

Lone Wolf

Bulletin no. 2



Anarchism: An outline of its historical progression

With an ethic that can be traced in origin well back into ancient history (Zeno the Stoic, the Taoist sages *Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu*, the Greek Cynics, the Roman slave revolts) or connected to Medieval peasant rebellions, to Winstanley's Digger movement in England, to writers of the 17th and 18th centuries, and to currents within the French Revolution, contemporary anarchists can claim an extraordinary heritage.

But as a self-conscious political force anarchism really begins with the generation of 1840; anarchist activists and theoreticians have participated on all levels in the revolutionary struggles of the past four or five generations. What we offer here is a brief outline of a few individuals and major phases of this "recent" development of anarchism as a force for extensive social revolutionary change.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) was the first political thinker within the classical socialist tradition to call himself an anarchist (meaning to Proudhon, one who seeks an organic social order without authoritarian government). Anarchism as a political movement does derive directly from his teachings and those of his immediate disciples. Proudhon conceived the theory of Mutualism, in which he saw society organized on an egalitarian basis where industrial units would be run by associations of workers linked by mutual credit founded on peoples' banks; this would permit workers to be paid for time value expended on their product, and would give the world-wide working class the opportunity to be organized on an economic basis rather than a political one; in Proudhon's mind this would make administration or control by a government eventually unnecessary. Proudhon, up into the 1920s, remained the single most important influence on French working-class radicalism. He differed from most anarchists who followed him by accepting the Christian concept of Original Sin, and toward the end of his life his writings became so reactionary that right-wingers praised him as an apostle of counter-revolution. Proudhon holds a special interest today within the worker control movement, as he saw economic action by workers themselves, rather than violent revolution, as the practical way of transforming society. (See *Selected Writings of P.-J. Proudhon*, ed. by Samuel Edwards. Anchor.)

Michael Bakunin (1814-1876), a young friend and admirer of Proudhon, is considered to be the founder of revolutionary anarchism. An overpowering personality, a tireless activist and insurrectionist, a great adversary of Karl Marx and Marxist socialism, a frequent advocate of violent revolution, Bakunin remains today one of the least understood and most controversial of the 19th century revolutionaries. His chief historical achievement, aside from serving as a considerable inspiration to the anarchists who came after him, lies in linking the libertarian ideas of anarchism (previously a concern of the intelligensia) with a movement for the emancipation of the working class; his efforts to build an

anti-authoritarian form of socialism have colored the entire movement in the 20th century and have given anarcho-syndicalism its particular shape and quality (particularly in Spain and Italy). In attempting to deal with an industrialized society, Bakunin devised the Collectivist theory of anarchism: a direct attack on the class system and the State, where society can be reconstructed only when the workers take control of the means of production and reorganize industry on a basis of common ownership and control by associations of working people; the instruments of labor would be held in common and the products would be distributed according to the work done. Bakunin, with his personal knowledge of Marx and his authoritarian followers, accurately predicted the outcome of the Russian revolution some 50 years before it took place. (See *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, ed. by G.P. Maximoff. The Free Press.)

The Commune of Paris (March 18, 1871 - May 28, 1871) for the Left represents the first rejection in history of the notion that ordinary workers are not equipped to govern their own lives. This ten-week period was the first organized uprising of the proletariat and artisan and shop-keeper class against capitalism, and it will be celebrated as a harbinger of the new society progressive people seek. The Commune came into place with the collapse of Napoleon III's Second Empire after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). As the Prussian Army captured the third Napoleon and advanced to the area of Paris, Republican and radical working class Parisians feared the pro-royalist French National Assembly would use Prussian support to restore the Bourbon monarchy. When the executive head of the new provisional government - Adolphe Thiers - attempted to disarm the National Guard units (largely composed of members of Paris's working class) resistance broke out, municipal elections were called by the citizens and a government of the Commune was formed. The political factions organized within the Commune were Proudhonists, anarchists, Jacobins and socialists. New measures established by the revolutionary factions included the creation of a "stateless body" made up of federations

of autonomous local units; the removal of the Catholic church from control of education; the abolition of permanent armies and conscription; the forming of worker-run cooperatives for all unemployed women; the limiting of salaries for administrative employees to the level of a skilled worker; the power of the citizens to recall any administrator if dissatisfied by his/her work; and a broad range of decisions showing a new revolutionary concept of social justice. In May, Thiers' regular army units broke through the city's defense and, under the eyes of the German forces, Frenchmen began a massacre of French women, children, and men suspected of supporting the Commune. A total of 20,000 to 30,000 persons were killed by the French troops, and later 7,000 Parisians were deported to penal colonies. The controversy continues among historians as to the "success" or "failure" of the Commune, but to anarchists it was proof that, without destruction by the armed might of reactionary powers, the workers of Paris could have managed well their new life of radical democracy. (See *The Paris Commune of 1871*, by Frank Jellinek. Universal Library.)

Syndicalism is a doctrine of worker direct action, its name being taken from the French word for trade union. The syndicalists ascribe a predominant role to the labor unions in any revolutionary struggle, seeing within these autonomous productive and distributive units inherent social and revolutionary possibilities in their everyday functions. As with anarchists, the syndicalists see the enemy as the State, monopoly capitalism, and property. Seeking a collectivist, stateless society — with the workplace owned and managed by the workers themselves — the syndicalists are opposed to parliamentary efforts or traditional forms of political practice; the tools of revolutionary action are seen to be in the general strike, sabotage, and boycotts. The chief philosopher of the "intellectual wing" of revolutionary syndicalism was Georges Sorel (1847-1922), whose book *Reflexions sur la violence* attempted a synthesis of Proudhon, Marx and Bergson; it is widely available in English today, and academic writers continue to inflate Sorel's impor-

tance though working-class syndicalists have a more realistic sense of his moderate influence in practice. Syndicalism historically has merged so often with the anarchist movement that it is often termed anarcho-syndicalism, and is most actively represented in the world labor movement today by the International Workers Association (founded in 1922). (See *Syndicalism in France*, by Louis Levine. Columbia Un. Press.)

Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) is the anarchist theorist believed to have done more than any other individual to spread the sensible teachings of anarchism. An egoless, highly ethical and benevolent man of scholarly inclinations, he devoted his adult life to political activism and propaganda, and to producing a series of volumes demonstrating a scientific base for anarchist modes of belief. His theory of "anarchist communism" proposed that property and unequal income give way to free distribution of goods and services, as generated in voluntary, relatively self-sufficient communes and associations created for mutual support. He saw a society where persons divided their labors between mental and manual work and received goods according to individual needs. In his book *Mutual Aid* (1902) he sought to refute the Darwinist notion of survival of the fittest, and offered in its place substantial evidence that sociability and cooperation are the dominant features of both the human and the animal worlds. He was invited back to Russia (after many years in exile) in 1917, but with the taking of power by the Bolsheviks said: "This buries the revolution!" Kropotkin's writings (informed by his varied education in the classics and engineering, his field work as zoologist and pioneer geographer, and his extraordinary worldly experience) are widely read today, and are as valuable and relevant as when first published. (See *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. by Roger N. Baldwin. Dover.)

Errico Malatesta (1853-1932) was born to a wealthy southern Italian family, but, on being expelled (for political activities) from medical school at the University of Naples, gave the remaining 60 years of his life to anarchist agitation, conspira-

cy and open revolt, not only in his native country but also in France, Spain, the Levant, England, the United States and Argentina. He was a friend and disciple to both Bakunin and Kropotkin, and attempted to forge a synthesis of their ideas for his own life. He devised the practice of "the insurrectionary deed," in which he organized the seizure of lands and small towns by peasants (and because of these actions spent much of his life in prison or exile). Malatesta offered in his numerous writings a mildly anti-syndicalist view of revolutionary struggle: he felt the syndicalist ideas of one big labor union and strict class-struggle were too narrow, and he sought to express a concept of anarchist revolution for all classes, bringing complete economic, political and moral liberation for all of society. Malatesta gave his inherited wealth and property to the Italian workers and peasants and supported himself as a journalist, street vendor and electrician. He died after being placed under house arrest for a long period by Mussolini. (See *Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, ed. by Vernon Richards. Freedom Press.)

American Anarchism historically falls into two separate areas of development, the indigenous and the imitative. The first is a form of philosophical individualism, the second a European import brought in by German, Russian, Italian, Czech, and Jewish immigrants following the teachings of Bakunin, Kropotkin, and/or the French syndicalists.

The school of anarchist individualism was made up chiefly of middle-class or patrician intellectuals. These nativists included Henry David Thoreau, Josiah Warren, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Lysander Spooner, and Benjamin Tucker. Distinctly American in their espousal of maximum personal freedom, they owed little debt to immediate European forebearers but were more directly influenced by such radical Christian sects as the Quakers and Unitarians, by Jeffersonian democracy, and by the American environment of great physical space. Tucker — perhaps the most distinctly political of these writers — kept an anarchist book shop in New York and from 1881 to 1908 edited "Liberty," an influential newspaper. These individualists have heirs among us today

in writers like the Harvard philosopher Robert Nozick and the libertarian Murray Rothbard. (See *The American as Anarchist*, by David DeLeon. Johns Hopkins Un. Press.)



Emma Goldman (1869-1940) and Alexander Berkman (1870-1936), though Russian and Lithuanian-born respectively, represent the second form of American anarchism prevalent during the late decades of the 19th century and in the labor activism extending up into the 1920s. Both lived in the United States (and in its prisons) for many years. Their lives were devoted to unceasing agitation to bring the abolition of the capitalist system and to propaganda for the anarcho-communist cause. Goldman was an early champion of women's rights and birth control methods; Berkman is often remembered as a terrorist who tried to kill Henry Clay Frick (an act said to have broken the back of resistance to worker demands in the bloody Homestead strike). Their clear and highly energetic writings are widely available today. These were only two of the many thousands of anarchist labor activists who made Chicago, New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Patterson lively centers of anarchist struggle, leaving contemporary American workers with an extraordinary heritage to help guide our present efforts. (See *Anarchism & Other Essays*, by Emma Goldman. Dover. And *ABC of Anarchism*, by Alexander Berkman. Freedom Press.)

Anarchist Communalism in America and the attempts to establish libertarian education so that children might develop naturally free and autonomous personalities achieved considerable success in the Free School anarchist commune at Stelton, N.J. Largely created by Yiddish-speaking anarchists from New York and Philadelphia, this large farming community existed for approximately 40 years after the Free School moved from its New York building. The school concept was based on the Modern School founded in Spain by Francisco Ferrer, an anarchist executed on faked evidence by the Spanish government in 1909. Both Goldman and Berkman were associated with the Stelton group as lecturers and teachers, and the commune served as home, haven and summer retreat for generations of radical activists and their children. World War II saw the decline of the community when the surrounding area was purchased by the federal government as an army base. Much harassment undermined the old life there, though the school for children continued until 1953. (See *The Modern School Movement*, by Paul Avrich. Princeton Un. Press.)

The Wobblies or Industrial Workers of the World have existed in the United States for 75 years as our only true syndicalist labor union. Still maintaining headquarters in Chicago where the IWW was founded in 1905, the Wobblies have shown a resurgence in membership and activity since the early 1970s. The IWW was brought together as a response to the general conservatism of the American Federation of Labor, an organization which even opposed industrial unionism for unskilled workers. Wobblies have proposed expropriation of the means of production, see the cause of labor primarily as economic struggle, refused to sign labor contracts (so their members could strike anytime), scorned union bureaucracy and electoral politics ("A kick on the job is worth ten at the ballot box"), and called for an end to the political state altogether, offering in its place loosely allied councils of workers. The Wobblies' principal areas of strength were the Pacific coast states and the Rockies, and national membership once topped 100,000 (with many more on the fringe claiming "membership"). Following on their

opposition to World War I — the only U.S. union to come out against the war — members of the IWW were actively persecuted, jailed and murdered. (See *The Wobblies*, by Patrick Renshaw. Doubleday.)

The Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 witnessed an extraordinary birth of natural anarchism in the Russian peoples. In the brief and unsuccessful revolt against Czarist authoritarianism and inefficiency in 1905-06, workers, artisans and declasse intellectuals of an anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist persuasion began a process of organizing and mutual assistance by way of worker councils, district coalitions and the first actual Soviet which helped lead to the forceful beginning of the social revolution of October 1917. The 1905 revolution failed largely because of the lack of political experience and lack of significant ties between those elements in revolt, and because of the general weakness and uncertainty of the bourgeois favoring a constitutional monarchy. A crucial demand of the workers in 1905 had been the right to organize. This, of course, was not granted by the Czar's government, thus all organizing efforts remained underground, leaving the general worker population scattered as a force. The Bolshevik party thrived in this secretive condition, and by 1917 possessed a strength fatal to the final revolution itself. With the removal of the Czar and the creation of the Kerensky regime, several years of conflict set in between the Bolsheviks and the various libertarian socialist and anarchist elements of the working class. The two opposing ideas of the revolution were: (1.) Bolshevik — building on the ruins of the authoritarian state a new "workers' state" with a dictatorship of the proletariat in the iron control of a party elite; and (2.) Anarchist — transforming the economic and social bases of society without recourse to a political state or government or dictatorship of any kind. Anarchism would allow the immediate realization of revolutionary process and goals not by the political or statist means of the Bolsheviks, but through natural and free activity, economic and social, of the associations of workers themselves.

One of the most telling phases of this

basic conflict, for the future of Russian society, came in the Kronstadt uprising of March 1921. Kronstadt was an island fortress, a major naval base, and an industrial port complex located just off the coast of Petrograd; its military personnel had played important roles in the revolts of 1825, 1905 and 1917. When the Bolshevik government proved unable to provide adequate food to the urban populations, began the destruction of political freedom, and imposed harsh regulations on workers, the labor factions in Petrograd began a series of strikes and protest demonstrations. The Kronstadt sailors and workers supported the strikes, formed the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, called for "soviets without Bolsheviks" and an end to the dictatorship of the Communist Party. Understanding the potential of such a threat to state control, Trotsky and the Red Army attacked this newly self-governing island and slaughtered or imprisoned the anarchist and socialist seeking to fulfill the social revolution of October '17.

It was also at this time that another remarkable phase of anarchist involvement in the revolution was ending. The Russian anarchist forces had gained their most impressive success in the Ukraine where peasants and workers established a non-government federation and an egalitarian army to fight first the Germans and Austria-Hungary, then the Czarist and other conservative groupings (called Whites), and finally the Red Army itself. Under the field command of Nestor Ivanovic Makhno, a young self-educated peasant who had been a guerilla fighter since 1903, this army waged steady warfare between 1918-21. In their area of operation the Makhnoists created common ownership of the land, the home rule of communities, and a federated solidarity where all organization was done freely from the bottom of society. The Bolsheviks initially granted several "truces" with the anarchists of the Ukraine while using them to defeat the White armies — and while also jailing and executing anarchists in the cities. In 1921, no longer able to tolerate this dagger of freedom in the very side of the Bolshevik empire, the full force of the Red Army was brought down on the Makhnoists after a number of Makhno's army commanders were murdered at a

"peace conference." For several years, however, the anarchists had managed to maintain a very workable free region of autonomous communes. (See *The Unknown Revolution*, by Voline. Black Rose, Quebec.)

Gustav Landauer (1870-1919), though little known as a writer or political theoretician outside of the anarchist movement, created a body of writings which continues to have a strong influence among revolutionary anarchist, communitarian and non-violent direct action groups. A particularly gentle, contemplative man, noted in his lifetime as a leading literary critic and novelist, Landauer called himself an anarcho-socialist and proposed a method of social transformation based on the building of independent communes devoted to the immediate creation of utopian anarchist and socialist practices. He was much influenced by Tolstoy's teachings on non-violence and civil resistance and became a leading interpreter of Tolstoy (the Tolstoyan kibbitz in Israel today were formed by persons following Landauer's work). Although believing in the utter artificiality of the state, he did serve briefly as minister of culture in the short-lived Council Republic of Bavaria in 1919. When the Marxist Spartacist faction seized control of the administrative body of the councils and the German army was sent from Berlin to "liberate" Munich from the Reds, Landauer was arrested and beaten to death by the White army troops. (See *Call to Revolution*, by Charles B. Maurer. Wayne State Un. Press.)

The Spanish Anarchists have been an inseparable part of Spain's history since the mid-19th century (the first Spanish anarchist journal was founded in 1845). The anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements there have been the most numerous and powerful in the world, and today — since Franco's death and after more than 40 years underground — have re-emerged as a major force in Spain's political life. The strength of the movement has been based historically on two social and geographic groupings: the factory workers of Barcelona and other towns in industrial Catalonia and the poor peasants of Andalusia in the south.

Formal organizing of these groups began in 1907 with the creation of Solidaridad Obrera; the syndicalists formed the Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) in 1910, taking in a majority of the organized Spanish workers; in 1927 anarchist militants formed the Federacion Anarquista Iberica (FAI). The CNT-FAI were models of anarchist decentralization and anti-bureaucratism, possessing as many as 1,600,000 members in 1936 and still getting by with only one paid employee, because all local worker units managed their own affairs. When Franco's fascist army groups staged a rising on July 17, 1936, plunging the nation into a three-year civil war, it was the anarchists — expert street fighters and guerillas — who defeated the army units in Catalonia and Aragon and thus prevented an immediate coup. It was also the anarchists in towns and rural areas throughout Spain who then (in July of '36) started the Spanish social revolution. Worker committees and peasant farm communes set up their own collective governing mechanisms, took over factories and the farm lands of absentee landlords, and began the process of total self-management that anarchists feel is the only just and sensible form of social and economic existence. There is much evidence that both farm and factory operations were more efficient and productive than under the capitalist system. Soviet Russia, serving in part as the Spanish Republic's major ally and chief arms supplier against Franco, was horrified by the success of the real social revolution and wished to advance the cause of the Spanish Communist Party at everyone else's expense. Putting pressure on the government of the Republic, by withholding money and arms, the Soviets extended their control into non-fascist Spain. Eventually they began the extermination of opposition and the reversal of the revolution by suppressing the free communes. Stalin took a new ally by signing a non-aggression pact with Adolph Hitler, the Russian military supplies to Spain were soon cut, and Franco was able to win a military victory in 1939. The Spanish anarchists had been able to show, however, the extent to which a true libertarian revolution could be carried. (See *The Spanish Revolution*, by Burnett Bolloten. Un. of North Carolina Press.)

The 1960s were a time when anarchism was reborn and reinvented in many different ways, on several levels of western society, in all parts of the world. Concepts and practices common to anarchism were brought into political activism, formal organizations, cultural happenings and the individual lives of people seeking an alternative society. The national organization Students for a Democratic Society went through an anarchist phase (its best and most fertile), and other student workplace and peace activist groups in many countries took their direction and forms from orthodox Left anarchist teachings. Techniques of worker control and decentralism were advanced in many nations as people experienced disappointment with standard capitalist and socialist methods, and remembered that real self-management need not be a utopian dream. There was also a large natural expansion of the anarchist book market in English, with scores of classic volumes by Emma Goldman, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Berkman being brought back into print at the same time the new anarchist writings of Paul Goodman and Murray Bookchin began reaching a large public. Also among the numerous and remarkable signs of anarchist good health that marked the 1960s were the Situationist movement, the birth (and sensible, quiet retreat) of the Hippie, the creation of the new urban and rural communes, and the popular revolts of 1968 in Paris and Czechoslovakia.

Demanding acts of subversion and heresy, the "construction of situations" (to disrupt the common submissive manner of perception), and full participation by the "reinvention of everyday life," the Situationists (in many publications and guerilla actions) offered a theoretical framework for analysis of all action and art, and openings for the creation of free unalienated lives. Two principal concepts were those of "commodity" and "the spectacle": we had come to consume even social relationships, hypnotised by work and comfort, and had become experts at non-intervention, passive observers of the spectacle, the world as a show. The Situationists offered us a way to experience the reality of ourselves and fall in love with life once again. (See *Leaving the 20th Century*, ed. by Christopher Gray. Free Fall Publications.)

The 1970s, in spite of reports to the contrary by the mass media, were years of valuable political activity and continuing advances in the international anarchist movement. The black flag of anarchy appeared as people came down from the troubles of authoritarian and sexist groups of the 1960s, and the feminist movement expanded to exert a profound influence in the life of the western nations. The anti-nuclear movement was deeply influenced by anarchism and many of the alliances were full of living and breathing "avowed" anarchists. In Europe, and more recently in Canada and the United States, the Autonomist movement — true heirs of revolutionary anarchism — has become a rapidly expanding if under-publicized force. The autonomists started in the Italian industrial cities of Milan and Turin where southern Italian workers were experiencing culture shock in the communist labor unions. In defiance of Marxist union bosses they founded their own movement of insubordination, seeing themselves as a new "social subject" conscious of its historical potential. "Autonomy at the base" became a key concept, a belief rejecting political representation, any "general line" of doctrine, and the idea of party power. Their weapons were simple refusal and self-recognition. Coupled with anarchism and the Situationist analysis, the Autonomists have brought forth a movement

which could transform the nature of work, our relationship to it, and all political practice as we know it today.

As the decade of the 1980s unfolds the anarchist movement increasingly shows itself to be a reality of the peoples' might. The story of the accomplishments of anarchists, who have developed their free-form doctrine over the last 140 years, can be seen clearly as a blueprint for altering a world plagued by war, ecological destruction, runaway industry, and unnecessary government. The revolutionary task of achieving a society in which anti-authoritarianism, economic equality, and individual sovereignty are common social practices is one of absolute immediate necessity. It is a task we all must share. (See *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*. Semiotext.)



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Lone Wolf Collective — February 1982
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Dedicated to the memory of Richie Stock (1957-1981).