL forms of discrimination, whether against people of another race or people of another class.

At our most recent congress, in March 1990, we agreed upon a resolution that no form of violence should be used in furthering our aims. We are pacifists. This is an important issue for anarchists in the Soviet Union. The history of our country is a history of civil war. If we were to initiate a civil war, it would defeat our libertarian aims by strengthening the totalitarian structures within our society.

We can accept the idea of an individual using violence for self-defence, but it is morally unacceptable for it to be used as a tactic in the political struggle.

KAS opposes state institutions such as the army and the police. We support the young Lithuanians who refuse to serve in the Soviet army. One of our publications is a magazine dedicated to pacifism. Pacifism in the USSR is a very complex issue because of the idea that we are all part of the people's state. There are differences of opinion about the idea of compulsory military registration within our group. Recently, a number of KAS members have refused military service.

We hold the view that it would be impossible for our society to reach a normal level of economic development without the introduction of a market economy. We oppose all forms of monopoly.

There must be collective forms of ownership (of factories for example) and there must be co-operation between the collectives. We oppose the idea of 'state property' but support the concept of 'collective property'. Our support for the free market stems from the fact that we live under a state monopoly. The reality of life in the Soviet Union is that if we reject a free market economy, then we preserve this monopoly.

The only viable approach to the difficulties in the USSR today involves decentralisation of the economy and self-management of local government, municipal government, industry and trade unions.

Poland

Anarchist Groups in Poland

The Development of the Rzeszow Group

A group known as 'Freedom and Peace' (whose Polish abbreviation is WIP) played an important role in the development of modern Polish anarchism. WIP was formed in 1985 to protest against compulsory military service and the activities of the SB (secret police).

In 1989 a branch was formed in the city of Rzeszow and, in co-operation with the Anarchist Intercity organisation, took part in the following activities:

- * a protest against the emission of mercury over Rzeszow by the 'Polam' factory
- * the setting up of a service providing information on how to stay out of the army
- * protests against nuclear energy
- * the drawing up of a petition against the death penalty
- * a protest against the influence of the army on education. This action included a lengthy boycott of military studies.

WIP distributed leaflets, placards and a magazine for school students called *Kominat*. It also supported a local bulletin called *ALE* and *Deprawacja*, an anarchist literary paper.

The Anarchist Federation began at an anarchist meeting in Dobrzen, in June 1989.

The Rzeszow WIP group joined the Anarchist Federation, bringing a handful of people, an old typewriter and \$50. They formed links with LAGA, an anarchist group in Lublin, and helped them to get office space by occupying the Communist Party HQ.

At this stage in their development, the group's activities included:

- * a 'General Jaruzelski must go' demonstration
- * a protest against Lech Walesa and Solidarity '89
- * an election boycott
- * 'Revolution' – a satirical commemoration of the Soviet revolution
- * 'SS-20' – a protest against the Polish army
- * on the anniversary of the July agreements between workers in Gdansk and the government, distribution of leaflets at the city's biggest factory.

Some of these actions attracted the interest of the press, and some led to investigations and clamp-downs by the local authorities.

The Rzeszow group occupied the buildings used by the Communist Party and the Young Communists in order to get office space in the centre of their city. The City President allowed the Anarchist Federation to use the rooms, but charged a very high rent. Some of the cost is met by renting space to a nationalist group called the Free Poland Confederation. The building also contains an anarchist library.

The group publish leaflets and a bulletin, *Zmowa*. Under the name 'Alter' they produce videos and concerts. Their next plan is to occupy the offices used by the Committee of Conscription.

The Anarchist Federation

Anarchism has only been organised at a national level for the past two years.

The Anarchist Intercity (known as the 'MA') was formed in August 1988, with the aim of providing information about anarchism, initiating anarchist activity and integrating the activities of a number of smaller groups, including:

- * The Movement for an Alternative Society (RSA). Founded in Gdansk, RSA has branches in the Szczecin, Poznan, Warszawa and Bialystok. They publish *Homek* in Gdansk and *Rewolta* in Warszawa.
- * Libertarians within the ecological and pacifist movements.
- * Freedom and Peace (WIP). The Gdansk WIP group produces *A Cappella*, the anarchist magazine with the highest circulation. (There are twenty regular anarchist papers in Poland with circulations ranging from 500 to 5000 copies.)
- * Anarchists in counter-culture groups, such as the 'Orange Alternative'.

When it was first formed, the MA was more of a communication network than a real organisation. At a meeting in July 1989 the group decided to create an internal bulletin, form a finance committee, open an information bureau in Warszawa and produce a Poland-wide anarchist paper. The basic principles and structure of the organisation were discussed, and its name was changed to the 'Anarchist Federation'.

Today, the Anarchist Federation has contacts in 50 towns in Poland, and includes more than twenty large groups which publish open contact addresses.

In addition to their publishing and propaganda activities, groups now working within the federation have been involved in a variety of actions:

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- * October 1988: member groups co-operated with US anarchists in a protest against Reagan's interference in Nicaragua.
 - * March 1989: the RSA/MA organised a demonstration in Gdansk for the anniversary of the Kronstadt rising. The demo had the slogan 'What Kronstadt began, Gdansk will finish'. It was attended by three thousand people.
 - * April/May 1989: weekly demonstrations in Poznan and Gdansk against the building of nuclear power stations in Klempicz and Zarnowiec.
 - * July 1989: blockade of a Soviet military base by 100 people, mainly members of Silesian anarchist groups.
 - * August 1989: demonstrations in co-operation with the Hungarian anarchist group 'Autonomia'. Held in Gdansk and Budapest, they were a protest against the Berlin Wall and other borders.

The Federation is keen to form links with groups abroad, since all anarchists would benefit from an international exchange of information about ideas, activities and the way people live.

The difficult economic situation in Poland means that the Federation is desperate for financial support.

The discussion on anarchism in Poland was presented by members of the Anarchist Federation, the Movement for an Alternative Society, and the Kultura Club of Pila.

Presentation by a speaker from the Anarchist Federation

Interest in anarchism in the 1980s began with youth groups and students. Today, almost every group within the Anarchist Federation has its own paper, and there are a variety of approaches to anarchism. For example, there are differences of opinion about the use of violence.

If anarchism is to have a broad appeal we need to take our ideas outside the youth and 'alternative' groups, and into the wider community. It is important to get involved in economic actions as well as cultural ones.

There is a strong case for forming links with non-anarchist groups. For example, the Polish Socialist Party for Democratic Revolution (SRD) have policies with an anarchist slant. We have joined them in protests against unemployment and price rises.

Presentation by a speaker from the Movement for an Alternative Society

The Movement for an Alternative Society (RSA) was founded in 1983. It attracted a great deal of attention in 1985 during demonstrations in Danzica, when fights broke out with police.

RSA was the first group to take an anti-militarist stance, and was involved in a campaign to replace military service with social service.

In the main, our activities have been in the cultural sphere. In Poland, the Communist Party controlled all social and cultural activities, so it was vital to develop an alternative culture. The resurgence of anarchist activity in Poland began with concerts, plays and other art-forms.

We have links with a radical left-wing group called the SRD, who promote the idea of self-management in industry.

The recent political changes have led people to believe that only capitalism can offer a solution to Poland's problems. Anarchists are often dismissed as communists. There is an assumption that those in opposition to the government are ex-communists.

There is no difference between the political left and right in Poland today. The values of capitalism are not being questioned, and right-wing nationalism is becoming an increasingly powerful political force.

People do not realise that the police and the army could be used against them. The government has re-structured the army and changed the name of the police to the Polish Milizia. The secret service used to be called the Security Service, but is now known as State Security. The institutions that wield power are still in place – all that has changed is their names.

Presentation by a speaker from the Kultura Club in Pila

In the city of Pila young people can hold meetings, and organise other activities, in the Kultura Club. Some members are anarchists, and some pacifists, but the club is a place for 'underground' young people who want to do something different with their time. Kultura has organised concerts and demonstrations in Pila, and we are encouraging people to set up similar clubs in other cities.

My own interest in anarchism began with music, when I listened to songs with pro-anarchist lyrics. I visited festivals where I became curious about the black and red flags I saw. Later, I began to look for information about anarchist ideology, and decided it was an interesting and intelligent approach to life.

Pila is in the part of Poland that was held by Germany before the

Second World War. The unification has led some Germans to want their old lands back, and German visitors have been to Pila to see their old homes. This situation has alarmed many people in Poland.

There are only about 100 German people living in Pila. Throughout the country, relations are fairly good between the Poles and the German minority: in one town a German was elected to the senate.

Anarchist groups in Poland are operating outside the law, so we do not have the same level of organisation that can be seen in Western Europe. The present government is not as oppressive as the previous one and, as a result, formal anarchist organisations are beginning to get stronger.

The new government is more democratic, and the political situation has improved a great deal over the past two years.

When elections were held in Poland last summer, opinion on whether to get involved was divided. One point of view was that we should not take part under any circumstances since they were undemocratic. Some people wanted to vote for Solidarity because they felt that the first priority should be to destroy the communist system. Other people felt that we should observe the elections but not actually take part.

There is a break-away faction of Solidarity called 'Fighting Solidarity' which is a radical group with links to the Confederation of Independent Poland. Fighting Solidarity wants to get the Russian army out of Poland. They are much more radical than the ruling Solidarity group, and have worked with ecology groups and those fighting against the power of the army. They also organised a demonstration in support of the student uprising in China. This party are not represented in the Polish parliament.

The Polish attitude to politics is rooted in our recent history: we tend to disbelieve everything the government says, but at the same time we don't get involved in political activity. Personally, I was glad that Solidarity won because it meant that the old Communist Party is dead.

Two years ago everyone had to do two years military service. If someone refused they went to prison. Today, the period of national service has been reduced to 18 months, and those who object to military service can opt to work in hospitals or within another social service institution. The work of groups like Fighting Solidarity and Anarchist Intercity has made rejection of military service a popular choice.

Ninety percent of the population are Catholic. The non-Catholic minority are often treated as outsiders. The Church is as wealthy and powerful as it was in the middle ages. Since the political changes it has increased its influence on the government. At one time streets tended to be named after communist leaders – now they are named after saints. The vast power of the church means that its officials are removed from

the people: they do not understand our problems, concerns and ideas. The priests take far too much interest in politics and power.

Some non-anarchist members of the Kultura Club in Pila are Catholic, and it is very difficult to open their minds to new ideas. The church helped Solidarity to take power and, for the moment, its influence is assured. To challenge the political role of the church would be seen as a moral crime.

Bulgaria

The History of the Bulgarian Anarchist Movement (Edited extracts from a paper by Vladimir Bojanov)

From the fascist coup led by A. Zarkov in 1923, until the fall of the Communist dictator Todor Zhivkov in November 1989, the Bulgarian anarchist movement had to work underground. In this period many revolutionaries and intellectuals were killed or exiled. Anarchists were sent to death camps, imprisoned or continually harrassed. In spite of this oppression they never abandoned the struggle for freedom, and the movement has recently undergone a renaissance.

The roots of Bulgarian anarchism can be traced back to the Bogomils, an anti-feudal, social and religious movement of the 10th century. This group, which did not seek political power, inspired radical movements like the Albigensians, Cathars, Anabaptists and Hussites.

The dramatic history of the anarchist movement in modern Bulgaria began 100 years ago. Since then it has had to fight both the cruelty of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie and the terror of Stalinism.

Early developments and international influences

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the noted publisher and writer Liuben Karavelov and the poet-revolutionary Christo Botov were in contact with Bakunin. Bakunin's influence upon our anarchist movement led to the involvement of Bulgarian libertarians in events like the First International, the Paris Commune and the revolt in Hertzegovina in 1875.

Bakunin had a profound effect on the life and work of Botov, who became the first true representative of anarchist-communism in Bulgaria. Botov's anarchism is evident in his poems, his atheism, his defence of the Paris Commune and his vision of a communist society free from authoritarian control.

When Bulgaria was liberated from Turkish control in 1879 socialist ideas were propagated by Blagoev and Gulapcev, two exiled students from Russia. Their ideas were initially based upon authoritarian Marxism, but they later turned to anarchism.

In the last ten years of the nineteenth century the anarchist movement became much more organised. In 1894, Dr Dimitar Boichinov set up the first Bulgarian anarchist journal *Borba* (Fight) in Plovdiv.

A number of Bulgarian students, based in Switzerland, set up the 'Circle of Geneva'. They were involved in the National Revolutionary Movement in Macedonia, and published two journals; *Otmashenie* (Revenge) and *The Secret Revolutionary Committee of Macedonia*.

Revolutionary anarchists believed that the struggle for national liberation presented an opportunity to further the cause of libertarian communism. Many took part in the struggle for Macedonian liberation, and 60 were killed.

One member of the Circle of Geneva, Mihail Ghergikov, participated in the famous Preobrasensko Vastanie revolt of 1903. This involved the creation of the 'Strangianska Comuna', the first attempt to set up a libertarian communist society in Bulgaria.

As a result of anarchist involvement in the tram and rail workers' strikes, Ghergikov was imprisoned and his magazine *Free Society* was banned.

The work of Verban Kilifarksi

At the turn of the century the appeal of anarchism was broadened by the addition of the syndicalist dimension. Two anarchists, Nikola Stionov and Verban Kilifarksi, founded a trade union for rural workers.

In the early 1900s there was an increase in anarchist publishing activity, mainly due to the determination of Kilifarksi, who published the journal *Besvlastie* and a number of anarchist works translated into Bulgarian.

In 1912, at the start of the war in Bulgaria, he emigrated to France and worked in *Koscera*, a progressive school near Paris, founded by Sebastien Faure.

He took an active part in working class struggles in France, Italy and Switzerland and, as a result, was arrested and imprisoned many times. His associates included many famous figures in European anarchism; Faure, Grave, Malatesta, and Rocker amongst others.

Kilifarksi returned to Bulgaria after the end of WW1, where he continued the struggle for a free society in spite of declining health.

In the later years of the war a number of anarchist journals were

published, including *Robotniceska Missal*, *Comuna*, *Probuda* and *Liberation*. Many anarchists were involved in the fight against militarism. They refused to take part in the war, and had to carry on their work clandestinely. In 1918, the military courts found forty anarchists guilty of spreading anti-war propaganda.

A time of growth (1918-1923)

The immediate post-war period was a time of growth and consolidation for the movement: the bourgeois government was opposed by a number of anarchist groups working underground. The famous writer and publisher Gheorghi Zecev was a secret member of one of these groups. On two occasions his anti-government activities forced him to emigrate to France.

Anarchists participated in the rail workers' strike of 1919, helping the progressive forces to defeat the forces of the white General Wrangel.

In June 1919, the Anarcho-Communist Federation of Bulgaria (ACFB) held a congress in Sofia. The anarchists became a strong social and political movement, and formed strong links with other revolutionary groups.

During the administration of the Agricultural-Farmer Party, led by Stambolinski, membership of anarchist organisations was legalised. This made it possible to work in a more open way, and to expand anarchist activities. The ACFB held five congresses. The early 1920s were a high point for anarchist publishing, and magazines like *Anarchista*, *Purpur*, *Burevestnik*, *Bunnt* and others were sold openly on news stands.

While this expansion of Bulgarian anarchist activity was taking place, the forces of reaction were gathering strength. In March 1923 at Jambol, one of the centres of the anarchist movement in Bulgaria, there was a military coup: twenty-six anarchists were among those executed without trial.

Anarchists under fascism (1923-1944)

In June 1923, after the fascist coup led by Zarkov, anarchists organised the Kilifarksi revolt. Many of them died fighting against fascist groups. The period after the coup was the darkest hour for the people of Bulgaria.

The first anti-fascist revolt in Europe took place in Bulgaria in 1925. Partisan groups in Stara Pkaninna and Sredna Gora fought a guerilla war against the government. The fascist dictatorship crushed the revolt. After the Communists organised an assault on the Cathedral of Sveta

Nedelia on the day before Easter in 1925, many working class revolutionaries were executed without trial: victims of this bloody crack-down included communists, anarchists, famous writers, poets, publishers and intellectuals.

The anarchists were once again forced to take their activities underground. Secret congresses were held by the ACFB in 1927 and 1932.

The situation for the anarchist movement became even more complicated after the military fascist coup led by Kimon Gheorghiev in 1934.

By the time that the fascist regime of King Boris was established, many anarchists had been killed, imprisoned or forced to emigrate. In spite of this repression, Bulgarian anarchists took part in the Spanish Civil War. Many fought against Hitler and contributed to the overthrow of his puppet Bulgarian government in September 1944.

One of the most popular anarchist figures of this era was Manol Vassev, who worked underground for twenty-two years before being killed by the Stalinist government in 1957.

The Communist Government (1944-1989)

At first Bulgarian anarchists had welcomed the formation of the Communist Government in 1944, hoping that it represented the beginning of a new era. They were soon disillusioned. The ACFB was re-established in October 1944, but it didn't last long. They only managed to publish four issues of their paper *Rabotniceska Missal* before it was banned.

In March 1945, the main item on the agenda of the ACFB's national conference was the relationship between the anarchists and the coalition Popular Front Government, led by the Communist Party. Before the conference began the militia arrested all ninety delegates. They were taken to a prison known as the 'House of the Blind', and later to special concentration camps. This was the first attack by the Communist Government against the anarchist movement.

Concerted internal and international pressure led to the release of the anarchist detainees, and an issue of the ACFB's journal was printed in a run of 30,000. As the movement became more popular the government became alarmed, and began to resort to more drastic and cruel methods of control.

After eight editions the journal was permanently banned. The movement went underground once again, and held a secret conference in Sofia in August 1946.

Two days before the opening of the 5th Communist Party Congress in December 1948, 600 anarchists were arrested and taken to the Belene

concentration camp near the Danube. One aim of this persecution was to frighten delegates at the Communist Party conference from expressing libertarian ideas.

The anarchist movement was completely outlawed and in the late 1940s and early 1950s many libertarians began to emigrate. When the border became more tightly controlled they could not leave, and were subjected to prisons, concentration camps and psychological harassment.

A time of hope (1989-)

Recently, the totalitarian communist regime of Todor Zhivkov was toppled. This is only the beginning. The main structures of the 'socialist' state have not been touched: the apparatus of repression remains intact.

There is a wide array of new parties; and a variety of groups, unions and movements have been created. Many traditional parties have been re-established, including those of the extreme right.

At first sight there seems to have been a popular liberation of the masses, but there are few organisations with a positive programme for the future of Bulgarian society.

Recently, the Anarchist Federation was re-established. It is the only group with the clear aim of creating a free society: it aims for the abolition of the state and the setting up of free communes which co-operate on a regional basis. It also seeks national and international co-operation, for the creation of new values and to assure the welfare of everyone.

There are many Bulgarian anarchists working outside the country, for example; the Union of Bulgarian Anarchists in Exile and the Work Confederation. The Paris-based Our Road publishing house, which produces the *Our Road* journal, was established in 1952. They have issued many books which have played a vital role in the rebirth of Bulgarian anarchism.

Hungary

In their founding declaration, published in November 1988, the Autonomia group of Budapest stated that their aim is a society without rulers, achieved by the free, responsible, morally guided behaviour of self-conscious people. This society would be based upon self-governing communities within a decentralised federation.

The document calls for an end to all forms of oppression:

- *No more oppression! No more exploitation!*
- *No more discrimination for political, national, racist, religious, sexual or any other reason!*
- *No more patriarchy! All women, children and elderly people should enjoy total emancipation.*

Particular stress is placed upon the ideas of workers' self-management, direct democracy through community councils and awareness of ecological issues.

At the 'East' conference, Autonomia outlined the Hungarian anarchist movement's activities and the problems they face . . .

Society and the Political Scene

The main problem for Hungarian anarchists is that the Communist Party has had forty years of absolute power, during which all alternative movements were suppressed. The party controlled all political activity and society was fragmented. As a result workers were unable to organise themselves.

Opposition to the bureaucratic power of the state came from scattered groups of intellectuals publishing anti-government papers.

There is no real tradition to draw upon: anarchist groups were set up before World War I and during the commune of 1919, but there has been no concerted anarchist activity since 1945. While there was no systematic presentation of anarchist thinking, libertarian sentiments were expressed in the workers' councils during the 1956 uprising.

Communist-controlled Hungary was supposed to be a 'workers state', but the interests of workers were never considered. We were exploited by our government in the name of 'socialism', but what they really practised was state capitalism.

Illegal opposition to the government included movements for self-government, human rights and ecology. The ecology movement gained strength at the end of the 1980s. This development was not connected to Gorbachev's reforms, but centred on a specific issue. The government had proposed the construction of a huge hydro-electric power station, and when they were faced with pressure from a wide range of opposition groups the plan was scrapped. As people campaigned for this cause it became clear that it would be possible to form a popular opposition movement.

The loss of the Communist Party's monopoly of power has led the West to interpret the changes in countries like Hungary as a move towards democracy. The truth is that this society has changed in a way

that has enabled our rulers to hang on to their power. The peaceful nature of the changes shows that they have never really lost control of the political developments and that the same institutions of power are intact.

Sadly, many Hungarian people believe in the strength of parliament and are prepared to depend upon it for everything.

The recent elections were not a triumph for democracy. Hungary now has a multi-party system, but the new parties are not as radical as they first seemed. Most of them accept the conservative features of the old system and are not keen for people to act upon their own initiative. Parties which existed between the two world wars have been re-formed and they tend to be very nationalistic. Their ideas have no place in the modern world.

Conservatives are over represented in parliament. There are no 'Greens' or groups which offer alternatives to the traditional political groups. The two most influential parties have developed from old opposition movements. The Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF) won the recent election and the Free Democrats League (FDL) came second. These groups, together with a number of smaller conservative parties, aim to develop a capitalist economic structure in Hungary: they want to copy western economic structures and they will allow any amount of Western money into the country.

Ideas of social inequality and competition are widely accepted. The main parties say 'those who are strong will survive, and have lots of money. Those unable to compete will be poor and we don't care.'

At present anarchists seem to be the only people who are not enthusiastic about the introduction of capitalism. Many people only think in terms of their local problems. Most of the workers' councils are not really opposed to privatisation, they just want to see their interests well represented in the new capitalist Hungary.

The politicians are not concerned with the welfare of working people. Their policies include privatisation of factories and land and there has even been talk of giving lands back to the church which were seized after World War II. The church is getting stronger once again and is giving support to the conservative parties.

The working class are not represented. Women have very little power and the interests of minority groups are not taken into account.

The term 'feminism' has unfortunate connotations in Hungary, since many people assume that it means forcing women to go to work. When women entered the work force, the social structure did not alter to accommodate this development; nor did male attitudes and women were effectively doing two jobs: they go to work for eight or nine hours per day and then do another four, unpaid, at home. One thing that many

Western women are fighting for, that we already have here, is long maternity leave. Mothers can have three years' maternity leave at a low rate of pay. The state did not bring this measure in as a result of pressure from women, their aim was merely to reduce the number of people in the work force. Genuine feminism is only just beginning to emerge.

Workers' Groups

The organisations we used to call 'trade unions' were really run by Communist Party bureaucrats. It was compulsory for workers to belong to them, but they did nothing to look after workers' interests.

Instead of reforming these bodies, it would be better to abolish them and form new unions. Since the political changes last year union bosses have just given their organisations new titles and begun to refer to them as 'independent trade unions'. These people cannot be trusted — their only concern is staying in power.

The transformation of Hungary into a capitalist country may make conditions worse for workers, particularly those in minority groups. Many of those in power under the communist system have managed to retain their old positions by describing themselves as 'managers' and promising to take a more democratic approach: 'I'm not a communist any more — I am the owner of a factory'.

The fact that these people have been able to keep their power and influence demonstrates that our society is still organised along very hierarchical and authoritarian lines.

There are, however, some grounds for optimism with the first genuine development in the workers' movement in forty years. Two kinds of workers' council are being set up. One type is just a trade union, representing workers' interests to employers, but the other seeks collective ownership and control of the factories.

The heavy industry with which workers' groups were traditionally associated are in decline, but new types of production are emerging. It is to be hoped that the workers' movement can adapt to these developments.

Anarchism in Hungary: aims, activities and problems

Autonomia, was formed in Budapest in 1988. Our approach to anarchism is based upon tolerance, non-violence, direct democracy and self-organisation. We are keen to lend support to minority and women's groups and to form links with other anarchist groups at home and abroad.

When the group was first formed our weekly meetings in Budapest were mainly attended by students, but we were later joined by workers and the unemployed. Anarchist ideas have also proved attractive to 'punks'. We have links with a wide variety of other interest groups including the Green party and an independent Gypsy organisation.

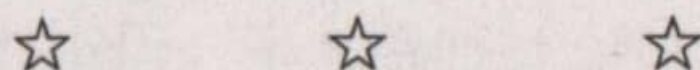
Autonomia have organised a number of large-scale anarchist activities:

- August 1989 — a demonstration against the Berlin Wall.
- January 1990 — a larger demo against the national census.
- March 1990 — a ten day long programme called 'Extra-legal Days', including an exhibition, discussions, meetings, video shows and a demo against national identity cards. At the latter event, volunteers burned their ID cards and their army cards. This was covered in the press and the participants were identified as 'people with nothing better to do on a Friday afternoon!'.

Autonomia has links with an anarchist group in Nyiregyhaza, called 'Portrait', a faction of the Liberal Association of the Free Democrats League formed in January 1989. The group operates in an area bound by conservative tradition, where there is a great deal of poverty and unemployment. They have been involved in demonstrations against price rises and the promotion of free trades unions and workers' councils. In addition, they publish a paper called *In Another Way*.

The power of Hungary's ruling HDF party is particularly strong in the Nyiregyhaza region, and Portrait's activities have been constrained since the election.

The Autonomous Women's Initiative is about to be launched. It will be a non-profit making organisation. We hope to change public opinion about women's issues by publishing books and papers, and translating feminist work from the West.



Some people in our group favour the absolute pacifism of Tolstoy and Gandhi, but our non-violence does not rule out all direct action. We *would* squat a house, but would not deliberately provoke the police, who are quite tolerant towards anarchists. Violence is not inevitable in our struggle. It cannot be used to achieve an objective and then dropped, as it breeds a need for revenge.

Anarchists and socialists in the West have a long history of opposition to capitalism, but people in Eastern Europe do not really understand what it is. They can, therefore, see no reason for challenging it. Hungary lags 10-15 years behind the Western nations in terms of technological development. Some members of Autonomia suggest that capitalism is a necessary stage of cultural development, while others reject the idea.

Another area of disagreement within the anarchist movement is the issue of legal registration. Some groups feel that they must register if they are to have any effect upon public opinion and influence parliamentary decisions.

One of the main difficulties for anarchism in Hungary is distancing itself from Stalinism: both ideas are seen as being in opposition to the 'free market' ideology. The term 'socialism' has an association with the authoritarianism of Stalin, so we dare not use it. We need to develop a new language!

Autonomia does not subscribe to the outdated Marxist-Leninist idea that revolution can only be achieved by the working class. In modern society the working class are not necessarily revolutionary: many of them seem to be content with their positions. They may play an important role in revolutionary change, but they are not the only class who are exploited.

The first step to anarchist revolution is to bring about a revolution in our own ways of thinking. People in both the East and West have been brain-washed. We need to abolish the mode of thought that the state has given us and produce new ideas. Only then will we achieve anything on a wider scale.

The Anarchist Social Experiment

We aim to create an international anarchist town. By setting up a non-hierarchical community we would abolish the invisible walls between people. We look forward to the day when state borders and the power of the centralised state are demolished. The town would be run according to ecological and non-violent, humanist principles.

The intention is to buy the largest possible area of land on the borders of Austria, Hungary and Slovenia. The scheme has already been discussed with friends from Croatia and Slovenia.

The social experiment will begin in about five years' time and annual reports will be published, informing supporters of the success of the new types of social organisation that are developed. Advice from those who have participated in similar experiments and offers of financial support would be appreciated.

France

Presentation by a member of the International Relations Committee of the French Anarchist Federation.

The French Anarchist Federation was formed thirty years ago. It has member groups in thirty cities.

The Federation's theoretical standpoint draws upon the tradition of Sébastien Faure: our anarchism is a synthesis of anarcho-syndicalism, individualism and anarchist communism.

We are organised on a non-hierarchical basis. Instead of an elected central committee we have a secretariat with clear, precise mandates to carry out specific activities.

In recent years we have been involved in campaigns against militarism, prisons and fascism. We have links with the ecology and feminist movements, and our cultural activities involve running a libertarian theatre.

We also work within the trade unions: whether a union is reformist or revolutionary, you will always find anarchists within it.

We have three main ways of spreading the anarchist message:

i. Our newspaper, *Le Monde Libertaire*, is produced by volunteers on a weekly basis. It is sold in more than 5000 outlets and has a good circulation. Smaller publications are produced by individuals and groups within the Federation.

ii. *Radio Libertaire* broadcasts twenty-four hours a day in the Paris area. There are 120 presenters: some are anarchists, but the facility is open to groups and individual activists with a wide range of viewpoints.

iii. Our shop, bookstore and meeting place are well known in Paris. We stock all types of anarchist literature.

Presentation by a member of the Collective of Libertarian Youth

Unlike the French Anarchist Federation, the Collective of Libertarian Youth is not able to draw upon a long tradition of activism.

In 1986, members of the French student movement, who belonged to local groups within the Anarchist Federation, decided that there ought to be an organisation specifically for young anarchists.

The group began with three people in Paris working within large libertarian groups. The difficulties facing French youth, including compulsory military service, made it difficult to recruit members.

Links have been formed with the Union of Libertarian-Communist

Workers, together with anti-racist, anti-fascist and anti-militarist groups. Our main interest is the issue of education.

We aim to hold a conference every two years, if we can afford it. Every three months we hold national meetings where we address current issues and decide upon our future direction.

The Collective has a national newspaper called *Clash*, aimed at school students, and a variety of newspapers produced by member groups.

Presentation by a member of the UTCL's 'Circle of Daniel Guerin'.

Our ideas stem from the libertarian communism of Daniel Guerin, a militant member of the UTCL until his death.

We were formed in 1976 with the aim of stepping up libertarian involvement in industry, particularly within the trade union movement. We would welcome the opportunity to work with other revolutionary groups in France and would like to engage in a wider range of activities.

The present crisis in the trade union movement has enabled the social democrats to triumph at the expense of those dedicated to revolution and the class struggle.

One example of the unions' shift to the right came with the recent postal workers' strike. Unions which supported the strike were expelled from the national trade union confederation (CFDT). After a bitter dispute involving health workers, their union was also excluded from the CFDT. These events left thousands of workers without representation, until they were able to form new unions.

In the present political climate we seem to be fighting a rearguard action. The crumbling of state capitalism in Eastern Europe has led to an ideological crisis in both East and West. All the various left-wing groups in Europe can be seen to be suffering from a crisis of identity. There is a major debate on how we can redefine the idea of transforming society. The UTCL has joined in these discussions and hopes to develop a new perspective and publicise the libertarian alternative.

We have made contact with a number of libertarian-communist groups in Western Europe and would like to form similar relationships with groups in the East.

Ten years ago we held a big meeting to discuss Kronstadt and the revolt by Solidarity in Poland. We co-operated with the independent Polish unions and the revolutionary elements within Solidarity after the military coup.

We welcome the falling of barriers between East and West, and see internationalism as a vital dimension of anarchism.

Austria

A speaker from Vienna described the activities of the Austrian anarchist movement and its links with groups in Eastern Europe.

The anarchist movement is very weak in Austria. It has slowly developed from the punk movement, the peace movement and the civil rights movement.

We have been involved in a wide range of activities. One of our biggest protests came when the government introduced a law directed against foreign workers and young people. It will allow the police to put someone in jail if they don't move away from a place when they are ordered to. We held a protest concert, and were delighted when over two thousand people came.

The election of Mr Waldheim as Austrian president is just one symptom of the increase of racism in Austria: there is a great deal of prejudice against foreign workers.

We have joined comrades from Kurdistan and Turkey to organise support for the rights of foreign workers and refugees.

Austria has recently closed its borders to refugees from the East. Romanians and Turks have been expelled and Poles are no longer allowed in. We are working with people in these other countries to try to protect their right to come here.

We are determined to fight against national borders: everyone who wants to come to Europe should be able to. Europe should be free from racism and capitalism.

Every May 1st we join the Socialist and Communist Parties in a huge rally. Another annual activity in which we take part is a protest against a meeting of industrialists, held every February in the opera house. This is a gathering attended by 5000 capitalists from all over the world and we have managed to disrupt it for the last four years.

The first protest against this conference ended with a riot directed at the police. The next year the demonstration was less effective because the reformist parties (Socialists, Communists and Greens) took control of it.

Last year (1989) was special. Six months earlier squatters had been expelled from houses in Vienna. With the obvious exception of the treatment of Jews in the thirties, the brutality of the authorities was unprecedented. We were driven from the houses, beaten and jailed. Our belongings were taken from us and we came out of jail with nothing. This event led to a huge, militant demonstration at the industrialists'

gathering. Over 5000 young people attended, and the newspapers described the atmosphere in Vienna as one of civil war. This was the first time since the foundation of the Second Republic after WWII that Austria had seen a massive demonstration of discontent and class hatred.

This year (1990) the reformist parties were determined to control the rally. But while they held their legal demonstration, we broke away and held our 'traditional' illegal protest. We were faced with the greatest police presence ever seen in Vienna: over 3000 policemen were there. One of our comrades is still in jail and has not been allowed any visitors.

We believe that anarchists should place a greater emphasis on cultural activities. We must mount an organised challenge to bourgeois culture: people have to develop their own ways of living together.

United States and Canada

Presentation by Joey Cain, a worker at Bound Together Books in San Francisco

In the last 15 years anarchism has gone through a rebirth in the USA and is at its most popular since the early years of the century.

Since 1986 anarchists from Canada and the US have met at a conference in Chicago.

Last year (1989) more than 3000 people attended a conference in San Francisco. One of the main issues was bigotry within North American society and the anarchist movement: sexism, racism and homophobia were discussed.

There is a large anarchist community in San Francisco. We don't all belong to one big collective, but are organised in small communities and affinity groups.

One group organise an anarchist coffee house once a month, when people from all the separate groups can meet.

To address the issue of the spread of AIDS and the HIV virus among drug users, another anarchist group began an illegal needle distribution service.

An organisation called Direct Action has been involved in the anti-nuclear movement. They have worked with other groups to oppose all forms of nuclear technology.

Mary from New York City described the activities of 'Sabotage Books'

'Sabotage Books', in the heart of New York City's Lower East Side, is run by a collective of ten people. It is a successful outlet for anarchist books, magazines, badges and t-shirts.

The Lower East Side is a traditionally radical neighbourhood, where Emma Goldman once lived and lectured. For a long time its residents have been involved in a fight against the gentrification of the area. Real estate developers have been trying to force out the Hispanic people, who have lived there for decades, in order to make room for expensive shops and condominiums. A large, militant squatter's movement is carrying out repair work on 15 abandoned apartment buildings. We have held up the development of the area by making it a bad investment.

We run a food co-op and a people's park, and also hold theatre and music festivals.

Ariane from New York discussed sexism, racism and animal liberation

The mainstream groups campaigning for equal rights in the US have tended to create divisions between the various racial minorities. It has reached the point where one minority group will hold a demonstration at which another is not welcome.

There is a degree of racism within the anarchist movement but direct confrontation of the issue has made it less widespread.

Feminism in the US has almost come to a standstill, but anarchists have made a conscious effort to include women in collectives and production groups. In addition, there is a strong anarchist contingent within the 'pro-choice' (pro-abortion) lobby.

The animal liberation movement consists mainly of anarchist students and punks. They have held a number of successful demonstrations and attitudes are slowly changing towards issues like vegetarianism, wearing fur and testing products on animals.

Bob McGlynn from New York City outlined the activities of the 'Neither East nor West' group, and in particular their support for anarchists in Eastern Europe.

The Moscow Trust Group, an anti-nuclear organisation, was founded in 1982. One member, Serby Brotavrin was exiled from the Soviet

Union and formed a committee in New York which included himself, other Moscow Trust Group exiles and a number of New Yorkers. At that time the group was known alternatively as the 'New York Trust Group' and the 'Solidarity Committee with the Eastern Block Movement'. Eventually the name 'Neither East nor West' was adopted.

In North America, anarchists are the only political movement on the left that has shown strong support for human rights in the East.

The group was formed with the hope that groups in the East would be able to support *our* struggles too. When there was a huge riot in Thompkins Square Park in the Lower East Side, messages of solidarity were sent to the victims of police violence by 'Freedom and Peace' and 'The Movement for an Alternative Society' in Poland.

These Polish groups also wrote in support of Lower East Side residents campaigning against the gentrification of their area. The support of these Eastern comrades, who are far more oppressed than ourselves, meant a great deal to anarchists in New York.

In turn, we gave support to 'Freedom and Peace' when they had passport problems. We picketed the Polish Consulate in New York and drew up petitions. Groups from all over the US and Canada joined in this campaign and it enabled us to set up an effective support network.

Specific activities can help to bind the movement together: on April 23 (1990) we are going to try to seize Wall Street.

We are against all systems that oppress people, including the Soviet one.

Laura from NYC talked about recent trends in the North American anarchist movement

In recent years there has been a heated debate about the kind of organisation and tactics that should be used in order to create an anarchist society.

Anarchists in North America have recently begun to organise themselves on a continental basis and there has been an increase in the number of people involved in the movement.

Throughout America there are also a large number of groups that are not affiliated to any anarchist network. Their aim is not to create a mass movement but to create small groups which function effectively, according to anarchist principles. They are involved in projects like squatting and food co-operatives. Their aim is to work collectively, without a boss, outside the capitalist system.

There is a strong feminist movement within the American anarchist movement, but the liberation of the sexes is not just a women's issue. Both men and women are slaves to the gender roles we have created and we must work for change together.

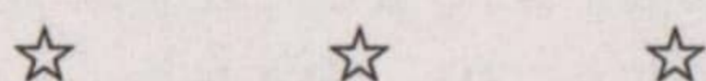
The presentation on anarchism in Canada was made by Stephen Dankowich, a Ukrainian-Canadian living in Toronto. Stephen is a member of a group called 'Act for Disarmament'.

There is a vibrant and growing anarchist movement in Canada today.

Montreal is the home of the publishers Black Rose Books and Our Generation. In Toronto, there are prisoner defence publications and a bi-monthly current affairs magazine called *Eco-Media*.

In both Toronto and Montreal anarchists have become involved in municipal politics. They aim to use the power of the local assemblies to counteract the power of the provincial and federal central authorities.

Anarchists have made use of radio to spread their propaganda in Montreal, Petersburg, Toronto and Vancouver.



'Act for Disarmament' is a peace group with branches in eight cities. It is our view that what you do is more important than the label you give yourselves. So, while we are not explicitly anarchist, we are organised along libertarian lines: the group is decentralised and non-hierarchical; it does not make use of state or corporate funding, and it takes decisions on the basis of consensus.

We have supported the Canadian peace movement in their fight against the militarisation of the country and the government's preparations for World War Three. In addition, we encouraged the movement to organise itself on a non-hierarchical basis.

We aim to bring together all those social movements with a libertarian slant to their politics; such as the green, feminist, peace and human rights movements.

In 1986 we held the first East-West peace festival. It was the first time that peace activists from the East and West had come together to discuss common concerns and consider co-operative solutions.

The mass movements in Eastern Europe have increased hopes for an end to the world's major conflicts. In addition, their success may lead to some progress towards the goal of a libertarian society.

Belgium

The presentation on Belgian anarchism was made by a representative of 'Anarchist Co-ordination', founded two years ago.

'Anarchist Co-ordination' has tried to focus the activities of anarchists all over Belgium. Its roots lie in pirate radio, alternative music and youth culture. Our aim has been to bring together a wide range of groups, so that they can exchange information and co-operate in practical activities.

Belgium is suffering a re-emergence of fascism, particularly in the north. In our elections a fascist group managed to get 20% of the vote. We are very concerned about this development and would like to see an anti-fascist demonstration across the whole of Europe. This demonstration should include the Eastern European countries as well since they have the same problem.

Another major issue is the European Community administrative centre in Brussels. Those working for the EC have taken over some neighbourhoods, and their presence has resulted in rent rises. In co-operation with our comrades of the Anarchist Federation in Germany we produced an anti-EC poster. This was our first joint venture but, since we live in a small country, we would like to form links with as many groups in Europe as possible.

We intend to give the anarchists in Eastern Europe as much support as possible, and wish them the best of luck with their activities.

Greece

The speaker was a representative of the 'Anarchists of Kypselis' group in Athens

The Greek anarchist movement began twenty years ago, at the time of the military dictatorship. The lack of a long tradition has prevented the development of different currents of anarchist thought such as anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-communism, individualism and so on.

While we are concerned with class struggle issues, our group has little influence with the working class. Our main appeal has been with the young people that we call the 'wild youth'.

There have been recent attacks upon the rights of young and working class people in Greece. The consensus built by the Socialist Government in the early 1980s has been replaced by conflict and tension. The state's attempts to modernise the economy and the apparatus of government have brought repression in work-places, schools, universities and social gathering places. Resistance to this clamp-down has begun with the small group of people who oppose capitalism and the state.

The main priority for anarchists is to find a way of appealing to students and the young unemployed.

Some ex-anarchists have joined with members of ecological and 'alternative' groups to form the Ecology Party. This group does not share our internationalism or our opposition to capitalism and the state. When the Ecologists decided to participate in the elections, we organised a sit-in at their HQ: a fight broke out with the police and four anarchists were arrested.

When a policeman was cleared of the murder of a young anarchist we occupied the Polytechnic Institute. Once again there were fights between anarchists and the police. This event focussed the attention of many thousands of people on us at a time when we were being opposed by a coalition of communists, socialists and right-wing groups.

These kind of activities have helped anarchists to become one of the most influential opposition movements in Greece.

The economic situation in Greece has made it difficult for anarchists to travel to meetings abroad, but we feel that it is essential that there is an exchange of information on an international basis.

Spain

A contributor from Spain discussed the problems and opportunities facing anarchists in Eastern Europe

An anarchist approach to the challenges of Eastern Europe must be based upon the principles of federalism and direct action.

The problem for our comrades in the East is that of finding a way to work within the new popular movements. There is a danger that power will be passed on to a new ruling class: the communist bureaucrats will be replaced by liberal bureaucrats.

It is essential that Eastern anarchists avoid becoming a marginal movement outside the social mainstream. Some of us tend to close

our minds to other ideas in order to protect the purity of our values: we shouldn't ignore what is going on in the streets just because it doesn't fit into the framework of our theoretical beliefs. Anarchists in Western Europe have become separated from popular politics and social movements.

It is important that we offer help in the form of publications, translations and money to anarchist groups in the East. There are great opportunities for the development of anti-authoritarian movements in every Eastern country.

Sweden

The Swedish representative was Annika from SAC (the Central Organisation of Swedish Workers)

SAC is a syndicalist trade union with 14,000 members in 130 autonomous local groups. It is working within the tradition of libertarian socialism. Founded in 1910, SAC has a long history of opposition to the big Social Democratic trade union which dominates industrial life in Sweden.

Our basic principles are direct democracy, self-management and federalism. We have been concerned with the issues of ecology, anti-racism, peace, anti-fascism and feminism; but our major role is that of a traditional trade union.

Our long-term goals in the industrial sphere are the abolition of wage slavery and the creation of a society based upon libertarian socialism.

In 1981 SAC gave support to Solidarity in Poland, which was a very different organisation in those days. In the same year we organised a demonstration commemorating the Kronstadt rebellion, outside the Soviet embassy in Stockholm.

In the late 1980s we began holding demonstrations every August 21st, to mark the anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Prague in 1968.

In 1981 we worked with Eastern European groups at a demonstration outside the Czechoslovakian embassy: we called for the release of a jailed Czech activist, and for the release of all political prisoners.

SAC has formed close links with KAS (the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists) in the Soviet Union. The two groups have sent members on exchange visits, to exchange information and share experiences. We have tried to support libertarian socialists in the Soviet Union by sending

them literature, producing badges for them and holding a collection to enable them to buy printing equipment.

We are keen to develop links with independent trade unions in Eastern Europe.

Italy

Speaker from the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI)

There is a long tradition of anarchism in Italy. The 1980s were a period of government repression, and revolutionary groups are only just beginning to re-emerge. For the first time in many years there is substantial anarchist involvement in the trade union and students' movements. Anarchists have also begun to work in ecological, anti-militarist, anti-clerical and anti-nuclear groups.

The most popular libertarian paper in Italy is a weekly called *Umanita Nova*, published by the FAI. Many other groups and individuals produce monthly magazines and periodicals.

On May 1 (1990) there is to be a demonstration in Carrara, where the government has forcibly evicted the FAI from a building we have occupied since 1945. This was the national centre for anarchists in Italy.

Italy's growing anti-militarist movement recently held a demonstration in Modena. Another rally is soon to be held outside the military prison in Peschiera.

The recent events in Eastern Europe are important to the anarchist movement in two ways:

- i. they give us an insight into the ways in which people can liberate themselves from totalitarian domination;
- ii. they highlight the theoretical and historical crises of Marxist ideology. Anarchists no longer have to expend so much effort challenging the Marxist domination of the anti-capitalist, revolutionary left.

Next month (May 1990) the Italian anarchist movement will run an anti-election campaign as our challenge to the state's ritual legitimization of its power. Comrades in Eastern Europe, who face harsher forms of state oppression than ourselves, often suggest that our opposition to 'democratic' processes is based upon ideological prejudice. For anarchists in the West, however, 'democracy' is just another mask to hide the power of the state.

Speaker from 'Libertarian Collective'

Libertarian Collective does not belong to any federation. Our members are involved in a variety of struggles, such as anti-militarism, ecology and feminism.

In Italy the Catholic Church has a tremendous political influence, and the present Pope has very traditional views; especially on the role of women in society. Some members of the Libertarian Collective have become involved in the Association Against Baptism, which campaigns against the power of the Church.

Speaker from 'Insurrectionalist Tendency'

The opening of frontiers in Eastern Europe has not come about through revolution. The recent changes came about as a result of capitalism's need to re-structure by opening new markets and reducing expenditure on defence.

Anarchists must develop methods of struggle that take into account the complexities of modern capitalism, which is being conducted on more of a global basis.

While capitalism is constantly presented as strong, its continued survival has depended on constant readjustment. There are millions of people all over the world who are fighting against this system. They don't call themselves anarchists, but people all over Europe, Africa and Asia are engaged in the class struggle. We have two classes today — the exploited and the exploiters. The form of exploitation differs according to military and police structures, and the degree of mystification achieved by religion and the mass media.

As anarchists, we must engage with the realities of our world. We are struggling against a capitalism that is presented with a more democratic face: it appears to be more open, less oppressive and more in tune with people's aspirations. In fact, its operation has become more insidious. Its lines of communication spread to all parts of the world, connected by hidden centres of control. It functions according to a communication system based upon an electronic language we have no access to, and cannot understand.

It is essential that anarchists develop a means of undermining capitalism's network of communications. We should learn from the history of anarchist movements, so we can develop methods which help us to address contemporary issues.

We need to work towards the setting up of small affinity groups within the anarchist movement. These should be based upon debate,

argument and struggling together. Affinity groups would work within their own localities and areas of interest, but they would also be part of an informal international network.

Great Britain

Presentation by a member of Class Struggle Anarchist Network

Class Struggle Anarchist Network grew from an old group, the Northern Regional Anarchist Network, which brought together groups from Scotland and the North of England. Over the years the activists who had made the group work were all class struggle anarchists, so we changed our name to reflect this. We are organised on a regional basis.

Class struggle anarchism recognises that we are living under capitalism and calls for its destruction by the working class. Our group has no time for middle-class, liberal time-wasters: we believe that only the working class can dismantle the capitalist system.

The younger generation of anarchists in Britain came mainly from the punk and peace movements. These 'alternative' movements started off with ideas like pacifism and animal liberation.

But pacifism gets dropped pretty fast when you get your head kicked in.

The Animal Liberation Front started in England, and many class struggle anarchists became involved in politics through animal rights activities. Many people had their first experience of conflict with the cops on ALF hunt-sabotage trips.

Some people got into politics through anti-fascist activities. There was a big problem with fascist groups in Britain in the late 1970s, but when Thatcher came in and stole their platform they began to decline.

The struggle against the poll tax has rejuvenated British anarchism. It came in last year (1989) in Scotland. The government used the Scots as guinea pigs: if they accepted the new tax, then everyone else would. The Scots didn't take it, but now it's being forced on the English people as well.

The reaction to the tax has been a great step forward for anarchists, and the left in general. It has necessitated action through community groups working street by street, knocking on doors and forming committees. The struggle hasn't just involved groups of like-minded people who happen to read the right books and dream of revolution when they get together for a beer.

There is a lot of activity on the ground, and the anti-poll tax movement is mostly made up of people who have never been involved in politics before. Most of those involved are working class: most middle class people would say 'you can't break the law. You've got to pay the Poll Tax and vote Labour next time.'

Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979. Her programme is the classic liberal line of laissez faire capitalism: privatise everything; let the market set costs and wages; fuck the poor, they can fend for themselves; all our wealth will trickle down to everyone. It's bullshit. The Conservative Party have lost contact with reality to the point where they believe that people will accept this tax.

This old-style neo-liberalism isn't working for the capitalists any longer. Getting rid of Thatcher wouldn't help them much either.

What is the alternative to Thatcher's Tory Party? In Britain we have the Labour Party, which claims to be social-democratic, and is closely tied to the trade union movement. Both Labour and the unions are degenerate piles of crap.

We also have two tiny 'centre' parties which claim to occupy the ground between Labour and the Conservatives. This is impossible, since the parties are so close together that there is no room for any middle ground.

If Labour were elected people would expect social democracy to cure all our ills, but it wouldn't be able to deliver.

British politics are very interesting at the moment. The recent riot (Poll Tax demo in London, March 31 1990) was the first for a long time. As in the 1984-1985 Miners' strike the authorities lied about who was responsible, but working class people don't believe them any more. The politicians condemned people for fighting back against the police, but the real violence in our society is poverty. We don't condemn people who are willing to use violence against the cops and the authorities who force the violence of poverty upon us.

With the present political situation in Britain, things are going to get very, very hot in the next couple of years.

Presentation by a member of the Anarchist-Communist Federation (ACF)

The ACF emerged in the aftermath of the national miners' strike of 1984-1985. It follows a tradition that developed in the early 1970's, when there was a reaction against the ideas of liberalism, pacifism and individualism that had previously dominated the anarchist movement.

Anarchists in Eastern Europe should look closely at the development

of the British anarchist movement over the past twenty years. In the mid-sixties, when Britain had elected a Labour Government after thirty years of the Conservatives, there was an upsurge of interest in anarchism.

At that time the movement was strongly anti-organisational, and many people who were interested in the class struggle were attracted to Trotskyist groups.

With the founding of the ACF the idea of class struggle anarchism re-emerged. There was now a strong anarchist-communist organisation able to spread its ideas among the masses of working people.

We have also emphasised the need for the development of anarchist theory. This requirement has often been ignored by the movement in Britain.

Agitation in the work-place is essential, but struggles in other areas of society should not be ignored: the ACF stresses the importance of the fights against racism and sexism.

The anarchist movement in Britain is small and divided. There is a new mood, however. In what might be called 'the last days of Thatcherism' we have the fight against the Poll Tax. The recent upheavals in Eastern Europe have led to a crisis for Stalinism and its little brother Trotskyism. These two factors have led to a renewed hope for the development of a class-struggle anarchist movement in Britain.

[Note: the conference was held in April 1990, several months before the Tory leadership change. The speaker must be delighted by the prescience of the expression 'the last days of Thatcherism'!]

The anarchist movements in Eastern Europe have developed in very difficult circumstances, and our first priority must be to supply practical support. Later, we must hold a debate with our Eastern comrades on a number of difficult questions: non-violence as opposed to the need to defend a revolution; counter-culture as opposed to effective agitation amongst the mass of people; the market as opposed to anarchist-communist production for the needs of the whole community.

Presentation by a member of the Anarchist Workers Group

In 1988 some members of the Direct Action Movement (DAM) left as a result of their opposition to its anarcho-syndicalist tactics. They founded the Anarchist Workers Group.

The group sees itself as working within the libertarian-communist tradition, like the Friends of Durutti in Spain. We were sick of an

anarchist movement with no roots within the working class, and no ideas that were relevant to them.

Our political activity takes place within working class organisations. We aim to make the struggle for women's rights (especially abortion rights) and the fight against racism central to workers' struggles. These are working class issues.



Serge Cipko

Nestor Makhno: A Mini-Historiography of the Anarchist Revolution in Ukraine, 1917-1921

October 27, 1989 marked the centenary of the birth of one of the most colourful figures in the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921, Nestor Makhno. The leader of an anarchist movement in South-East Ukraine, Makhno is still anathema in many circles, Soviet and anti-Soviet alike. In the Soviet Union, regardless of the regime in power, his name has been taboo to this day, except as an official term of abuse in condemning 'counterrevolutionary' activity.¹ In Soviet writings, Makhno and his followers have variously been depicted as 'kulaks', 'pogromists', 'bandits' and 'counterrevolutionaries'. The entry in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia on the *Makhnovshchina*, as the Makhno movement is often referred to, is reflective of the official Soviet view when it introduces the Makhno movement as:

an anti-Soviet anarchic kulak peasant movement in the Ukraine from 1918 to 1921, led by N. I. Makhno; one of the various forms taken by the petit bourgeois counterrevolution.²

That the memory of the Makhno movement continues to pose problems for Soviet officialdom can be gauged from the fact that even under *Glasnost*, neither Makhno nor any of his followers have yet made it to the ranks of the recently 'rehabilitated'.

Makhno's reception among the Ukrainian communities in the diaspora has been little better. If he is mentioned at all in emigré writings, he is usually portrayed as a liability to the cause of Ukrainian independence. The attitude that has prevailed in emigré circles is that the Makhno movement was such a negative episode in Ukrainian history that it deserves only to be ignored. The fact that not a single book in

1. See, for instance, Bohdan Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth Century Ukraine* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1985), p136.

2. Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, vol 15 (New York and London: Macmillan Educational Corporation, 1977), p343.

Ukrainian has been published in the West devoted to the movement testifies to this line of reasoning.

Conversely, the *Makhnovshchina* has stimulated far more interest outside Ukrainian community circles, particularly within the international anarchist movement, the New Left and academia.³ Indeed, the first major scholarly work to be published in English on any of the leading actors in the Ukrainian Revolution was a monograph on Makhno.

So what has made the *Makhnovshchina* a subject of trepidation and sensitivity to some and yet one of fascination and reverence to others? Perhaps an outline of Makhno and the movement he led can serve as a guide to some of the issues which have contributed such an aura around him. Then we can turn to the main task of this article, which is to assess how these issues have been presented in major scholarly works published in the English and French languages. For the sake of expediency we omit from our discussion the unreliable Soviet studies of the movement, whose sole intent is to discredit it. Furthermore, the issues they raise are sufficiently well covered in the literature selected for this article.

Makhno and the Makhnovshchina

Born into a poor peasant family, Nestor Ivanovych Makhno was introduced to revolutionary activities when he joined an anarchist cell in his home settlement of Huliai Pole, a large rural centre of 30,000 inhabitants (located in the Katerynoslav province), in 1906. Two years later he was arrested for his complicity in the assassination of a district police official and sentenced to death. Because of his youth, this sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment at hard labour in Butyrki prison, Moscow. While in prison, Makhno met Peter Arshinov, a Russian worker and anarchist from the city of Katerynoslav (now Dnipropetrovsk). Arshinov was instrumental in further developing Makhno's anarchist ideology and later played an active rôle in the Makhno movement.

A general amnesty in February 1917 released Makhno and subsequently he returned to Huliai Pole. There he assumed a prominent rôle in community life, organising trade union activity among local peasants, workers and artisans. In August 1917, the Huliai Pole Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, which he headed, undertook a policy of expropriating the land of the local gentry and redistributing it among the

3. See, for instance, Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968), pp220-233. For a discussion of general views of Makhno, see chapter one of Skirda, pp7-14.

poorer strata of the peasantry. Those dispossessed were permitted to retain a share of the land, equal to that of the labourers, as well as tools and livestock. Makhno's activities were temporarily suspended in the early spring of 1918, when both the Central Rada (the Ukrainian government at the time) and the Bolsheviks had signed the Treaty of Brest Litovsk leading to the occupation of Ukraine by forces of the Central Powers and, subsequently, to the installation of the conservative regime of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky. Makhno was unable to offer effective resistance to the occupation and was forced into exile in Bolshevik Russia.

In July 1918, he returned to Huliai Pole to mobilise resistance to the occupation forces of the Central Powers and the militia of Hetman Skoropadsky. Capitalising on the general discontent in the region, Makhno led a popular insurrection against the occupying forces while at the same time conducting a series of raids on the manors of the local nobility. During the course of the struggle, he distinguished himself as an exceptionally capable military leader. His followers were overwhelmingly of peasant origin, many of whom, men and women alike, were simultaneously peasant labourers and partisans. Although the movement was largely Ukrainian in composition, more than 10% was made up of other ethnocultural groups (Russians, Jews, Greeks, Bulgarians, Germans, Poles, Kuban and Don Cossacks).

In November 1918, an armistice resulted in the withdrawal of the Central Powers from Ukrainian territory, placing Makhno in a position of considerable strength in the Katerynoslav province. After a series of skirmishes with the forces of the Directory of the Ukrainian People's Republic (the new Ukrainian government), and following an uneasy truce with the Bolsheviks, Makhno was left in control of the entire Huliai Pole region for the first five months of 1919. This afforded the opportunity to apply anarchism, Kropotkin-style, in practice. In the spring of 1919, the anarchist character of the movement was strengthened by the arrival to the Makhnovite camp of members of the Nabat Confederation of Anarchist Organisations in Ukraine, which had its headquarters in the city of Kharkiv, but maintained branches throughout the major cities of Ukraine. These newcomers assisted in the cultural and ideological work of the movement.

The utopian experiment was given little time to develop. A strained alliance with the Bolsheviks, concluded in March 1919 as a common front against Denikin, soon deteriorated when Makhno resisted attempts to subordinate his command to the Red Army. In June 1919 Bolshevik forces attacked Huliai Pole, forcing Makhno's army out, and dissolved all existing anarchist communes. Shortly afterwards Denikin's troops arrived and extended even further the process of liquidation. In July

1919, an independent partisan leader, Matvii Hryhoriiv, whose army was operating in the vicinity, extended an offer of alliance to Makhno. The latter refused, executed him, and brought a large portion of the victim's soldiers to his army's ranks. The advance of Denikin's army in August and September pushed Makhno's forces westward to Uman, where they met the army of the Directory. A military pact between the two armies was concluded, but Makhno decided to operate against Denikin's forces independently. On 26 September the Makhnovites launched a successful attack on Denikin's army in the village of Perehoniivka, dealing it a blow from which it was never to recover, the Bolsheviks then attacking it from the rear, compelling the planned White offensive on Moscow to be completely abandoned. With the defeat of Denikin accomplished, Makhno reached the height of his influence in Ukraine, taking the cities of Katerynoslav and Oleksandrivske (Zaporozhia) in October and November 1919. In the short spell he held these cities, he introduced anarchist concepts to urban life. In the autumn of 1919 his troops numbered approximately 40,000 (some sources claim over 80,000) and the extended area of the influence of the movement corresponded to nearly one third of the present territory of the Ukrainian SSR, comprising a population of over seven million.

With the Denikin threat removed, the Bolsheviks once more turned on the Makhnovites. A bitter war between the two groups ensued for eight to nine months in which both sides sustained heavy losses. Hostilities ceased in October 1920 in the face of a renewed White threat emerging from the Crimea. Once more the Makhnovites and Bolsheviks were allies against the Whites, but on the latter's defeat towards the close of 1920, the Bolsheviks resumed their commitment to wipe out the *Makhnovshchina*. The Makhnovite army held out for nine months until finally Makhno, together with a small band of followers, was forced to flee to Romania on 28 August 1921. Detained in Romania and Poland on three separate occasions, Makhno eventually ended up in Paris in 1925. He remained there till his death on 25 July 1934.

A Chronological Review of the Literature

The short survey above attests to the importance of the Makhnovite factor in the events of the Ukrainian Revolution. However, the first major book in English devoted to the study of Makhno, Victor Peters's *Nestor Makhno: The Life of an Anarchist*, fails to assent to this significance. As the title of the book implies, it is essentially a biography of Makhno. Hailing from the German-Mennonite community of the Huliai Pole region, Peters used his background to tap eyewitness accounts of immigrants in North America who had experienced the *Makhnov-*

shchina. An historian by profession, he explored an array of sources yielding information on his subject, including anarchist archives in France, German military records for the year 1918 (the few that survived), assorted anarchist periodicals, Soviet studies of the Makhno movement, memoirs and other primary and secondary literature. With such a wide range of material at his disposal, Peters was well placed to offer a pioneering, serious appraisal of the individual he was analysing. However, it can be inferred from reading Peters's final product that the author's own, very likely preconceived, bias against Makhno has interfered to inhibit such an appraisal. This bias can be deduced from his selective use of sources: a heavy reliance on those unfavourably disposed to Makhno and exiguous references to their sympathetic counterparts, including Makhno's three-volume history of his movement. Even when Peters does refer to the latter literature, it is often out of context to lend credence to his expositions.

In his treatment, Peters focuses very narrowly on Makhno, manipulating his personality to expound the thesis that the *Makhnovshchina* was an unsophisticated and incoherent expression of uneducated or semieducated peasants, for whom the slogans of anarchism were merely a pretext to engage in disorderly activities. Makhno's own ideology was one of 'primitive anarchy', which Peters attributes to his inadequate education and humble origins. These circumstances, in Peters's view, explain why the movement disintegrated into a type of Jacquerie, where the land expropriations of 1917 and the subsequent establishment of communes were carried out in a disorderly manner, culminating in 'chaos and terror at Gulai Pole (sic) and the regions controlled by Makhno'. Consequently, Makhno's 'ideal of an anarchist republic' was reduced 'into a farce' (p31). Peters therefore disputes the accounts of Peter Arshinov⁴ and Voline⁵ (Vsevolod Mikhailovich Eichenbaum), both of whom were tied to the Makhno movement, and Makhno's own version, of the character (orderly in their view) of the expropriation process. According to Peters, Makhno's 'peasant primitivism' was compatible with his definition of what constituted revolutionary activities: 'In reading Makhno it sometimes becomes difficult to distinguish between Makhno the peasant and Makhno the revolutionary' (p.30). Peters implies that it was the more irresponsible peasantry who backed Makhno during the Revolution, while the 'more responsible revolution-

4. Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement (1918-1921)* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1974; London: Freedom Press, 1987).

5. Voline, *The Unknown Revolution, 1917-1921* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975)

ary peasantry . . . were more inclined to support the less radical Social-Revolutionary party' (p31).

Peters's thesis is unconvincing, if only because he fails to support his arguments empirically. He accepts uncritically eyewitness accounts which are unsympathetic to Makhno and often engages in sweeping statements without providing a source at all. In the case of one of his informants, that of Fotii Meleshko, one needs to question the extent to which his reminiscences are a reliable source. His attitude towards Makhno is exceptionally antagonistic, as can be gleaned from the following assertion:

In the Ukrainian liberation struggle, Makhno's rôle was so negative and destructive that he deserves only to be ignored.⁶

Meleshko's article on his encounters with Makhno appeared in 1935, that is, after Makhno's death. In spite of the dubious reliability of this account, Peters refers to it at will, even siding with Meleshko over Makhno's wife, Halyna Kuzmenko, on the issue as to whether or not she and Makhno had had a church wedding! (pp103 and 121).

In view of this discriminate use of sources, one can arrive at the conclusion that the intention of Peters has been to relegate Makhno from the 'hero' he has been eulogised as by his admirers to the 'zero' he has been condemned as by those ill-disposed to him. He has done this most systematically through the method of searching for petty flaws of doubtful significance in Makhno's personality and physical features. At the same time he is careful to note that there were some exceptional aspects about the Makhno movement. For instance, he concedes that Makhno 'and his followers rarely molested the poor peasants' (p33), and spends a considerable amount of space refuting the charge that the Makhno movement was xenophobic and anti-Semitic (pp94-96, 106-107). Indeed, the other scholarly literature that discusses Makhno's relationship with the Jewish population is of the same opinion and concur that unlike the Whites, Bolsheviks and other competing groups in Ukraine during the Revolution, the Makhnovites did not engage in pogroms.

But on reading Peter's book one gains the impression that these exceptions were incidental rather than deliberate, for he does not attribute them to the ideology of the movement, believing Makhno himself to be incapable of formulating a theoretical plan of principles for his followers to be guided by. Peters concludes that Makhno was a 'peasant villain' (p112), and it is this caricature which overshadows any other aspect of himself and his movement. Peters opts to disregard the qualities

6. Cited in Sysyn, p271n.

that Makhno's 'friends' ascribe to him because, 'it is the recklessly and irresponsibly violent Makhno whom tens of thousands of people of the Ukraine of all nationalities, classes and occupations, not excluding many humble peasants, remember' (p101). Peters refers to examples of how Makhno extended his use of violence to his own army commanders and followers. But in those instances where Makhno had members of his military personnel shot for acts of plundering, embezzlement, and to prevent racist attacks on ethnic minorities, Peters does not link to efforts to instil discipline in his army.⁷ Rather, this behaviour was the result of Makhno's 'uncontrolled impulsiveness' and his 'excitable temperament'. To strengthen his point, Peters adds: 'We have no medical reports on Makhno, but Meleshko, who had a chance to observe him over a period, says that Makhno was possibly mentally ill' (p104). Therein, perhaps, lay the key to Makhno's success in consolidating a movement which was able to resist for four years armies of numerically superior strength. Moreover, within a context of his area becoming a major battleground which included the armies of the Bolsheviks and Whites, foreign interventionist forces, among others, and in which the inhabitants could not escape the violence and chaos that ensued (indeed, even many Mennonites were impelled to relinquish their principle of non-violence and take up arms, either by joining the ranks of the Whites or by forming self-defence units),⁸ Makhno was still able to restrain his troops from engaging themselves in indiscriminate targets. Had Lenin, Trotsky, Denikin and others during the Revolution been equally 'mentally ill', then they, too, might have precluded such actions as pogroms, which all sides appear to have participated in with the notable exception of the Makhnovites.

Following Peters's book, two studies appeared almost simultaneously examining Makhno's relationship with the Ukrainian national revival during the Revolution. Michael Palij's book, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918-1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution*, is mainly concerned with the subtitle, as Makhno's anarchism is scarcely touched on. Frank Sysyn's study, *Nestor Makhno and the Ukrainian Revolution*, appeared in a collection of articles dealing with assorted trends in the Ukrainian Revolution. In this well-researched and lucid paper, Sysyn assesses Makhno's anarchism and how this affected his attitudes towards

7. Makhno's disciplinary measures apparently gained some respect among the populace: 'The townspeople [of Katerynoslav] were very impressed when Nestor personally shot a looter in the city bazaar, a contrast to the White commanders such as Slaschov who tended to issue edicts from on high but let the Cossacks get on with it'. Malet, p99.

8. Dietrich Neufeld, *A Russian Dance of Death: Revolution and Civil War in the Ukraine* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1977), pp26-27.

the Ukrainian nationalism espoused by the Ukrainian governments of his time. Makhno regarded himself first and foremost as an anarchist and, as such, his ideology was irreconcilable with the creation of a Ukrainian 'state', in any of its forms. At the same time, Makhno designated himself as a 'Ukrainian' and was aware that the movement he led was largely composed of Ukrainians and operated on Ukrainian territory. Sysyn notes that Makhno, while in prison in Moscow, had lost his command of his native language, and his extensive contacts with Russian and Russified anarchists fixed him firmly in the realm of Russian perspectives of revolutionary doctrine, which tended to neglect the 'national question'. It was in the Russian anarchists that Makhno sought his tutelage and the leadership of his movement during the Revolution was staffed largely by culturally Russian anarchists. Nevertheless, neither Makhno nor his movement could divorce themselves from the national revival. Sysyn concludes that during the course of the Revolution, owing in part to the steady influx into the movement of nationally conscious Ukrainian intellectuals, the movement began to assume a stronger 'Ukrainian' character, Makhno himself increasingly beginning to think in Ukrainian national terms.

Sysyn argues his case cogently, drawing on Makhno's own writings and on the composite accounts of those who had met him personally during the revolutionary years and/or in exile to trace his development of a national consciousness.

It would be appropriate here to elaborate on a theme that Sysyn alludes to in his study: the leadership of the Makhno movement. As Sysyn rightly points out, the guiding force for the ideology of the movement came primarily from anarchists in the Ukrainian cities who were culturally Russian in outlook. This resulted in a curious situation: an urban-bred, culturally Russian elite directing a rural, largely Ukrainian movement. This elite appears never to have learned Ukrainian, and Sysyn is correct (pp299-300) in his assertion that it perceived the Makhno movement in terms of the all-Russian Revolution, taking little, if any, interest in indigenous cultural and national concerns. Makhno, however, albeit cut off from his roots during his formative years and receiving his ideological tuition in a Russian milieu, and although he never wavered from his internationalist goals, was nonetheless aware of his heritage and able to identify the endogenous factors that gave rise to his movement. These in essence, were peculiarly and historically Ukrainian, and within an all-Ukrainian context, the region in which the Makhno movement operated, known as Steppe Ukraine, possessed certain intrinsic features shaped by the social, political, economic and administrative legacies of the past. One person who was perceptively aware of the historical complexities inherited by Ukraine, and

who prescribed an ultimately anarchist solution to these intricacies, was the outstanding Ukrainian intellectual of the late nineteenth century, Mykhailo Drahomanov.⁹ Makhno does not appear to have been familiar with Drahomanov's extensive writings, and one can only hypothesise what might have happened had he gained access to them. Certainly, a 'home grown' variety of ideological anarchism, which takes into full consideration local conditions, adopted by a movement such as Makhno's, might have considerably broadened the appeal of anarchism among the Ukrainian populace, more than the brand advocated, and approach taken, by the ideological cadres in the Makhno movement.

Michael Palij's study, a published version of his Ph.D. dissertation, deals with Makhno within the context of the Ukrainian Revolution. While Palij is correct in pursuing his line of inquiry against the background of wider events in Ukraine, the emphasis has been more on the latter at the expense of the central theme of the book. Consequently, a large section of the book is devoted to the rise of Ukrainian national consciousness up to 1917; the policies of the three Ukrainian governments (the Rada, Hetmanate and Directory); and a discussion of the Bolsheviks and Whites in Ukraine. Those portions of the book concerned with the Makhno movement centre primarily on its military and political aspects, particularly vis-a-vis the other major contenders for power in Ukraine. Palij's thesis is that the inability of either of these contenders, whether the Whites, Bolsheviks or successive Ukrainian governments, to resolve the land question in Makhno's region, drove the peasants there to his fold. Makhno perceived the Whites as the principal enemy; they wished to restore the hegemony of the Tsarist regime with its centralised power and landlord institution. The Bolsheviks were at first considered revolutionary cousins, with whom cooperation was possible as long as they recognised the independent work of the anarchists. However, the Bolsheviks proved to be treacherous allies and unwilling to concede to the Makhnovites their self-determination. With the exception of Hetman Skoropadsky's administration, whose policies evoked general discontent among the populace, Palij argues that Makhno's attitudes toward the other two Ukrainian governments, the Rada and Directory, were ambivalent. From 1919, he maintains, the Makhnovites and the forces of the Directory engaged in an unwritten code of non-aggression with each other. According to

9. For a discussion of Drahomanov and his ideology, see Ivan L. Rudnytsky, ed, *Mykhailo Drahomanov: A Symposium and Selected Writings* (New York: The Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the US, 1952); Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987), pp203-297.

Palij, this was due to Makhno's increasing Ukrainianism, stimulated in part by members of his movement, his wife among them, urging for a more vigorous approach in defence of Ukrainian national rights. Makhno, therefore, underwent a profound change from 1919, assuming a more aggressive patriotic rhetoric which now labelled the Bolsheviks not only as politically harmful but also as national enemies (pp79-80). But the same Soviet sources upon which Palij bases his thesis on the transformation of Makhno's thinking on the national question, are challenged by Sysyn, who argues that there is no evidence to corroborate the Soviet charges that Makhno had converted to Ukrainian nationalism; Makhno himself refuting these allegations (Sysyn: 292-297).

Conversely, Palij notes that although the Makhnovites did not fight the Directory in the latter stage of the Revolution, neither did they join forces with its army. They were thus detrimental to the cause of Ukrainian independence. Makhno was too politically 'immature' to face up to the demands of the 'national cause'. Palij assesses the background to this 'lost opportunity' in Steppe Ukraine as follows:

Years of struggle for land and freedom had left a strong mark on popular consciousness. Although the region was rich in military potential, with strong historic traditions that could have served the national cause, it was nationally and politically undeveloped, with not strong enough military and political leaders who could inspire, organise, and lead the peasants against the country's enemies. The leadership therefore devolved on partisan leaders such as Makhno, Hryhoriiv, and others who fought only for their limited purposes and thus contributed to the fall of the independent Ukrainian state (p56).

There is sufficient material in Palij's book to indicate how misleading this evaluation is. If by 'limited purposes' he means 'local-level goals', then this is at odds with what is known about the Makhno movement. In his own discussion of the Regional Congresses of Peasants, Workers and Insurgents held in early 1919, which included delegates representing 350 districts of the Ukraine, one of the resolutions adopted called for the land issue to be resolved 'on a Ukraine-wide scale at an all-Ukrainian congress of peasants' (p155). The Makhnovites also issued addresses to peoples residing outside Ukraine. The goals of the Makhnovites were 'limitless' rather than 'limited' by the very nature of the ideology that helped bring about the movement: anarcho-communism — the notions of self-determination and emancipation (in the broad sense) transcending national boundaries.

The question that Palij could have posed is how did Makhno succeed so long in Steppe Ukraine when all others had failed? The Makhno movement was not defeated from within but, ultimately, by external military means. One immediate answer to this question is that Makhno

had an attractive programme which, among other things, called for the instant redistribution of land. As Palij himself acknowledges, the governments of the day were very hesitant on this issue and, consequently, this only added to the Makhnovite suspicions of centrifugal forces. Makhno himself had another grievance against central government: he considered the invitation of the Central Powers to Ukraine an act of betrayal, his indignation was heightened when his brother Omelian was among those killed during the invasion of Huliai Pole by German and Austrian troops. Furthermore, the comparison made between Makhno and Hryhoriiv is a deceiving one. Makhno was consistent in his goals; Hryhoriiv was not and it is he who more appropriately fits the criteria of the *Jacquerie* of the period, or *otamanshchyna* as it is known in Ukrainian.

It is because Palij views the Makhnovites from the perspective of Ukrainian nationalism that he is unable to fully appreciate the conditions that gave rise to and sustained the movement. The anarchism of the movement, the aspirations of the people of the area and regional characteristics are only peripherally discussed. Palij had at his disposal sufficient primary and secondary material to broaden his assessment of the *Makhnovshchina* — his bibliography of the Makhno movement (and Ukrainian Revolution), spanning some 103 pages, has yet to be paralleled — but, evidently, this had not been exploited to its full potential. But the bibliography, as well as Palij's study, notwithstanding its shortcomings, have served a useful purpose in constituting a resource base for additional research on the Makhno movement.

A person who has clearly benefited in this respect is Yves Ternon, whose profession is not history but medicine. However, his passion for history as a hobby has inspired him to write books on subjects as diverse as the genocide of the Armenians to a history of medicine and, more recently, Nestor Makhno. Ternon states that on writing his book, *Makhno: La Revolte Anarchiste*, he was overcome by a 'fascination for the epic character and strong personality of Nestor Makhno' (p8). Ternon makes no effort to disguise his sympathy for the character he is assessing and consequently his work could be interpreted as an anti-thesis to Peters's. At times his sympathies border on plain idolisation. This is apparent, for instance, in his descriptions of Makhno's military exploits, which he tends to exaggerate. During the battle of Dibrivki in 1918, where a tiny band of Makhnovites faced a vastly superior combined force of German, Austrian and local militia forces, and in which the latter was routed, Ternon (without stating his source) asserts that the enemy soldiers numbered 'more than 1000' (p18) when other sources place the figure much lower (Palij: 102).

In terms of methodology, Ternon's approach is similar to Palij's. Like his predecessor, Ternon places the Makhno movement in the context of the Ukrainian Revolution. The first section of the book is an overview of the Makhno movement. This is followed by a treatment of the historical background to the Revolution and then the Revolution itself. Makhno's final years in exile close the study. Unlike Palij's book, however, Ternon's study is based almost entirely on secondary sources and, therefore, it reveals little new in the way of information. Ternon does, though, touch on an issue that is conspicuously absent in Palij's monograph: the question of pogroms. In view of the accusations levelled at Makhno on this score, this omission in Palij's treatment of the Makhno movement is somewhat surprising. Ternon devotes 13 pages to the subject of Jews in Ukraine and arrives at the conclusion that the Soviets are behind the unfounded charge that the Makhnovites were anti-Semitic and pogromists.

In common with Palij, Ternon discusses the legacy of the Zaporozhian Kozaks in the region inhabited by the Makhnovites.¹⁰ But Ternon assesses this heritage in romantic terms which detracts from the scholarly aspect of his study. For Ternon, the Makhnovites acted in the spirit of their Kozak ancestors, breaking the chains of oppression and, as disciples of Bakunin and Kropotkin, created an utopian society which upheld the ideals of social justice. It is no coincidence that the front cover of Ternon's book sports a picture of the famous painting by I. E. Repin of the legendary Zaporozhian Kozaks writing their bold letter to the Turkish sultan. Although Ternon's study is less detailed than Palij's, it is nonetheless the first full-scale study of Nestor Makhno in French.¹¹

Finally, there is an issue which Ternon raises that merits further investigation. In concluding his study, he notes that it is difficult to divorce Makhno from the movement he inspired: 'could it have existed without him?', he asks (p161). Indeed, more to the point, where was it once he was chased away by the Bolsheviks from the zone that nurtured the movement? Did the departure of leading Makhnovites leave behind a leadership vacuum? It would appear so, since the struggle against the

10. The Zaporozhian Kozaks were fugitive serfs who founded a military base, or *sich*, beyond the rapids — *za porohy* of the Dnieper river. There they established a democratic egalitarian society based on the principles of fraternity, successfully fending off hostile invaders and maintaining a liberated zone from the sixteenth century till the eighteenth, when they were finally subjugated by successive Tsarist regimes.

11. The only major work in French which preceded Ternon's is Malcolm Menzies, *Makhno: une épopée. Le soulèvement anarchiste en Ukraine 1917-1921* (Paris: Editions Pierre Belfond). It is based on limited sources.

Bolsheviks lost its earlier momentum in Steppe Ukraine with the eviction of the main protagonists of the movement. The introduction of Lenin's New Economic Policy, which replaced the much detested Bolshevik policy of 'war communism', and the repressive measures of the Bolsheviks in combatting resistance, can only in part account for this decline. Insurgencies and movements such as Makhno's do not simply 'burn themselves out', as many of their students are often concluding. The Paraguayans during the War of the Triple Alliance (1865-1870), when they faced the combined armies of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, were not subdued till 90% of their male population had been obliterated, while Vietnamese partisans were able to repel the world's most powerful armed forces, the US, during the Vietnam War. Admittedly, these are extreme cases, but they do suggest that the tenacity of a movement can resist effectively against the odds if the support mechanisms remain intact throughout. In the case of the Makhno movement its mechanisms of support had steadily been eroded by 1920-21.

Let us turn now to the final phase of Makhno's partisan army. It is clear from the literature that details of this particular episode are sadly lacking. The importance of this phase lies in the fact that for the first time in the history of the movement, the Makhnovite partisans were forced into new areas of Ukraine where their influence had hitherto been negligible. The paucity of sources impedes any fruitful evaluation of the attitudes of the populace in these far-flung regions towards its visitors. But the fact that Makhno's depleted army was able to survive in unfamiliar territory for so long in spite of the relentless hounding by the Bolsheviks, who had their whole occupation machine behind them, and Makhno's own eagerness to return to Ukraine and continue the struggle upon receiving medical treatment abroad for his multiple wounds, attests to a degree of support or at least sympathy by local inhabitants. Ultimately, whatever the support he might have commanded in this final phase it proved insufficient to effectively resist his Bolshevik predators.

Bolshevik military tactics against the Makhno partisans is a theme alluded to in Michael Malet's book, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*. Malet's treatment of Makhno incorporates more details of the military aspects of his movement than previous studies. Malet stresses how new tactics employed by the Bolsheviks, such as the quartering of Red Army troops in Makhnovite villages, served to sever the links between Makhno's partisans and their traditional base of support. These new tactics were applied almost simultaneously with the introduction of the NEP; an attempt at compromise with the peasantry. Moreover, the drought and famine of 1921 further reduced the will of the peasantry to fight.

Malet considers his book, which took a decade and a half to complete, to be a complement to Palij's study. With the exception of British Foreign Office records and anarchist archives deposited in the Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, which Palij did not examine, Malet has generally drawn on sources already exploited by his predecessors. His methodology, however, is significantly distinct. In contrast to Palij's study, Malet places the Makhno movement within the context of the Civil War throughout the Russian Empire. Therefore, he devotes some attention to rebellions outside Ukraine, such as the one in Tambov province in western Siberia led by A. S. Antonov in 1920-21, drawing parallels with the Makhno movement. There were similarities between the two movements in terms of their origins, military organisation and tactics. But the reasons why the Makhno movement lasted longer lay in the fact that it was rooted earlier and encompassed a much wider area. Other issues, such as the relationship between the Makhno movement and its ideological rivals; Makhno's alleged anti-Semitism; the ideology of the movement; the organisation of the partisan army; and Makhno's years in exile, receive wider treatment than previous studies. The way Malet has organised his material renders the book to read as a handbook of the Makhno movement. It is divided into four parts, each with subheadings. The first dealing with the movement's military history; the second with its organisation; the third with ideology; and the fourth with Makhno's years in exile. The sparse footnoting in the book suggests that the handbook format is what the author intended.

While Malet's treatment is generally concise and clear, there is one aspect of the movement that is unsatisfactorily assessed: Makhno's relationship with the group Malet refers to as the 'nationalists'. First, he uses the terms 'nationalists', 'Petlurists' and 'Directory' interchangeably. Second, the so-called 'nationalists' encompassed a wide range of forces, which included even members of the Skoropadsky government (whom he mistakenly labels as 'White', thus confusing the issue even further). The 'nationalism' that the followers of Petliura espoused and that which Skoropadsky and other political groupings advocated were not directly compatible, as is apparent in the conflicts and debating that went on among rival political factions both during the Revolution and later in exile. Third, Makhno's attitude towards Petliura is assessed simplistically. There is reason to believe that Makhno was not so antagonistic towards Petliura as Malet implies. Although the fact that their armies refrained from fighting each other in the later stages of the Revolution might be attributed to military tactics, as Malet suggests, there is another plausible factor which could also explain this abstention: Makhno's reconsidering of Petliura as a fellow native victim of the Bolsheviks. Malet, however, is loath to draw too close an affinity

between these two personages. On discussing a chapter of Makhno's years of exile in Paris, he describes a chance meeting between the two in a Russian restaurant. Also present was Petliura's would-be executioner, Samuel Schwarzbart, a Ukrainian anarchist Jew who held Petliura responsible for pogroms committed in Ukraine during the Revolution:

He [Makhno] was in a Russian restaurant with May Picqueray, Alexander Berkman, the Jewish anarchist watchmaker Schwarzbart and others, when Petliura walked in. Makhno's attitude is not recorded, but Schwarzbart turned pale. (p189)

Although no source is acknowledged for this information, it appears to have been based on Victor Peters's account of the meeting (compare pp89-93 of Peters to p189 of Malet). But Malet deliberately disregards a significant sentence in Peters's account, who adds that: 'According to Ida Mett, Makhno expressed to her strong disapproval of the assassination' (p93).

This disapproval is a feature in Alexandre Skirda's *Nestor Makhno: Le Cosaque de l'Anarchie*, the last book in this survey. Skirda's source in this regard is the testimony given to him by the Bulgarian anarchist, Kiro Radeff. According to Radeff, Schwarzbart consulted Makhno on his intention to assassinate Petliura. Makhno tried to dissuade him, pointing out that this was simply not in line with anarchist ways. Besides, he added, as far as he knew there was no evidence to link Petliura personally to pogroms. He referred to Petliura's consistent condemnations of anti-Jewish actions and the representation of Jews in his government and army. These efforts were in vain. Schwarzbart went ahead as planned and assassinated Petliura on 25 May 1926. Skirda adds that Schwarzbart's lawyers at his trial went on a special mission to the Soviet Union to collect the necessary 'evidence' to connect Petliura with the pogroms he was alleged to have instigated (p320). Elsewhere, Skirda refers to another testimony which suggests that the relations between Makhno and Petliura were not so venomous. According to a certain Oleh Kotschuk, whose mother was interned in the same camp as Makhno in Poland, a group of Petliura followers in the camp was plotting to kill Makhno, but was dissuaded from carrying out this plan by responsible Petliurites who reasoned that such an act would be harmful to the 'Ukrainian cause'.¹²

Skirda, whose book was eighteen years in the making, does not hide

12. Alexandre Skirda, 'Postface bibliographique' in Nestor Makhno, *La lutte contre l'État et autres écrits* (Carrare, Italy: J-P Ducret, 1984), p144. This is an anthology of selected writings by Makhno, compiled and translated from the original Russian by Skirda.

his inclination towards anarchism (all his previous works have been on that topic), and his study of Makhno reads very much like a defence of Makhnoism. In terms of methodology, he examines Soviet, White and other sources which display an antipathy to the Makhnovites, and compares these to the writings of the Makhnovites and eyewitness accounts, which he takes more seriously, on various aspects of the movement. He challenges the negative views of the *Makhnovshchina* put across by its various detractors by drawing attention to the inconsistencies and lack of substance in their accounts, memoirs and studies.

Skirda's thesis is that the Makhno movement was a genuine revolutionary manifestation. The diffusion of anarchist ideology, the land expropriations, the organisation of communes and the creation of democratic organs led to a 'radical revolutionary consciousness in the [Makhnovite region]' (p58). The plebeian character of the movement, led by a local of proletarian origin, solidified common interests and aspirations. Skirda also attaches some significance to the Zaporozhian Kozak heritage in the Makhnovite region (hence the title of the book). He argues that although the neighbouring Kuban Cossacks were also descendants of the Zaporozhians, class differentiation over the years had reduced the appeal of Zaporozhian egalitarian values in their region. This was not the case with the Makhnovites, however, whose bitter experience with landlord exploitation and authoritarian abuses instilled more firmly the memory of their ancestors' struggle for dignity and emancipation. Skirda notes that Makhno himself was deeply moved by his mother's tales of the legendary feats of the Kozaks.

Skirda's own commitment to Makhno and the principles his movement advocated, has impelled him to assume a scrupulous approach to any source (including sources that are seemingly bona fide) that slanders or distorts Makhno's personality and aims. It is in this manner that he tackles Voline's claims of shortcomings in Makhno's character. Voline had spent a few months with the Makhno movement in 1919 and after the Revolution joined Makhno and Arshinov in exile in Paris. On writing his book on the anarchists during the Russian Revolution, Voline devoted a section to the Makhno movement, which although almost entirely based on Arshinov's previous study, was interspersed with some personal observations. Among Voline's comments on Makhno was an attack on his apparently debauched behaviour (overindulgence in drinking and orgies and other excesses).¹³ This description of Makhno's personal defects has periodically been quoted by later scholars, whether favourably disposed to him or otherwise, who have accepted it at face value. Naturally so, since it was provided by a former participant in

13. Voline, pp705-706.

the movement who knew Makhno personally. Skirda, however, in his quest to separate myth from fact, challenges this characterisation. Why, he asks, should Voline resort to prejudicing Makhno's reputation? Skirda provides compelling reasons to account for Voline's defamation of his former colleague. In analysing Voline's writings and on the basis of eyewitness testimonies, Skirda concludes that relations between Voline and Makhno had always been uneasy, and were particularly strained during the ideological debates on anarchist strategy in the 1920s which saw the two adopt asymmetrical positions.¹⁴ During the course of the debates, Makhno charged that Voline held an inflated opinion of his role in the *Makhnovshchina*, one that was based more on fantasy than fact. In light of this, Skirda argues, Voline had an axe to grind. His hurt pride unhealed long after Makhno's death, the assessment of the *Makhnovshchina* within his study of the Revolution afforded the opportunity to take his slanderous revenge.

Skirda's study is especially valuable for the filling of gaps in our knowledge of such issues as Makhno's years in exile, female participation in the movement and the fate of those Makhnovites who crossed into Romania with their leader. According to Skirda, in exile Makhno continued the struggle, 'the pen replacing the sabre' (p388). He illustrates the extent and incisiveness of Makhno's writings and his contacts with the international anarchist movement. Apparently, Makhno had regained his command of Ukrainian in exile (p398), a fact that would suggest that presuppositions about his alleged 'unUkrainianess' ought to be revised. As for those Makhnovites who accompanied Makhno to Romania (Skirda doesn't state how many were involved and alternative sources provide estimates ranging from 50 to 250), some remained there and an undetermined number settled in Poland. Others 'emigrated further afield, to Germany, France, Canada and to other countries across the globe' (p302). Skirda was able to trace at least three Makhnovites who had settled near Makhno in Paris¹⁵ and notes that two others fought in the anarchist Durruti Column during the Spanish Civil War (p424).

As for the effects of the war in the Makhnovite region, Skirda's conclusions are macabre. Between 1917-1921 Steppe Ukraine had lost

14. The subject of the ideological debates are alluded to in both Skirda's and Malet's studies, but a more thorough discussion can be found in Anthony D'Agostino, *Marxism and the Russian Anarchists* (San Francisco: Germinal Press, 1977), pp195-248.

15. This fact would put into considerable doubt Meleshko's petty assertion that only two Ukrainians attended Makhno's funeral: his wife and daughter (repeated in Peters: 97 and Palij: 244). It would be interesting to discover on what premise Meleshko based his calculation. Did he himself attend the funeral? (If so, the number of 'Ukrainians' now participating augments to three.)

nearly 1½ million of its population. The settlement of Huliai Pole, which had been dubbed 'Makhnohrad' during the Revolution, had not even been able to reach 40% of its pre-Revolution population level by 1926. Only 10% of the 300,000 soldiers who had passed through the ranks of the Makhnovite army had survived (pp423-424). The Makhnovite region was to know no peace in years to come. A terrible famine in 1932-33, induced by Stalinist policies, claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands in Steppe Ukraine. Barely a decade later, the inhabitants of this region experienced the horrendous results of Nazi rule.

Makhnovite influence in Ukraine remained for years to come, in spite of Soviet efforts to eradicate any such manifestation. Skirda notes that Makhnovite guerrilla warfare continued well into 1924, not in the traditional Makhnovite stronghold around Huliai Pole, but in such regions as Poltava. Skirda suggests that Makhnovite influence may have persisted through World War II, citing as an example the independent partisan units who fought under the black flag against both Hitler and Stalin. He cautions, however, that only Soviet archives can confirm whether these units were Makhnovite inspired (p303).

Reflections

After reading Skirda's solidly researched study, one can conclude that barring any major revelations from little-known sources in the West, one cannot expect a significant enhancement of our knowledge of Makhno and his movement in the foreseeable future. The residues of Makhno's memoir manuscripts, which apparently cover the post-1918 period, have disappeared leaving little trace behind as to their possible fate. If ever retrieved, then they should shed light on how the protagonist assessed his movement during its latter stages. Otherwise, Soviet archives are still inaccessible, Peters has explored what remains of the German official records of the 1917-1918 period, Malet their British counterparts, Palij and Sysyn some Ukrainian possibilities in the West, while Skirda has virtually exhausted anarchist archival holdings that contain Makhnovite-related matter. This leaves only Austrian and French official archives as major possibilities for alternative material relating to the *Makhnovshchina*.

Unless any major disclosures result from research in these archives, a fruitful direction for would-be scholars of the Makhno movement could be to pursue interpretative studies, drawing on the material available, and to consider adopting existing social science conceptual frameworks that pertain to the analysis of peasant revolutionary movements; anarchism, guerrilla warfare; and regional history. A shift towards com-

parative studies between the *Makhnovshchina* and other rural movements tainted by anarchism has already commenced,¹⁶ and hopefully this trend will continue. Unfortunately, to date (1988), and with few exceptions, there has been a tendency to focus heavily on the personality of Makhno to the neglect of other aspects of his movement. For instance, certain issues such as the participation of women in the movement (by all accounts, quite substantial), the social, economic and cultural impact of the anarchist revolution in Steppe Ukraine, the urban-rural dichotomy in the region, and the reception of the *Makhnovshchina* in anarchist and other left wing circles (particularly vis-à-vis the Bolshevik Revolution), warrant further investigation. In each case there is sufficient existing material for such studies to be conducted without recourse to Soviet library and archival depositories. Of course, were the Soviet authorities to relent and permit research in their holdings then the possibilities for new lines of inquiry to be undertaken on the history of the Makhno movement and allied subjects can only advance their scholarship still further.

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16. Dittmar Dahlmann, *Land und Freiheit: Machnovshchina un Zapatismo als Beispiele agrarrevolutionärer Bewegungen* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1986).

David Koven

Letter to an Old Friend

Dear Marvin,

I was moved by your last letter; pervasively melancholy, it aroused deep empathetic responses in me. I understood the state of confusion and loss you are experiencing as you witness the collapse of the Eastern European 'communist' societies in which you had had so much idealistic hope. Despite the differences of political orientation between us which engendered some tension in our relationship, it was always the eminent sincerity of your idealism and your artistic, anarchic personality that overcame the conflicts between us and enabled our friendship to persist. It was a shared idealistic vision; the desire to see society change direction to one that would enable individuals to grow, develop capabilities to make decisions and act directly in matters that concern them, that energised our relationship. Despite our different orientation, we share a vision of a society in which people can express themselves fearlessly and freely, a society without exploitation and differences of privilege, and a society that would use peaceful, reasonable means to find solutions to internal and external conflict. Ultimately you, like I, envisioned a society, the people of which would overcome dependency on external authority however it identified itself. These attitudes were, I always felt, in conflict with your emotional connection to the Communist Party.

I think that the major differences in our approach resulted from the happen-chance that I arrived at my anarchist viewpoint through the good fortune of having met a group of young anarchists who became my friends and comrades, after my disillusionment with the CP in 1936. These young anarchist friends affirmed my strong libertarian views and helped set my direction in life. Meanwhile you arrived at your radical 'weltanschauung' by connecting with people who accepted, *carte blanche*, the discipline of the Communist Party. The party obscured from rank and file members like yourself its domination by the dictum of Joseph Stalin and the Russian Communist Party. The interpretation of Marxist/Leninist espoused by the party bureaucracy at that time reduced the majority of rank and file party members to the rôle of sycophants who uncritically accepted all central committee decisions. Inherent in the philosophy of the CP was the cynical concept that most people couldn't

be trusted to make reasonable decisions for themselves. This attitude reflected the Marxist/Leninist rationalisation for elevating 'The Party' to the rôle of *'The Vanguard of the Proletariat'*. That concept coupled with Stalin's paranoia engendered the growth of a powerful Russian party apparatus that authorised the brutal suppression of anyone suspected of questioning or criticising the decisions of the Party's leadership. In turn, this concept inevitably led to the 'Moscow Trials', the execution of the 'Old Bolsheviks', and later to the slaughter of the anarchist and Poumist militants in Spain. It was also the rationalisation for the Hitler-Stalin Pact, and the imperialistic attacks on the independent countries that later became the Eastern Bloc.

As you know, I distrust all governments, despite whatever nomenclature they use to identify themselves: Dictatorship of the Proletariat, Democracy, Theocracy, Republic, Communist, Socialist, Maoist, Christian Democrat, etc. Historically, they have all demonstrated that their ultimate interest is in maintaining political power and control. They all insist that *only they know* what is best for society. The leaders of these organisations all share one common rationale. Despite all their protestations of good intention, they ultimately represent a bureaucracy whose only real priority is its own self perpetuation. In truth, all governments cynically recognise that the people they profess to 'lead', are in fact their real enemy and represent the greatest threat to the government's hegemony. Thus, governments spend most of their energy and society's wealth in creating military organisations theoretically as protection from mythological enemies, but whose real function is to maintain control over their respective populations.

In some of the discussions between us, I think that you will remember that I insisted that the regimes in the so-called communist world were, in fact, another form of State Capitalism, and that 'the party' functioned in ways that enabled the party bureaucrats to reap similar benefits from the domination of their people that capitalists, politicians and bureaucrats reap in the west. You might dismiss these allegations as 'anti soviet' propaganda, but now that the communist regimes are collapsing in Eastern Europe, the crassness and avarice exercised by the party bureaucracies are shown to exceed any concept of malfeasance of which I might have conceived. It is eminently obvious that in Russia, the struggle to maintain the old order is buttressed by the fact that the Russian CP has accumulated wealth and property in excess of two billion Rubles. The Communist Party in Russia claims 'ownership' of all the newspapers, all the publishing houses, all public buildings (even those that were built in pre-revolutionary days) and all technical equipment. The 'apparatt' controls all the medical facilities, vacation resorts and rest homes. Party leaders, functionaries and their supporters live lives

of luxury and privilege, while the majority of the Russian people eke out a bare and dreary existence. Sadly, if the people challenge the politicians, or the party's control of society, the 'new' leaders in the East won't hesitate to use force to suppress them. Using either military force directly as in China or more recently in Albania, or 'loyal followers', such as the recent use of the miners in Romania, anti-administration demonstrations will be either co-opted or suppressed. Even Gorbachev, hailed in the West as a moderate would be democrat, uses threats of force, either military or economic, in his efforts to control dissent in the independence seeking 'Republics'. I'm certain that despite all of his liberal slogans, he and his followers or any other 'leaders' this crisis may produce, will inevitably continue the exploitation of the Russian people, professing to know what is best for Russia. This is the rationalisation used by all 'megalomaniacs', 'true believers', 'fundamentalists' and all bureaucrats to justify their actions.

I know that you must find these events difficult to accept and comprehend, for they emphasise that in truth, despite all of the 'revolutionary' rhetoric and brave posturing taken by the party leaders since the onset of the Bolshevik Regime, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Breznev, Gorbachev, et al, mouthed nothing but empty slogans. When Lenin, and the group of Bolsheviks who had been living in exile when the Russian Revolution broke out, were secretly returned to Russia by the German High Command, they had accepted the German offer of transport in exchange for a promise of Russian withdrawal from participation in World War I. Once back in Russia, they seized power from the Kerenski government by means of a military coup. In the name of the Communist Party; cynically mouthing the populist slogans of the anarchists and left social revolutionaries, concepts that had moved the Russian people to revolt, they used the war weariness of the Russian people as the springboard to propel themselves to power. The first real item on their agenda was to co-opt the revolution they had had no part in. Under Trotsky's command the newly formed Red Army soon managed to imprison, drive into exile, or kill the left social revolutionaries, socialists and anarchists who had energised the Revolution. In doing so, they soon dissipated the idealism and spirit that had brought down the Czarist regime. With the Bolshevik destruction of the independent Soviets and Trade Unions, and the military attack launched by Trotsky against the revolutionary sailors and radical syndicalist workers of Petrograd at Kronstadt, the CP destroyed all hope for a meaningful revolutionary change and began the long counter revolutionary years of fear, repression and political murder that marked their control of the peoples that came to make up the Soviet Union. Today, almost 75 years after the beginning of the Russian revolt, the peoples of eastern Europe are finally trying to unbur-

den themselves of Communist Party domination. But do we hear calls for the establishment of a more radical regime than that which has oppressed them for all of these years? Helas, no, instead we hear only the desire to change to a 'free enterprise' capitalist society similar to those of the West with their emphasis on materialism. More sorry yet, is the rebirth of the reactionary politics that marked the pre-revolutionary regimes in Russia and the Balkans. The reappearance of violent, sectarian, narrow nationalism and the growth of anti-semitism in the newly 'liberated' Eastern bloc leads one to the inevitable conclusion that despite 75 years of Communist control, despite all of the high sounding propaganda, inside the communist countries the Communist Party had little or no lasting educational effect on the populace.



Marvin, I think that you know me too well not to recognise that my bitter feelings over the effects of Communist Party control in the countries they have dominated isn't mere prejudice but has its roots in the belief that at the time of the Russian Revolution there was the possibility of changing the direction of the world political environment toward a more peaceful, libertarian one. I believe that possibly the world was at a crucial moment that may never be repeated again.

Marvin, I think that you also know that I'm equally critical of the capitalist world. We know from the past that, here in the United States, our history is one where the government hasn't hesitated to use force to attack dissenting people. The use of the miners in Romania reminded me of a similar use in California of union longshoremen (dockworkers) 'protecting their jobs'. The dockworkers were inspired by their local union leaders, the local police and the FBI, to try to break up the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations at the Oakland Army Base. The use of military or para-military force, or the incitement of mob violence by federal, state, or local governments to suppress popular or labour unrest has marked our history from the very beginning of the United States as a political entity. The ruthless attacks on the Wobblies (the IWW) during and after World War I; the hysterical state terrorism that marked the attack on the eight hour day movement in the late 19th century culminated in the execution of the Haymarket Anarchists and the virtual destruction of the nascent union movement. More recently, the ruthless slaughter of strikers at the Republic Steel plants and the killing of anti-Vietnam War student protestors at Kent State University by the National Guard, are still alive in our memory.



Marvin, I think that in the United States the euphoria expressed by the media over the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the proclamation of the 'Victory of Capitalism' is nought but a public circus to mask the fact that the capitalist world too, is in complete disarray. A great tragedy is that the new 'revolutionaries' in the Eastern bloc can't see the insurmountable problems that the West covers up. The growing population of homeless people; the spread of AIDS with little or no effort being made to develop medical treatment for those who are afflicted; the sense of hopelessness and alienation that is expressed by ever increasing drug use by our young people with its concomitant growth of senseless violence. This violence adds to the genocidal death rate of young black men in America's ghettos. All this is accompanied by the growth in power of the most reactionary elements in our society, resulting in the increase of racism, anti-semitism and anti-feminism on college campuses across the country. What freedoms we still possess are under attack by the reactionary courts of the land.

Do the people in Eastern Europe understand the significance of the increased flight by mega-capitalist enterprises to third world countries, looking always for cheaper labour? Here in the United States, this shift is causing further destruction of our economy and the creation of a permanent class of impoverished, unemployable people. The growing dominance of the military influence in government is resulting in ever more frequent threats of military incursions by Western governments in third world countries. Witness the present involvement by the US in the Mid East. The hypocrisy of Western leaders, rationalising their intervention in the Arab world in the name of Western moral values and life-style is enough to sicken one. Here in the United States, President Bush calls for balancing the budget by further pauperising the poor and middle classes. *Politicians can always find money for killing people*, but can't find money to deal with the pressing issues of health care for the poor and elderly, or housing for the homeless. They can't find money for a faltering education system, yet the suggestion that the military take a cut in funding, now that the bogey of the cold war has been laid to rest, was followed almost immediately by the Mid East crisis. Do the materialism blinded, newly self liberated peoples of the Eastern bloc see the increasing gap between a tiny group of super-wealthy individuals and the growing majority of people struggling to barely get by? Who is calling attention to that most threatening phenomenon of all, media control over the minds of our population especially over those of our children? Using the most sophisticated electronic techniques the new managerial class assure the continued support for this system by filling the population's heads with materialist desires and mindless, patriotic, violent images.

Marvin, at this point I can hear you saying: 'You anarchists have always been keenly critical of the societal ills that befall us, but in light of the ever increasing danger to the continuance of society, and even to the continuance of the human species, what positive suggestions can you offer? What rôle can anarchists play in trying to reverse the self destructive direction that society seems to be embarked on?' Alas Marvin, there are no easy solutions. I can only offer small comforts in attempting to answer these questions. Before I try to do so, I'd like to digress a bit and address some of the concepts and events that inspired anarchists in the past.

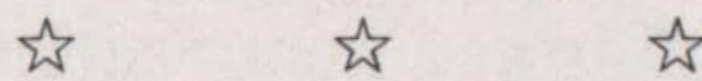
I, like most of my comrades had accepted the 19th century concept that capitalism must inevitably collapse because of its inner conflicts and that change would be achieved by an armed uprising of the 'working class'. None of the 19th century revolutionaries, including Bakunin, Marx or Kropotkin could foresee the rapidity and foresight that capitalism would develop enabling it to change with the times. The capitalist world was able to show greater inventiveness and flexibility than the revolutionary forces in the 19th and 20th centuries. They understood that by strengthening the state, and satisfying the growing hunger for material things on the part of the population they could subvert and attenuate the revolutionary spirit that had earlier threatened their existence. Both of these moves contributed to the creation of an increasingly apathetic populace, making it easier for the capitalist world to grow larger, stronger and exert greater control over society. Couple this with the capitalist state's tactics of encouraging militarism, fascism and dictatorship as a means of maintaining control over the world's population, leading to the greater centralisation of the state's power and a weakening of the revolutionary spirit.

By the late 1930s, the vision of armed insurrection, 'the Barricades', soon became apparent to some of us as an unrealistic tactic, a 'macho' myth in direct conflict with the reality of the increasingly centralised ever stronger states. In our minds, historical evidence indicated that every country that utilised armed insurrection to achieve revolutionary change, evolved in dictatorial, militaristic states that sacrificed untold numbers of their own people in the name of freedom never achieved. The idea of armed insurrection was further discredited in our minds by the increased apathy of most people. Finally, for some of us, the use of violence in order to reach a peaceful society, seemed to conflict with that central concept of anarchism — *your means must be commensurate with your ends.*



Capitalism is in the midst of changing its form to a more decentralised one. Witness the abandonment by the once highly centralised automobile industry of their traditional production methods and the closure of the enormous plants that were developed during the 1920s and 30s. Other evidence is the move off-shore by internationalised capital seeking cheaper labour in the asiatic countries and soon probably into the newly 'freed' Eastern bloc countries. (General Motors has already signed the contracts to build a plant in Hungary.) The decentralised, robotised production methods that are already in use world wide promise to be further developed. These methods and the search for cheaper labour have created ghost towns of the once prosperous auto producing cities of Michigan and Ohio.

We must consider these changes and see if we can't inspire people with our vision of a more just, more fulfilling, but possibly less affluent economic format for society. A format that could illustrate the emptiness of materialism and encourage the search for joy and satisfaction in one's community and in one's work. Back in the early 1940s, our comrade Paul Goodman and his architect brother Percy Goodman, advocated in their book *Communitas*, a decentralised format for modern society that had envisioned a structure with safeguards for our environment, peaceable communities, work methods that allowed for worker input in the decision making process, inventiveness and pleasure in our work life. Their vision of community encouraged handicraft production in addition to small decentralised industry. It kept the automobile out of our small cities, encouraging non-polluting transportation means. They encouraged the spread of informal agriculture, such as community kitchen gardens and communal participation in home canning projects. Most of all, the community could act as a vital educational organism for all of the inhabitants. The beauty of their vision was that the society they postulated was possible to achieve even under capitalism. Sadly, like most visionaries, their ideas never were taken seriously.



Marvin, we must all come to recognise that most of the people in the world, at this time, aren't capable of accepting responsibility for their own lives and they will inevitably choose to follow any new leader who will promise them improvement. We anarchists must also accept the hard fact that anarchy as we conceive of it, won't happen in our lifetime. The best we can do is to try to continue to nudge society in our direction, always calling attention to the dangers to humanity as we perceive them. Thus, our work is to try to continue to struggle for peaceful solutions to society's problems. We must advocate and work toward a new com-

munalism and decentralisation of power and try to reawaken a belief in co-operation rather than competition as the moving force in society. We have addressed ourselves to those aspects of society that divide people and will continue to do so. Racism, sectarian religion, reactive nationalism and the ongoing struggle of women and other minorities for acceptance and equality must be given priority in our work.

Our energies must be addressed to real human problems rather than dissipated in the pursuit of abstractions. Of course at this time a priority for all of us is to continue to call attention to the real danger of the destruction of human society, by the callous placing of profit before regard for the environment by existing governments and capitalist enterprises. I think that here in the field of environmentalism and in the advocacy of peaceful solutions rather than military adventurism, anarchism has the advantage over all other political ideals. In these fields, our powerful philosophical core — *the ends must be commensurate with the means* — becomes most powerful and most meaningful.



A final note, old friend: don't weaken and don't despair. Continue to bring your creative energies and spirit to bear where ever you can. Continue to touch people with your great sense of humanism and sense of communality. By trying to live our ideals we can make them almost palpable and comprehensible, and in so doing, we'll have fine exciting lives.

Your friend and comrade,

David.



Paul Marshall

Chomsky's Anarchism

With the collapse of state socialism in the East and the increasingly authoritarian nature of Western capitalism, perhaps we are entering a period in which the ideals of libertarian socialism and anarchism may be opened to a wider audience. One contemporary thinker who has contributed to and enriched the libertarian tradition is Noam Chomsky. He has caused a major revolution in linguistics and his work has led to its incorporation into the domain of cognitive psychology. His linguistic investigations, combined with his rationalist philosophy, have undermined the previously dominant behaviourist and empiricist concepts of human behaviour and offer the first serious insight into human nature with potentially revolutionary implications for social thought. He has written on a wide range of political issues and played a highly active role in the protests against U.S. aggression in Indochina which earned him repeated stays in prison and a place on Nixon's Black List. His deep concern for human rights has led to his uncompromising critique of U.S. foreign policy and he has refined Bakunin's prescient analysis of a new class of intellectuals and technocrats. He calls this new class the 'secular priesthood' and has exposed their role as state managers who serve to mystify and condone actions of the state in order to 'manufacture consent'. His recent analyses of the media's manipulative role have helped clarify the 'system of thought control in the west'.

The radical nature of Chomsky's political writings, so far from the mainstream, have provoked the wrath and sometimes the fear of the intellectual establishment who have attempted to marginalise him. He has been distorted, ridiculed or ignored. Hardly any intellectuals are prepared to confront Chomsky in public. In 1972 the 'New York Review of Books' stopped publishing his articles (as well as those of other dissidents as part of the fight against the 'crisis of democracy') and none of his books have been reviewed in the professional journals of the United States. This does not surprise or worry Chomsky. Quite the contrary: 'a dissident should begin to worry if he or she gets accepted into the mainstream. They must be doing something wrong, because it just doesn't make sense. Why should institutions be receptive to critique of those institutions?'¹

1. *Radical Philosophy*, 53, Autumn, '89. p36.

All his thought, both political and linguistic, is imbued with a rigorous libertarian morality and deep human concern. He has also written specific essays on anarchism and describes himself as a 'socialist anarchist'. While it is hardly surprising that Chomsky's political thought, despite his intellectual and moral stature, be ignored by the establishment, there are also anarchists who are either unaware of his political writings or who maintain an ambivalent or even suspicious attitude towards him. Some, for example George Woodcock, deny that Chomsky is an anarchist but rather a left-wing Marxist.² This essay will thus attempt to examine Chomsky's anarchism, his relation to Marx and Marxism and also the libertarian implications of his linguistic theory and rationalist philosophy.

Chomsky sees anarchism as a development of the ideas of the Enlightenment, stemming especially from Rousseau's 'Discourse on Inequality', Wilhelm von Humboldt's 'Limits of State Action' and Kant's assertion that 'freedom is the precondition for acquiring the maturity for freedom'. He writes that 'with the development of industrial capitalism, a new and unanticipated system of injustice, it is libertarian socialism that has preserved the radical humanist message of the Enlightenment and the classical liberal ideals that were perverted into an ideology to sustain the emerging social order'.³ Chomsky is in agreement with the anarcho-syndicalist Rudolph Rocker – perhaps, along with Bakunin, his major political influence – who defined 'modern anarchism' as 'the confluence of the two great currents which during and since the French revolution have found characteristic expression in the intellectual life of Europe: socialism and liberalism'.⁴ He argues, with Bakunin, that every consistent anarchist must, first, be a socialist by which he means one who opposes the private ownership of the means of production, wage slavery and alienated labour.

He thus sees anarchism as the libertarian wing of socialism and consequently rejects the authoritarian socialists' insistence on the need for the conquest of state power and the control of production by a state bureaucracy. He paraphrases Fourier in calling for the 'third and last emancipatory phase of history . . . the first having made serfs out of slaves, the second having made wage earners out of serfs, and the third, which abolishes the proletariat in a final act of liberation that places

2. 'Chomsky's Anarchism', *Freedom* 16 November, 1974. (Many anarchists, in turn, deny that Woodcock is an anarchist.)

3. *For Reasons of State*, Noam Chomsky (Fontana, 1973) p156.

4. *Anarcho-syndicalism*, Rudolph Rocker (Phoenix Press) p16. Also quoted by Chomsky in *For Reasons of State*, p156.

control over the economy in the hands of free and voluntary associations of producers'.⁵

Chomsky's inclusion of Rousseau and Humboldt already differs from the normal catalogue of anarchist or libertarian socialist thinkers, and when considering Bakunin's or Rucker's devastating critiques of Rousseau may at first seem odd. However, he is not alone in incorporating classical liberal doctrines within the anarchist tradition – see the Rucker quote above – and perhaps what really strikes some anarchists as strange or even heretical, is his selection of left-wing Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg, the council communists Anton Pannakoeck and Paul Mattick, and Marx himself. This is explained, however, as Chomsky is attempting to build up a broader libertarian socialist tradition whose essence can be found, at least in certain aspects of their thinking, in all the aforementioned figures. His approach to the history of thought is also an important explanatory factor: he approaches it as an 'art lover' rather than as an 'art historian' – to use his own analogy – and looks for insights which have been ignored, neglected or distorted but which have contemporary value or which could not have been properly developed due to the limitations of the historical period in which they evolved. I'd like first to examine his selection of classical liberal thinkers – Humboldt and Rousseau – then study the political implications of his work on linguistics and finally look at his relation to Marx and Marxism.

His selection of Humboldt, who was also a celebrated linguist, is perhaps the best illustration of his 'art lovers' approach to history and also demonstrates the link between classical liberalism and modern anarchism. Fundamental for Chomsky is Humboldt's conception of human nature which he sees as being self-perfecting, inquiring and creative. Chomsky argues that the basis of Humboldt's social and political thought is his vision 'of the end of man' as '...the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole. Freedom is the first and indispensable condition which the possibility of such a development presupposes'.⁶ This vision, argues Chomsky, is the basis of Humboldt's libertarian views on education and his critique of labour and exploitation where freedom is the essential prerequisite for meaningful, creative, self-fulfilling work as:

'...whatever does not spring from a man's free choice, or is only the result of instruction and guidance, does not enter into his very being but remains alien

5. *For Reasons of State*, p159.

6. This and subsequent quotes of Humboldt and Chomsky come from his essay on 'Language and Freedom' in *The Chomsky Reader* (Ed. James Peck – Pantheon Books, 1987) pp149-154.

to his true nature; he does not perform it with truly human energies, but merely with mechanical exactness'.

The same is true of Humboldt's critique of the state whose role he reduces to that of security. Due to the limitations imposed by the historical circumstances, however, – Humboldt was writing in the 1790's – he was, according to Chomsky, unable to foresee several subsequent developments. First were the 'dangers of private power' against which, 'in a predatory capitalist economy, state intervention would be an absolute necessity to preserve human existence and to prevent the physical destruction of the environment – I speak optimistically'. Second, the commodity character of labour which demanded social protection and third, the slavery which the wage system under capitalism created. He believes that, given Humboldt's conception of human nature, his stress on freedom and his critique of alienated labour, he 'might have accepted Fourier's third and last emancipatory phase of history', and concludes that Humboldt:

'...looks forward to a community of free associations without coercion by the state or other authoritarian institutions, in which free men can create and inquire and achieve the highest development of their powers – far ahead of his time he presents an anarchist vision that is appropriate, perhaps, to the next stage of industrial society'.⁷

Chomsky's selection of Rousseau is based solely on his 'Discourse on Inequality' which he describes as 'one of the earliest and most remarkable of the eighteenth century investigations of freedom and servitude . . . and in many ways a revolutionary tract'.⁸ Anarchists have traditionally attacked Rousseau as a precursor of Jacobinism or even fascism⁹ but this attack is based on his 'Social Contract', an authoritarian work very different from the libertarian 'Discourse'. Chomsky also criticises Rousseau for his anti-social individualism, and true to his 'art lover's' approach to history, he is only attracted to Rousseau's critique of authoritarian institutions and private wealth which is based on Rous-

7. Similarly, in his television interview in 1976, printed in *Radical Priorities* (Ed. C.P. Otero – Black Rose Books, 1981) he says that 'had [Humboldt] been consistent, [he] would have ended up being a libertarian socialist', p248.

8. *The Chomsky Reader*, p141.

9. For example Bakunin derided Rousseau's 'individualist, egoist, base and fraudulent liberty' (in *Bakunin on Anarchism* Ed. Sam Dolgoff – Black Rose Books, p261) and Rocker saw him as 'one of the spiritual fathers of that monstrous idea of an all-ruling, all-incisive political providence which never loses sight of man and mercilessly stamps upon him the march of its superior will', (*Nationalism and Culture*, Rocker Publications Committee, 1978, p163).

seau's conception of human nature. Like Humboldt, man's faculty of self-perfection is fundamental for Rousseau who sees it as the 'specific characteristic of the human species' and believes the 'essence of human nature' to be 'human freedom and the consciousness of this freedom', which is what 'distinguishes him from the beast-machine'.¹⁰

This concentration on a concept of human nature brings us to a connection between Chomsky's politics and linguistics, albeit a 'tenuous' and 'hypothetical' one. Chomsky has been greatly influenced by Cartesian rationalism whose concern for a 'species characteristic' – that element or characteristic which is specifically human and distinguishes him from other species – was central. This search for the essence of human nature has important political implications as a conception of human nature underlies every serious social theory. Thus Adam Smith stated that humans were born to 'truck and barter', conveniently justifying early capitalist society, just as Hobbes' anti-social human dominated by fear led to his defence of an all-powerful sovereign/state. Chomsky's conception of human nature is the libertarian socialist one as represented by Rousseau, Humboldt, Bakunin (that humans have an 'instinct of freedom' and 'revolt') and Marx, whose theory of alienated labour is, according to Chomsky, 'formulated in terms of a "species property", that determines certain fundamental human rights: crucially, the right of workers to control production, its nature and conditions'.¹¹

Chomsky offers a modernised version of Cartesian rationalism which sees knowledge as deriving from the mind, from innateness, in stark contrast to the dominant empiricist belief that knowledge derives from experience. 'What we know then, or what we come to believe, depends on the specific experiences that evoke in us some part of the cognitive system that is latent in the mind'.¹² He sees human language, or the language faculty, as part of this cognitive system, part of a system of 'mental organs' and, consequently, part of human nature. Before Chomsky it had always been thought that human nature was beyond the reach of scientific inquiry but he believes that a science of the mind is, at least in principle, possible and that in studying the properties of language we might have 'an entering wedge, or perhaps a model, for an investigation of human nature that would provide the grounding for a much broader theory of human nature'.¹³

10. *The Chomsky Reader*, p145.

11. *Language and Problems of Knowledge – The Managua Lectures* (MIT Press, 1988) p155.

12. *Reflections on Language* (Fontana, 1979) p6.

13. *The Chomsky Reader*, p147.

His and others' investigations of language offer strong grounds for believing that the normal use of language is free and highly creative (in that a child can produce and understand an infinite number of utterances which they have never heard before – a fact left unexplained by behaviourist and empiricist conceptions of language learning) and, along with the Cartesians, Chomsky believes that this 'creative aspect of language use' is unique to humans, essentially uniform across the species and based on biologically determined principles. He believes that 'the fundamental human capacity is the capacity and need for creative self-expression, for free control of all aspects of one's life and thought. One particularly crucial realisation of this capacity is the creative use of language as a free instrument of thought and expression'.¹⁴ He takes pains to stress that these beliefs are based more on hope and intuition than on scientific grounds but adds that if they are to any extent true, would offer 'a biological grounding to the essentially anarchist views that I tend to accept as reasonable'.¹⁵ Chomsky, looking towards the future, suggests that 'we might in principle' be able to study 'other aspects of human psychology and culture in a similar way' and so:

'develop a social science based on empirically well-founded propositions concerning human nature. Just as we study the range of humanly attainable languages, with some success, we might also try to study the forms of artistic expression or . . . scientific knowledge that humans can conceive, and perhaps even the range of ethical systems and social structures in which humans can live and function, given their intrinsic capacities and needs. Perhaps one might go on to project a concept of social organisation that would – under given conditions of material and spiritual culture – best encourage and accommodate the fundamental human need – if such it is – for spontaneous initiative, creative work, solidarity, pursuit of social justice'.¹⁶

While recognising that this involves a 'great intellectual leap' he points to the libertarian socialist tradition whose search for 'species characteristics' has made an important contribution and considers it a 'fundamental task for libertarian social theory . . . to investigate, deepen and if possible substantiate the ideas developed in this tradition'.¹⁷

These ideas might sound unappealing to some anarchists who have harboured a deep mistrust of science although we could point to Kropot-

14. *Language and Politics* (Ed. C.P. Otero – Black Rose Books, 1988) p144.

15. *Language and Politics*, p386.

16. *The Chomsky Reader*, p155.

17. *Reflections on Language*, p134.

kin who, as a natural scientist, analysed the role of cooperation and mutual aid in evolution. It may also seem outlandish as it involves such a radical departure from the dominant empiricist position that sees the human mind as a 'tabula rasa', a blank sheet with no fixed immutable nature, a product of the environment and which has become embedded in our collective consciousness. A closer look, however, shows it to be entirely reasonable. Until Chomsky, everything in the physical world had been studied in the manner of the natural sciences; everything except for humans above the neck. Chomsky simply proposes that the human mind/brain be no exception and that it be considered as yet another bodily organ – 'the mental organ'. He suggests that just as an arm grows in accordance to some initial genetic information into an arm and not a wing, so the language faculty – and by extension the other mental organs as well – will grow to a mature state based on its predetermined, innate and embryonic genetic structure. He does not deny a role to the environment, but this role is relegated to a nutritive rather than a determining one.

Perhaps it might also appear reactionary as much of Marxism has been influenced by empiricism and denies the existence of a fixed human essence, seeing human nature as a product of historically determined social relations, and because empiricism – at least classical British empiricism – grew in response and in opposition to the reactionary determinist doctrines which justified the oppression of women, racism and wage slavery on grounds of immutable human properties. Chomsky believes, however, that not only was the progressive nature of empiricism dubious then¹⁸ but that it certainly lacks this element today and in fact opens the way to 'shaping of behaviour' and 'manipulation'. The rationalists 'concern for intrinsic human nature', in contrast, 'poses moral barriers in the way of manipulation and control particularly if this nature conforms to . . . libertarian conceptions'.¹⁹ Chomsky believes that rational-

18. Chomsky believes it could be argued that there was a relation between empiricism and racism: 'Empiricism rose to ascendancy in association with the doctrine of 'possessive individualism' that was integral to early capitalism, in an age of empire, with the concomitant growth (one might almost say 'creation') of racist ideology' and quotes Henry Bracken's reasoning: 'Racism is easily and readily stateable if one thinks of the person in accordance with empiricist teaching because the essence of the person may be deemed to be his colour, language, religion etc., while the cartesian dualist model provided . . . a modest conceptual brake to the articulation of racial degradation and slavery'. (*Reflections on Language* p130). The reason for this 'modest conceptual brake' says Chomsky 'is simple. Cartesian doctrine characterises humans as thinking beings: they are metaphysically distinct from non-humans, possessing a thinking substance (res cogitans) which is unitary and invariant – it does not have colour for example. . .' (*Language and Responsibility* p93).

19. *Language and Problems of Knowledge*, p166.

ist approaches are not only the correct ones but also more optimistic and progressive and outlines

'a line of development in traditional rationalism that goes from Descartes through the more libertarian Rousseau . . . through some of the Kantians like Humboldt . . . all through the nineteenth century libertarians, which holds that essential features of human nature involve a kind of creative urge, a need to control one's own productive, creative labour to be free from authoritative intrusions, a kind of instinct for liberty and creativity, a real human need to be able to work productively under conditions of one's own choosing and determination in association with others. One strain of thinking held that is essentially the human nature. If so, then slavery, wage-slavery, domination, authoritarianism and so on are evils, which are injurious to the essential human nature, and therefore intolerable'.²⁰

Chomsky's rationalism has provoked fierce criticism from both the right and the left. In response he asks why empiricism has dominated Western philosophy for so long given the lack of any compelling evidence to support it. Analysing the role of the 'technocratic intelligentsia' in modern society which is that of 'ideological and social managers' he finds it easy to see its appeal to both the elitist revolutionary left and the liberal technocrats in state capitalist societies:

'If people are, in fact, malleable and plastic beings with no essential psychological nature . . . empiricist doctrine can easily be moulded into an ideology for the vanguard party that claims authority to lead the masses to a society that will be governed by the "red bureaucracy" of which Bakunin warned. And just as easily for the liberal technocrats or corporate managers who monopolise "vital decision-making" in the institutions of state capitalist democracy, beating the people with the people's stick, in Bakunin's trenchant phrase'.²¹

The reaction of anarchists and libertarian socialists to Chomsky's

20. *Language and Politics*, p594.

21. *Reflections on Language*, p132. Similarly, in *Language and Responsibility* (p90) Chomsky says: 'Walter Kendal, for example, has pointed out that Lenin, in such pamphlets as 'What is to be done?' conceived the proletariat as a tabula rasa upon which the 'radical' intelligentsia must imprint a socialist consciousness. The metaphor is a good one. For the Bolsheviks, the radical intelligentsia must imprint a socialist consciousness onto the masses from outside; as party members, the intelligentsia must organise and control society in order to bring 'socialist structures' into existence'. It's perhaps relevant to note here that whilst Chomsky says the 'marxist tradition . . . has . . . held that humans (in their intellectual, social and general cultural life) are products of history and society, not determined by their biological nature' he believes that 'this standard view makes nonsense of the essentials of Marx's own thought' in the sense that, as we have seen, he talked in terms of 'species property' in his early work (*Language and Problems of Knowledge*, p162).

rationalism and conception of human nature and the human mind has either been sceptical or non-existent as anarchists have generally been committed to the dominant empiricist philosophy. One recent anarchist overview of 'human nature and anarchism' does take a tentative step towards Chomsky's rationalism but stops half way between empiricism and rationalism adopting a 'soft determinist' position.²² It remains to be seen whether Chomsky will be successful in his attempt to persuade anarchists that they have a vested interest in rationalist philosophy.

Finally, a look at Chomsky's relation to Marx and Marxism. In his writings Chomsky often mentions Marx and approvingly quotes aspects of the thought of left-wing Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg and Anton Pannakoek. Bakunin also accepted a lot of Marx's thought, especially his analysis of capitalism – he even translated some into Russian – but no one would describe Bakunin as a Marxist. Similarly, it is quite clear that anarchism is the basis of Chomsky's thought, although his anarchism is above all a socialist anarchism and his main influences are Bakunin, Rocker and anarcho-syndicalism, especially the kind put into practice in the Spanish revolution. What Chomsky does is to take what he considers to be of value from the Marxist tradition and which he feels coincides with his own libertarian socialist ideals. He considers such concepts as 'Marxist' or 'Freudian' to be absurd and that 'we should not be worshipping at shrines, but learning what we can from people who had something serious to say . . . while trying to overcome the inevitable errors and flaws'.²³ Following from this he doesn't accept everything that all anarchist thinkers say or do (for example Bakunin's empiricism which he considers 'quite mindless') and never mentions Stirner (as far as I know) and rarely mentions Kropotkin who he believes represents an anarchist tradition that is more relevant to pre-industrial societies.²⁴ Chomsky adheres to the tradition that 'develops into anarcho-syndicalism which simply regarded anarchist ideas as the proper mode of organisation for a highly complex advanced society . . . this tendency merges, or at least interrelates very closely with a variety of left-wing Marxism, the kind one finds in . . . the council communists that grew up in the Luxemburg tradition, and that is later represented by Marxist theorists like Anton Pannakoek'.²⁵

22. 'Human Nature and Anarchism' – Peter Marshall, in *For Anarchism: History Theory and Practice* (Ed. David Goodway, 1989, Chapter 4).

23. *The Chomsky Reader*, p30.

24. This does not mean that Chomsky finds little of value in Kropotkin. He believes that Kropotkin's 'Mutual Aid' was 'perhaps the first major contribution to sociobiology' (*The Chomsky Reader*, p21).

25. *Radical Priorities*, p248.

He sees Marx as essentially a theoretician of capitalism whose analysis offers us a deep understanding into its nature and development, as did Bakunin and other anarchists. He considers the essence of Marx's thought to be his critique of alienated labour, the stultifying specialisation of labour and the wage slavery that capitalism presupposes. He is also attracted, as we have seen, to Marx's emphasis in his early manuscripts on a 'species character' but rejects the later tendency of Marx, which other Marxists have stressed, to embrace empiricist doctrine. He sees little of value in Marx's belief that society develops in accordance with alleged historical laws and feels he 'had little to say about socialism' siding with the anarchists who felt that the Marxists 'misunderstood the prospects for development of a freer society, or worse, that they would undermine these prospects in their own class interests as state managers and ideologists'.²⁶ He strongly objects to the idea of a vanguard party which aims to appropriate the means of production in the name of the workers and advocates the anarchist view that this appropriation must be direct. It is this non-elitist concept of revolution that puts Chomsky firmly in the anarchist camp and separates him from Marx and the Marxists, especially the tendencies associated with Bolshevism which he considers highly authoritarian and reactionary.

What attracts him to the council communists and Rosa Luxemburg is their critique of Leninist elitism and their view of revolution as a popular cultural transformation rather than an elitist political one. For example, he approvingly quotes Rosa Luxemburg's view that a 'true social revolution' requires a 'spiritual transformation in the masses degraded by centuries of bourgeois class rule' and that 'it is only by extirpating the habits of obedience and servility to the last roots that the working class can acquire the understanding of a new form of discipline, self-discipline arising from free consent'. Similarly, her judgement of 1904 that Leninist organisation would 'enslave a young labour movement to an intellectual elite hungry for power . . . and turn it into an automaton manipulated by a central committee'.²⁷ As for the council communists, he cites Paul Mattick's criticism of the Bolshevik's relegation of the needs of the proletariat to those of the Bolshevik party-state and Anton Pannakoek's echo of the anarchists' demand that the appropriation of capital must be direct: '. . .the goal of the working class is liberation from exploitation. This goal is not reached and cannot be reached by a new directing and governing class substituting itself

26. *The Chomsky Reader*, pp20-21.

27. Both quotes from 'Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship', reprinted in *The Chomsky Reader*, p84.

for the bourgeoisie. It is only realised by the workers themselves being masters over production'.²⁸

Chomsky is especially attracted to the council communists' ideas on worker's councils which he sees as providing a rational and effective system of decision-making in a complex industrial society. He sees them as functioning on the anarchist basis with the assemblies of workers and their direct representatives making the decisions, the latter being accountable to the assembly and working on the shop floor in order to avoid the creation of a separate bureaucracy.²⁹

Chomsky's quotes are highly selective and it would be easy to select other quotes from Rosa Luxemburg and the council communists which offer a less libertarian slant. We could even find libertarian utterances from Trotsky.³⁰ We could similarly point to Lenin's *State and Revolution*, a basically libertarian work though arguably opportunistic as it contradicted his previous, and later, authoritarian ideas and was written just before the revolution when libertarian ideas were widely accepted. It is the tension within Marxism between an elitist, authoritarian model of the revolutionary movement and a non-elitist, voluntary one which governs Chomsky's selections. He is essentially repelled by Lenin and Trotsky as the dominant strain within their thought is, despite occasional flirtations with a more libertarian approach, the elitist model. And he is attracted to Rosa Luxemburg and the council communists as it is the non-elitist model that dominates. Chomsky's reading of Marx and Marxists clearly follows his 'art lover's' approach which enables him to borrow

28. *For Reasons of State*, pp155 and 161.

29. See 'The Relevance of Anarcho-syndicalism', in *Radical Priorities*, pp245-261.

30. For example his belief in 1904 that 'Lenin's methods lead to this: the party organisation (the caucus) first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the central committee substitutes itself for the organisation; and finally, a single 'dictator' substitutes himself for the central committee'. (Quoted in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* p23 – Pathfinder Press, 1970.) Chomsky's antagonism to Trotsky is quite clear: 'Whatever (Trotsky) may have said during periods when he didn't have power, either prior to the revolution or after he was kicked out, when it was easy to be a libertarian critic, it was when he did have power that the real Trotsky emerged. That Trotsky was the one who laboured to destroy and undermine the popular organisations of workers in the Soviet Union, the factory councils and soviets, who wanted to subordinate the working class to the will of the maximum leader and to institute a program of militarisation of labour in the totalitarian society that he and Lenin were constructing. That was the real Trotsky – not only the one who sent his troops to Kronstadt and wiped out Makhno's peasant forces once they were no longer needed to fend off the Whites, but the Trotsky who, from the very first moment of access to power, moved to undermine popular organisations and to institute highly coercive structures in which he and his associates would have absolute authority'. (*The Chomsky Reader*, pp40-41.)

those elements of the Marxist tradition which are of value and reject those which violate the fundamental principles of anarchism.

It would thus seem difficult to place Chomsky within the ranks of Marxism rather than those of anarchism. It is clear that he is not especially attracted to individualist anarchism but his antagonism towards Marx's socialism (as opposed to his critique of capitalism) and especially towards the Leninist variant of Marxism is equally apparent. He is clearly, as he himself says, a socialist anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist.

C.P. Otero sees Chomsky as the new Rousseau in that, while Rousseau's ideas paved the way for the general cultural transformation that preceded the French revolution and political democracy, so Chomsky has provided the necessary concepts to stimulate a new cultural revolution and economic democracy. His ideas will, continues Otero, enable us to see ourselves in a new light and will help us to recognise the fundamentally inhuman nature of wage slavery whose elimination will bring us to Fourier's third emancipatory phase of history.³¹ While we might not go so far, it cannot be denied that Chomsky is a major intellectual figure and his critiques of empiricism and behaviourism have dealt a severe blow to the intellectual foundations of the ruling elitist ideologies. He has provided the basis for a deeper understanding of human nature, and, if his intuitions can be substantiated, would offer solid grounding and support for libertarian social theory. His analysis of state and corporate power and of intellectuals and the media who serve their interests has given us a deeper insight into social reality. His rationalist philosophy has arguably put his essentially Bakunian social theory on a higher plane. Finally, he has injected modern anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism with some badly lacking intellectual content and has persuasively argued for its contemporary relevance seeing it as the most rational and effective form of organisation for advanced industrial societies.

31. In his introduction to *Language and Politics*, C.P. Otero has edited both *Radical Priorities* and *Language and Politics* and has played a fundamental role in propagating Chomsky's thought. He is also about to publish *Chomsky's Revolution: Cognitivism and Anarchism* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell).

Comments on *Raven 12* 'On Communication'

Nicolas Walter (London) writes: S.E. Parker's biographical note on George Barrett (*The Raven 12*) needs to be corrected on one point. George Ballard was born not in 1888 but in 1883, and died when he was not twenty-nine but thirty-three years old. He seems to have changed his age as well as his name!

David Goodway (Keighley) points out that the two volume Emma Goldman biography *Living My Life*, one of the five Pluto titles FREEDOM PRESS have acquired was not part of the Libertarian Classics Series of which he was the editor. It was published by the previous owners. We gladly apologise but wonder why he should be offended. It's the best seller of the five titles!



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