# *Towards a libertarian communism: a conceptual history of the intersections between anarchisms and Marxisms*

# Towards a Libertarian Communism:

## *A Conceptual History of the Intersections between Anarchisms and Marxisms*

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# Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to provide a theoretical analysis and conceptual history of the most significant instances of convergence between 'anarchist' and 'Marxist' political ideas and practices, circa 1872-1963. This study will be conducted with two key aims. First, reassessing some of the dominant claims of a dichotomous relationship between the anarchist and Marxist traditions. Second, with a view towards determining if moments of convergence exhibit sufficient continuity and coherence to be considered as a distinct ideological current or sub-variant within the broader socialist tradition, or what has sometimes been referred to as 'libertarian socialism' or 'libertarian communism'. I argue that the communist, anti-statist, and anti-parliamentary currents in the international working-class movement expose a neglected sphere of commonality which demands closer investigation.

In part one, “Convergences and Divergences”, I problematise the dominant interpretations of the relationships between anarchism and Marxism as hostile and irreconcilable ideologies. Employing the 'morphological' approach to ideologies, I then recast this debate as an interplay between two core political concepts: the 'libertarian' critique of hierarchy and authoritarianism and the 'communist' critique of the capitalist mode of production and alienated labour.

Part two, “Beyond the Red and Black Divide”, examines the intersections of the libertarian and communist critiques through three case studies. In the first case study, the 'Chicago Idea' movement of the Haymarket Martyrs is examined as an instance of anarchist/Marxist synthesis – one of the ideological precursors of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union. Case study two examines ideological innovations which emerged in response to the Russian Revolution (1917-1921) and Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) through an analysis of the Makhnovist-platformist, council communist, and the 'Friends of Durruti' group conceptions of revolutionary organisation. The final case study examines the post-war evolution of the *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Johnson-Forest Tendency, and Solidarity groups from Trotskyism to 'libertarian socialism'.

# Dedication

To my mother.

Äidille.

# Acknowledgements

I feel fortunate to have been surrounded by such a supportive community of family, friends, and colleagues spread over vast geographic distances. Without this support the completion of this work would not have been possible.

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During the course of my research, I consulted several libraries and archival collections. Neil Skinner, Assistant Librarian at DeMontfort University, assisted me in locating journal articles and generously lent me books from his own collection. But above all, it is for his friendship and comraderie that I wish to warmly thank him. I am grateful to Marianne Enckell and the staff at *Centre International de Recherches sur l'Anarchisme* in Lausanne who kindly provided me with photocopies and scanned copies of difficult to find materials. I am also grateful to Nick Siekierski at the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University for the materials on Jaime Balius and the Friends of Durruti from Burnett Bolloten Collection that he copied and mailed to me free of charge. Also I would like to thank the staff at the Working-Class Movement Library in Salford and the Karl Marx Memorial Library in

London.

The first four chapters of this thesis, in various stages, were originally presented as draft papers at several academic conferences: the Anarchist Studies Network Conference at Loughborough University in 2008; the 'Is Black and Red Dead' Conference at the University of Nottingham in 2009; the Working-Class Studies Assocation Conference at the University of Pittsburgh in 2009; and the Social Movements and Popular Protest Conference at the Manchester Metropolitan University in 2010. I owe thanks to my fellow conference attendees for their comments and constructive criticisms.

Many people acted as soundboards to my rants and not yet fully formulated thoughts; engaged in interesting discussions; made useful suggestions; lent me materials from their personal archives; and gave me encouragement, advice, and support in this undertaking. Many thanks to Rob Blow, Stephen Vallance, Aaron Park, Emma Chung, Graham Moss, Steve Wright, Bill Hellberg, Alex Prichard, Dave Hrycyszyn, Ryan Graham, and Anumaija Hankilanoja.

**CONTENTS**

# INTRODUCTION

Contents



## 1. Introduction

> "*Crowned heads*, *wealth and privilege well may tremble should ever again* the *Black* and the *Red unite*!" – *Otto von Bismark, Minister-President of Prussia (1862-1890), upon hearing of the split between Marx and Bakunin in the International Working Men's Association.*[1]

The objective of this thesis is to provide a conceptual history and theoretical analysis of the most significant intersections between the anarchist and Marxist traditions. The focus will be on those currents of anarchism, flowing from the ideas of Michael Bakunin and evolving towards an anarchist-communist orientation, those of Karl Marx and the traditions of the revolutionary left-wing and 'councilist' variants of Marxism, and the relationships between these outlooks. The time span will cover the period from the dissolution of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) in 1876 to the reemergence of an anti-statist Left in the post-World War II period in Europe and North America. Three specific moments will form the basis of the case studies (chapters 2, 3, and 4) in which these intersections between the 'black' and 'red' will be examined.[2]

1. The development of the 'Chicago Idea' between 1876 to 1886, the continuation of its legacy and international diffusion in the ideology of 'revolutionary industrial unionism' as

[1] Quoted in Chester McA. Destler, "Shall Red and Black Unite? An American Revolutionary Document of 1883" in *Pacific Historical Review* 14:4 (December 1945), 447.

[2] Black is the colour most often associated with anarchism and red with communism.

elaborated by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union in the early twentieth-century.

2. The movement for workers' councils in the interwar period (1917-1939), and the discussions and debates concerning appropriate forms of revolutionary organisation, as expressed by the Makhnovist-Platformist current of anarchist-communism, the Dutch-German council communist tendency, and the Friends of Durruti group.

3. The workers' autonomy perspective in the post-war period as formulated by the nexus of three groupings emerging from, but sharply breaking with, the Trotskyist tradition: *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, the Johnson-Forest Tendency, and Solidarity.

This study will be conducted with two main considerations in mind. First, in challenging the validity of the dominant interpretations of a counterposed 'Anarchism' and 'Marxism', routinely presented in the 'singular' in the scholarly literature. Second, with a view towards assessing if moments of intersection between these currents may be considered to have sufficient continuity and coherence to be considered as a distinct sub-variant of the broader socialist tradition, or what has sometimes been referred to as 'libertarian socialism' or 'libertarian communism'.[3] No standard definition exists for these terms, and as will be discussed in chapter 1 etc., they have sometimes been used as synonyms for anarchism, denoting a broader umbrella term for multiple strands spanning both traditions, and even, most recently, as a term reserved for the libertarian theories of Marx and Engels.[4] Extant comparative studies of anarchism and Marxism, it will be maintained, have overemphasized the division between the two, based in part on decontextualised, ahistorical, or oversimplified interpretations of the complex and evolving relationships between anarchist and Marxist social movements.

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[3] These two terms – 'libertarian socialism' and 'libertarian communism' – will be taken as being synonymous. As Maximilien Rubel points out “The terms 'socialism' and 'communism'” may be used interchangeably “as there is no distinction between society and the community, so social ownership and communal ownership are equally indistinguishable. Contrary to Lenin's assertions, socialism is not a partial and incomplete first stage of communism.” Maximilien Rubel and John Crump (eds.), *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: MacMillan Press, 1987), 1. For the sake of clarity, the term 'libertarian communism' will be employed unless taken from a direct quotation.

[4] See for example Ernesto Screpani, *Libertarian Communism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Curiously Screpani's work devotes only some three pages to discussions of anarchist theory.

In the analysis of the evolution of anarchist and Marxist ideologies as historically-situated movements, rather than as abstract or trans-historical categories, what emerges is a plurality of expressions of anarchism and Marxism, often internally conflicting or contradictory. Rather than a singular 'Anarchism' or 'Marxism', there are in fact multiple *anarchisms* and *Marxisms*. Within the broader anarchist spectrum, attention will be paid to those currents which jettison individualist and liberal humanist perspectives in favour of a revolutionary class politics, and those tendencies within Marxism which reject 'orthodox Marxist' analyses and tactics, concentrating instead on the capacity of the working-class agents to change society 'from below': orthodoxy in the Marxist tradition taken here to mean social democratic and Leninist practices and interpretations of Marx's works.[5] The pre-1914 revolutionary syndicalist and post-1922 anarcho-syndicalist currents of the international working-class movement will not be dealt with directly in this study *as such*.[6] Not only is there already a considerable scholarly literature which deals with the topic of syndicalism,[7] but another important

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[5] Some of the main intellectual figures associated with these currents include Karl Kautsky and Georgi Plekhanov, in the pre-First World War social democratic tradition, and Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Tse-Tung in the post-war Leninist tradition. See the next chapter for a more detailed discussion of the defining characteristics of 'orthodox Marxism'.

[6] Notions of the 'Chicago Idea' and Industrial Workers of the World as anarchist or revolutionary syndicalist movements will be challenged in chapter 2. The Friends of Durruti, an anarcho-syndicalist affinity group, will be discussed in chapter 3 in the context of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution (1936-1939), in which a mass anarcho-syndicalist movement played a direct and influential role on the political scene. However, the Friends of Durruti distinguished themselves from other syndicalists of this period in their call for a specifically working-class political power, viewing labour union organisation as a necessary, but insufficient feature in and of itself, for carrying out social revolution. As will be shown, they attributed the lack of such political organisations as a factor in their ultimate defeat. The Makhnovist-Platformists, also discussed in chapter 3, made similar arguments, viewing syndicalism as an important tactical orientation alongside a revolutionary political organisation.

[7] Some of the standard works on syndicalist history and theory include Wayne Thorpe, "*The Workers Themselves": Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913-1923* (Amsterdam: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds.), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), Ralph Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism: An International Comparative Analysis* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), Vadim Damier, *Anarcho-Syndicalism in the 20th Century* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2009), and David Berry and Constance Bantman (eds.), *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism: The Individual, the National and the Transnational* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010). As these studies make clear, the syndicalist movement, especially between 1895 and in the post-WWI period (during the height of syndicalist influence in the labour movement) was quite diverse, tactically and ideologically. Key points of division included the practice of 'boring from within', radicalising or capturing existing trade union structures, as opposed to 'dual unionism', or creating revolutionary unions independent of dominant national trade union federations; decentralised or localist administrative structures, based on geographically organised groupings of crafts and trades, as opposed to centralised administrations and unions organised on an industrial basis;

consideration for the purposes of this thesis is the emphasis, by the groups and movements under examination, on the creation of specifically political organisations to complement mass-based working-class organisations and the debates and tensions surrounding these questions. Anarchist currents – particularly those identifying with the communist tradition such as the 'Chicago Idea' movement and the Makhnovist-Platformists – will form a major point of reference.

Although significant divergences are broadly apparent in particular expressions of the anarchist and Marxist traditions and in specific historical periods, it will be argued that the communist, anti-parliamentary, and revolutionary tendencies within both 'camps' exhibit a substantial degree of commonality which demands closer investigation. This thesis does not suggest that libertarian communism – as an area of convergence or overlap between these variants of the anarchist and Marxist traditions – has necessarily been *consciously* elaborated by the figures and movements under examination. Nor does it suggest that this is the only way that various anarchisms and Marxisms have converged. Rather, that challenges to orthodoxies in different periods, informed by revolutionary actions, present the possibility for the conceptual elaboration of a libertarian communist politics. These also challenge popular conceptions of a polarised relationship between anarchism and Marxism. In terms of the convergences between anarchisms and Marxisms, an effort is made to articulate a 'grey area' between the popular conceptions of a polarity based around an individualist orientation, on the one hand, and a statist-collectivism, on the other. The parametres of this emergent 'broad arc' of libertarian communism can be understood if one were to exclude from consideration, on the one hand, individualist, anti-organisational, market-oriented or non-socialist currents from the broader anarchist tradition and reformist, electoralist or state-centric approaches routinely associated with the two dominant expressions of 'orthodox Marxism' in the twentieth-century (social democracy and Bolshevism). The overlapping area between these positions display a number of common commitments and considerations: the role assigned to the working class as the social grouping most

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and collectivist conceptions of self-managed industries functioning within a market framework, as opposed to explicitly communist visions of a post-capitalist economy.

clearly associated with carrying out the task of human liberation; an anti-parliamentary disposition, rejecting the formal political democracy (as opposed to, and distinct from, economic democracy) of bourgeois parliaments or participation in electoral activity as effective methods for advancing social change; working-class self-activity, activism, and direct action as both a method for circumventing mediating bureaucracies, argued to stifle initiative and channel grievances into acceptable areas, and as a way to forge solidarities and create a sense of collective workers' power. To these ends, this thesis will be supported by the conceptual approach to the study of ideologies pioneered by political theorist Michael Freeden. The conceptual approach to the study of ideologies provides a framework which allows for an examination of anarchisms and Marxisms, less focused on self-definition, and more concerned with the substance and intellectual composition of common political ideas and practices.

This introductory chapter will do four things. First, establish the contemporary relevance of this undertaking with reference to current discussions on the convergences between anarchism and Marxism. Second, to flesh out the gap in the literature that this study seeks to address through a critical historiographical overview of the dominant literature on the relationships between anarchism and Marxism, with a focus on the origins of these traditions as revolutionary social movements in the International Working Men's Association, the historical literature produced in the post-World War II period, and how interpretations of these relationships have been formulated and challenged. Third, to provide a more detailed discussion of the morphological approach that will be adopted. Fourth, to provide an historical-conceptual framework that will be further elaborated on in the case studies in the remainder of the thesis.

## 2. Understanding the Contribution of this Thesis

What factors might justify a reconsideration of the relationships between the anarchist and Marxist traditions? One indicator of the relevance of, and indeed the impetus behind the project undertaken here, lies in the fact that calls for meaningful dialogue between anarchism and Marxism have repeatedly been sounded by numerous contemporary activists and intellectuals. These calls have

been formulated with a renewed sense of urgency given the severity of current international social, political, economic, and ecological dislocations. In this context, for some in the radical Left milieu, the view that neither anarchism nor Marxism have historically been able to successfully realise their common projects for human emancipation alone – and that perhaps the 'red' and the 'black' require, or could stand to benefit from, each others' insights – has acquired momentum in the search for a reinvigorated contemporary socialist praxis. This dialogue has been further buoyed, in part, by two developments: the collapse of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellite states and the general upsurge of anticapitalist activism in the alterglobalisation movement. This trend has certain parallels and continuities with movements in the New Left and those that emerged in the post-1968 period.

Staughton Lynd, an American historian and labour activist, considered anarchism and Marxism to be “two orientations” that are “both needed” since “they are like having two hands to accomplish the needed task of transformation.” Lynd further added that “it is clear that during the past century and a half neither Marxism or anarchism has been able to carry out the transformative task alone.”[8] Similarly, when asked if a synthesis of the anarchist and Marxist traditions would be fruitful for the contemporary Left, eminent social historian Howard Zinn answered in the affirmative:

> Take the analysis of Marxism, of capitalism, and [Marx's] call to action, his call for philosophers to change the world and not simply record it, and take the anarchist idea of being suspicious of authority and centralised power [...] I think that blending of Marxist and anarchist ideas is something that is a good ideal.[9]

In a panel entitled “Capitalism's Present Crisis: How Will It End?” at the 2009 London Anarchist Bookfair, John Holloway (a theorist associated with the 'open Marxist' intellectual trend[10]) remarked

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[8] Staughton Lynd and Andrej Grubacic, *Wobblies and Zapatistas: Converations on Anarchism, Marxism and Radical History* (Oakland: PM Press, 2008), 12.

[9] *Theory and Practice: Conversations With Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn*. 2010. DVD. Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and Sasha Lilley. Oakland: PM Press.

[10] The 'open Marxist' current is concerned above all with radically rethinking Marxist categories, and in particular, the concept of 'commodity fetishism' and the articulation of an anti-statist, emancipatory Marxism opposed to more deterministic and state-centred approaches. While the origins of open Marxist thought can be traced back to the 1970s 'state derivation debate', most of the key literature associated with this trend surfaced in the 1990s. See Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn, Kosmas Psychopedis (eds.), *Open Marxism, vol. 1: Dialectics and History* (London: Pluto Press, 1992); Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn, Kosmas

that, "the only Marx that makes any sense is an anarchist Marx, and certainly, the only anarchism that makes any sense at all is a Marxist anarchism." In fleshing out this 'anarchist Marx', Holloway drew on Marx's labour theory of value to demonstrate that labour produces capital, and is in turn dominated by capital – the two being intimately tied together in a social relationship – and that the core issue for revolutionary movements is to create alternative forms of social organisation that do not recreate hierarchical social relations premised on the division of 'doing' and its control as separate spheres of human activity.[11] Holloway had made previous assertions pointing in the same direction. For example, in a 2004 interview Holloway noted that:

> One thing that is new and exciting about the re-articulation of ideas is that the old divisions between anarchism and Marxism are being eroded. The fall of the Soviet Union and of the communist parties has given a new momentum to the long and distinguished tradition of heterodox Marxism.[12]

The erosion of past differences between anarchists and Marxists, which Holloway mentions, has manifested itself in several common reference points for activists and intellectuals. This includes, but is not limited to, critical praise for the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico[13]; theoretical collaboration through various web-based initiatives[14] and journals[15]; and joint participation in

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Psychopedis (eds.), *Open Marxism, vol.2: Theory and Practice* (London: Pluto Press, 1992); and Werner Bonefeld, John Holloway, Kosmas Psychopedis (eds.), *Open Marxism, vol.3: Emancipating Marx* (London: Pluto Press, 1995). For a useful short survey of the open Marxist understanding of the state, as a 'reified' form of social relations, and socialism as a global project see John Holloway, "Global Capital and the National State" in *Capital & Class 18:1 (March 1994), 23-49.*

[11] Audio of the panel is available online on the London Indymedia website: http://london.indymedia.org/articles/2645%C2%A0 (accessed September 26, 2010).

[12] "'Walking, We ask Questions': An Interview with John Holloway", by Marina A. Sitrin in *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, (Fall 2004), available online: http://www.leftturn.org/?q=node/363 (accessed July 26, 2010).

[13] See for example, Notes From Nowhere Collective (eds.), *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism* (London/New York: Verso, 2003) and Midnight Notes Collective (eds.), *Auroras of the Zapatistas: Local and Global Struggles in the Fourth World War* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2001).

[14] See for example the 'libcom.com' website – an abbreviation of 'libertarian communism' – which serves as an online resource for the revolutionary left-wing of the international working-class movement. The collective that runs the website states that "We identify primarily with the trends of workers' solidarity, co-operation and struggle throughout history, whether they were self-consciously libertarian communist (such as in the Spanish revolution) or not. We are also influenced by certain specific theoretical and practical traditions, such as anarchist-communism, anarcho-syndicalism, the ultra-left, left communism, libertarian Marxism, council communism and others. We have sympathies with writers and organisations including Karl Marx, Gilles Dauvé, Maurice Brinton, Wildcat Germany, Anarchist Federation, Solidarity Federation, prole.info, Aufheben, Solidarity, the situationists, Spanish CNT and others." See the "About" section: http://libcom.org/notes/about (accessed August 6, 2010).

[15] See for example the web-based journal *Insurgent Notes: Journal of Communist Theory and Practice*, a forum

anticapitalist demonstrations and mobilisations, most visibly in the spectacular actions against the alphabet soup of transnational political and financial organisations and summit meetings.[16] The lexicon and conceptual framework of the radical sections of the alterglobalisation movement includes some long-standing concepts borrowed from the anarchist tradition (for example, direct action and prefigurative political practices[17]) and some developed through an engagement with Marxist thought (class analysis and the dynamics of social conflict and global capital). These concepts are commonly expressed through the dynamic of emergent movements and social struggles in a way that is often wholly intertwined, making it difficult to determine where one ideological lineage begins or ends. For example, in describing the radical Argentine social movements – which after the 2001 financial collapse featured a wave of factory occupations and road blockades by unemployed workers – Marina Sitrin asked:

> What is the name of this revolutionary process: Horizontalidad? Autogestion? Socialism? Anarchism? Autonomy? Politica afectiva? None of these? All of them? Certainly no single word can describe it. It is a process of continuous creation, constant growth, and the development of new relations, with ideas flowing from these changing practices.[18]

These instances of collaboration, or the blurring of ideological boundaries through activism and political practice, along with a profound disillusionment with the trajectory of the established Left in the post-Soviet era (for example, the centrist or centre-right orientation of 'Third Way' social democracy and the adoption of a capitalist market economy in China), have contributed to the conception that 'anarchism' and 'Marxism' as political categories have in fact been transcended. In this sense, Richard Day noted that “classical and contemporary anarchisms and Marxisms can and should be overhauled, in fact are being overhauled, under the influence of recent social, political, and cultural

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for discussion for those positioned, broadly, within the 'libertarian communist' or 'left communist' spectrum: http://www.insurgentnotes.com (accessed September 20, 2010).

16 Perhaps 'less visibly' in other community and workplace organising projects including self-managed social centres, infoshops, or squats; independent union initiatives; and alternative media projects.

17 For a discussion of the anarchist influence on the alterglobalisation movement see David Graeber, “The New Anarchists” in *New Left Review* 13 (January-February 2002), 61-73.

18 Marina Sitrin (ed.), *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2006), 5.

theory."[19]

A similar trend is evident in the New Left and in the post-68 period, which has some continuities to the present day. During this era, disillusionment with the Soviet experience, following episodes such as the invasion of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, lead to serious soul searching by many on the far Left. The search for alternatives lead not only to a recovery of anarchist social theory but also heterodox, left-wing currents in revolutionary Marxism. This includes the Dutch-German council communist tradition, the 'Left anarchism' of the Makhnovist movement, the Industrial Workers of the World, and others.

Some recent works have focused on the relationships between currents of the Italian New Left (particularly the traditions of operaismo, or 'workerism' and autonomia, or autonomy) – or what are often somewhat problematically subsumed under the rubric of 'autonomist Marxism'[20] – and various contemporary and historical anarchisms.[21] An understanding of the dynamics of class struggle and proletarian self-activity (known as class composition) not only placed working-class struggle at the very centre of analysis in propelling capitalist development but also extended class struggle to other

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[19] Richard Day, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 93.

[20] Harry Cleaver was responsible for coining the term 'autonomist Marxism' (see Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (Leeds/Edinburgh/San Francisco: AK Press/Antitheses, 2000, p.15) as a political current informed by *operaismo* and *autonomia* as well as a number of other movements outside of Italy. Some, like Steve Wright, have suggested that "the term 'autonomist Marxism' itself deserves to be reviewed" as part of the process of understanding the trajectory, after 1979, of the variety of movements that this term encompasses. See Steve Wright, "There and back again: mapping the pathways within autonomist Marxism," available online: http://libcom.org/library/there-and-back-again-mapping-the-pathways-within-autonomist-marxism-steve-wright (accessed April 20, 2012). The British journal *Aufheben* gives a useful, short distinction between the terms o*peraismo*, *autonomia*, and autonomist Marxism. "*Operaismo* refers to the theories developed in the 1960s and early 1970s with the Italian movement of that name which focused on the work-place and the mass worker. *Autonomia* refers to the theories developed in the late 1970s that saw the mass worker being replaced by the 'socialized worker' as the revolutionary subject. 'Autonomist Marxism' is the term for that school of Marxism based largely in the USA that has sought to defend and propagate the theories of Italian autonomism since the end of the 1980s." "Review: Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today" in *Aufheben* 11 (2003), 55. For the standard historical account of the development of these trends in the Italian Left see Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

[21] See for example Harry Cleaver, "Kropotkin, Self-valorization And The Crisis Of Marxism" (1992), available online: http://libcom.org/library/kropotkin-self-valorization-crisis-marxism (accessed September 12, 2010); Heather Gautney, "Between Anarchism and Autonomist Marxism" in *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society*, 12 (September 2009) 467-487; and Christian Garland, "The (Anti-) Politics of Autonomy: Between Marxism and Anarchism". Paper presented at the 'Is Black and Red Dead?' conference, Nottingham UK. September 7, 2009.

spheres of social production (for example, housework[22]) traditionally neglected by 'orthodox Marxist' theory. These ideas were to play a significant role in the massive social struggles in Italy between the years 1969-1977.[23] Some of the lesser known currents in the Italian radical Left that emerged during these struggles, like the journal *Collegamenti Wobbly* (Wobbly Connections), consciously drew from both anarchist and Marxist sources. In reflecting on the journal's past, in 2002 one contributor to this "journal of critical libertarian theory" described the various radical currents that inform their analysis.

> While a particular type of workerism (*operaismo*) (rooted in direct action unionism: an explicit reference to the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World]) was the foundation and analytical framework of reference for *Collegamenti*, we can identify at least three roots of a partially successful, original theoretical synthesis: the working-class libertarian-communist tradition, the German-Dutch communist left (Mattick, Korsch, Pannekoek) and in general the councilist current purified from any deterministic system, and the school of class composition in its anti-bureaucratic connotations. The magazine has been a laboratory that has allowed a fruitful collaboration between anarchist formations and critical Marxism, on the ground of militant intervention, research and investigation. (Translation mine)[24]

Other New Left and post-1968 radical currents have similarly demonstrated the porous boundaries and mutual borrowings on the radical Left. In West Germany, the *Autonome* or 'autonomous left' elaborated revolutionary socialist ideas and practices which drew inspiration from both anarchist and Marxist sources. As Hans Manfred Bock writes:

> An antiauthoritarian movement of a new generation came into being in the Federal Republic during the students' revolt of the late 1960s. Their interest in the history of anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism was selective and predominantly theoretical. Their primary concern, evolving out of neomarxist ideas, was to extend and complement Marxism by incorporating the role of the "revolutionary subject," an anarchist theme; the slogan in the student movement was "Marx and Bakunin in a common front."[25]

George Katsiaficas gave a similar account of the German autonomous left, distinguished from statist

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[22] For a discussion of 'wages for housework' see Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming (eds.), *All Work and No Pay: Women, Housework, and the Wages Due* (London: Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press, 1975).

[23] For a discussion of Italian autonomist Marxism see Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

[24] "Editoriale" in *Collegamenti Wobbly,* 1 (Gennaio-Giugno 2002), available on *Raccolta Collegamenti Wobbly 1995-2006* CD.

[25] Hans Manfred Bock, "Anarchosyndicalism in the German Labour Movement" in Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds.), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 76. For another account of the 'autonomous left' in Europe during this period see George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (New York: Humanity Books, 1997).

Left formations by an “anti-authoritarianism, independence from existing political parties, decentralized organizational forms, emphasis on direct action, and a combination of culture and politics as a means for the creation of a new person and new forms of living through the transformation of everyday life.”[26]

Perhaps the best known manifestation of a more self-consciously 'anarcho-Marxist'[27] current was revealed during the events surrounding May 1968 in France. The “libertarian power of the red and black flags,”[28] in the words of Marcuse, became visible in a series of university and factory occupations, the formation of 'worker-student action committees,'[29] along with a wildcat general strike of some eleven million workers, which threatened the stability of President Charles de Gualle's government. The ideas of the Situationists, informed by avant-garde art, revolutionary Marxism and the workers' councils of the interwar period,[30] certainly played a role in May '68: many of the slogans of the movement which appeared as artwork or graffiti were adapted from Situationist texts. When asked about his political views, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the leading figures (or megaphone, as he once put it) of the radical student movement, famously quipped that “I am, if you like, a Marxist in the way Bakunin was,”[31] and in another interview described himself as a “Marxist-anarchist.”[32] His *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative*, co-written with his brother Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, sought to analyse the events of May in France immediately after the state suppression of the movement. The final chapters of this work are devoted to a positive appraisal of the anti-Bolshevik Makhnovist movement, Kronstadt uprising, and the 'left communist' opposition currents within the revolutionary

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[26] George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life*, 3.

[27] The term 'anarcho-Marxist' was used in Alfred Willener's sociological analysis of the May events in *The Action-Image of Society: On Cultural Politicization* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), xiv; 286.

[28] Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), viii.

[29] For a detailed examination of these committees, see Roger Gregoire and Fredy Perlman, *Worker-Student Action Committees, France May '68,* available online: http://libcom.org/library/worker-student-action-committees-france-1968-perlman-gregoire (accessed September 2, 2010).

[30] See for example “The Proletariat as Subject and Representation” in Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 48-90.

[31] “Interviews with Gabriel and Daniel Cohn Bendit” in *Magazine Litteraire* 19 (July 1968), available online: http://www.1968andallthat.net/node/205 (accessed October 16, 2009).

[32] Gabriel and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative* (San Francisco/Edinburgh: AK Press, 200), 235.

Marxist milieu, celebrating their notions of grassroots democracy embodied in the workers' councils.[33] Post-68 'red' and 'black' convergences in France – taking inspiration from councilism (and other non-Leninist Marxisms) as well as currents in the 'socialist anarchist' tradition (including anarchosyndicalism and the 'Platformist' tradition in anarchist-communism) – were continued by the *Mouvement Communiste Libertaire* (MCL; Libertarian Communist Movement), formed in 1969. The MCL was one of the ideological precursors to the *Union des Travailleurs Communistes Libertaires* (UTCL; Libertarian Communist Workers' Union) and their organisational heir, *Alternative Libertaire* (Libertarian Alternative, formed in 1991).[34]

On the other side of the Atlantic, the group around the Chicago-based journal *Rebel Worker* (1964-1968) rediscovered and revived the 'revolutionary industrial unionism' of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Aside from the IWW, the journal's editor and IWW historian Franklin Rosemont recalled that the group drew from a variety of heterodox Marxist sources including the council communism of Anton Pannekoek and Paul Mattick, and in particular, the British Solidarity group (discussed in chapter 4). The *Rebel Worker* group in fact regarded themselves as being the American equivalent of Solidarity. However, while the *Rebel Worker* was able to make an important distinction between Stalinism and other variants of Marxism, they also drew considerable influence from currents in the anarchist tradition.

> Although the Rebel Worker – like the IWW – belonged to the revolutionary Marxist tradition, we rarely bothered to call ourselves Marxists. It seemed futile, and perhaps a bit silly, to quibble over labels. Besides, we were influenced not only by the “ultraleft” currents of Marxism, but also by anarchism [...] In our view [...] Marx and Bakunin were no longer antithetical, and the IWW had always been a major locus of their reconciliation.[35]

Despite calls for a meaningful dialogue between the anarchist and Marxist traditions, or the

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[33] See “The Makhno Movement and the Opposition Within the Party” and “Kronstadt” in Gabriel and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative* (San Francisco/Edinburgh: AK Press, 200), 200-11; 212-22.

[34] For an account of the development of the contemporary libertarian communist current in France see David Berry, “Change the World Without Taking Power? The Libertarian Communist Tradition in France Today” in *The Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 16:1 (2008), 111-130.

[35] Franklin Rosemont and Charles Radcliffe (eds.), *Dancin' in the Streets!: Anarchists, IWWs, Surrealists, Situationists & Provos in the 1960s as recorded in the pages of The Rebel Worker & Heatwave* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2005), 42.

perspective that these traditions have merged under the pressures of contemporary anticapitalist activism, scant scholarly attention has been devoted to analyses of the historical intersections between these two currents of revolutionary thought and practice. Maximilien Rubel and John Crump's 1987 edited anthology *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*[36] and Darrow Schecter's 2007 wide-ranging and scholarly study, *The History of the Left from Marx to the Present: Theoretical Perspectives*[37] are also noteworthy. However, while both works discuss historical Left and labour radicalisms, including variants of the anarchist and Marxist traditions (delineated by Rubel and Crump for their avowed opposition to all forms of capitalism and exchange economies and by Schecter as ideas and practices that sought to chart a course between individual liberty and social solidarity), neither study explicitly locates these conceptions through the intersection of anarchist and Marxist social movements. The works of Daniel Guérin and Noam Chomsky also offer valuable insights, and will be discussed more fully below.

Although some scholars have acknowledged intersections, and contemporary calls for a more meaningful dialogue between the 'red' and the 'black' suggest considerable scope and relevance for undertaking such a study, lacking in the scholarly literature is a more indepth, overarching analysis of these manifestations beyond theoretical or normative treatments. A reexamination of the relationships between anarchisms and Marxisms, such as those outlined above, it is submitted, must take into consideration the ideas and concrete practices of previous revolutionaries, rather than attempting to mechanically synthesize elements of each tradition. Indeed, contemporary notions of a proposed anarchist-Marxist synthesis already presuppose a highly detached or distant relationship between these traditions which this thesis seeks to challenge.

In this sense, this study departs from standard comparative treatments of anarchism and Marxism

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[36] Maximilien Rubel and John Crump (eds.) *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: MacMillan Press, 1987).

[37] Darrow Schecter, *The History of the Left from Marx to the Present: Theoretical Perspectives* (New York/London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007).

and makes two claims to originality. The first consists of uncovering periods of theoretical and practical convergence between what have variously been described as 'social' or 'class struggle' anarchisms and 'heterodox', 'libertarian', 'ultra-left', or 'non-Leninist' Marxisms.[38] This concentration falls outside of the remit of available scholarly works on the subject – both in the history of ideas and in social movement research – as attention is focused here on teasing out commonalities rather than concentrating on differences. Second, the movement-driven approach, developed through an overarching analysis of three key case studies, makes a modest contribution to the understanding of the dialectical relationship between political theory and practice within the socialist milieu.

As one scholar recently noted, "Marxism has a long overdue appointment with anarchism, one that Marx himself was reluctant to make and one that Lenin erased for some 70 years. Now, finally freed from the shackles of Soviet statism, the time has come for the appointment to be met."[39] The aim of this thesis is to schedule that appointment.

## 3. A Brief History of the IWMA and the Marx–Bakunin Conflict

How have the relationships between anarchism and Marxism been understood in the dominant literature? The debates that fuelled the split between followers of Karl Marx and those of Michael Bakunin in the International Working Men's Association (IWMA, also known as the 'First International'[40], founded in London in September, 1864), as is well-known, have contributed to a

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[38] See for example Benjamin Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The means and ends of contemporary British anarchisms* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press and Dark Star, 2006), 12-16; Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Edinburgh/San Francisco: AK Press, 2006), 56-61; Wayne Price, *Anarchism & Socialism: Reformism or Revolution?* (Edmonton: Thought Crime Ink, 2010), 17-24; Wayne Price, *Abolition of the State: Anarchist & Marxist Perspectives* (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2007), 7-8; and Chris Wright's 'libertarian Marxist tendency map', available online: http://libcom.org/library/libertarian-marxist-tendency-map (accessed September 29, 2010).

[39] Sean Sheehan, *Anarchism* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), 72.

[40] Some historians have refrained from using the term 'First International' as "The expression was coined by the Communist International, calling itself the third, thus stressing continuity and a direct relationship with the IWMA." Daisy E. Devreese, "The International Working Men's Association (1864-1876) and Workers' Education: An Historical Approach" in *Paedagogica Historica*, 35:1 (1999), 15. Indeed, the so-called 'Second International' (1889-1914) is referred to in the literature of the period as the 'International Socialist Workers and Trade Union Congress' or simply the 'International Socialist Congress'. It was not until 1900, at the International Socialist Congress in Paris, that the organisation created a permanent secretariat, known as the 'International Socialist Bureau'. See this usage in, for example, V.I. Lenin, *The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart (Proletary)*, (1907) available online:

voluminous literature and have formed the basis of a familiar and well-worn polemic. This is often cited as a key location and backstory to explain later clashes between these two traditions. It is not difficult to understand why. Both the anarchist and Marxist traditions coalesced into revolutionary social movements under the auspices of the IWMA. Moreover, both the anarchist and Marxist doctrines were formulated during this period as critical responses to the rapid development of the capitalist mode of production, and its collorary, the crystallisation of the modern nation-state as the basic political unit. Finally, both revolutionary traditions outgrew their common origins in the IWMA, and assumed a variety of intellectual and organisational forms through the late nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. Before examining how the debates between Marx and Bakunin have been deployed in the scholarly literature, it might be useful to provide a brief account of the essential contours of this conflict in the IWMA.

The IWMA was a broadly left-wing workers' organisation created for the purposes of fostering closer cooperation between the labour movements in Europe and beyond, instigated by English and French trade unionists. At its peak, the IWMA probably had a membership of somewhere between five to eight million members, and sections in most European countries, as well as in the United States and Latin America. From its founding congress in London in 1864 to its dissolution in Philadelphia in 1876, it is important to note that the IWMA was not only the first sustained attempt at creating a worldwide working-class organisation, but it was also an ideological platform for socialists of various tendencies: Blanquists, Proudhonists, Lasalleans, Fourierists, left-wing republicans, radical democrats and others. In other words, the International was far from being politically homogenous.

Karl Marx joined the IWMA in 1864 and was elected to the organisation's General Council that same year, becoming one of its leading intellectual figures. Marx drafted two of the founding documents of the International, published in October 1864: the *Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association*[41] and the *General Rules of the Association*[42]. The *General Rules* famously

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http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1907/oct/20.htm (accessed August 27, 2010).

[41] Karl Marx, *The Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association* (1864) available online:

open with the line, “the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves.”[43]

In November 1864, while on a short visit to London, Michael Bakunin met with Marx, who he had not seen in sixteen years. The two had first met in Paris in 1844, at the time, a major centre for radicalism and exiled revolutionaries from around Europe. During this meeting in London, which would be their last in person, Marx encouraged Bakunin to join the fledgling International. Bakunin declined, apparently on the grounds that he saw more potential in organising secret societies in Italy than in devoting time and energy to what appeared to be a tiny organisation of workers in London and Paris.[44] To these ends, Bakunin gathered a small group of Italian, Russian, and French supporters and established the International Brotherhood while in Naples in 1865. Renouncing his previously held pan-Slavic revolutionary orientation (what might today be considered to be a variant of national liberation), Bakunin drafted the *Revolutionary Catechism* as the organisation's statement of principles, which Morris described as the first major articulation of Bakunin's anarchist views.[45] This should not be confused with a nihilist manifesto of the same name, penned by Russian revolutionary Sergey Nechayev (1847-1882), with whom Bakunin had maintained a close association between the years 1869 and 1870, but with whom he had fallen out soon after.[46] Nechayev's unscrupulous methods and principles, summed up in the slogan 'the ends justify the means', included bribery, theft, and murder, ostensibly in the single-minded pursuit of the revolutionary cause. Dostoyevsky's character Pyotr Stepanovich Verkhovensky in *The Devils*, first published in 1872, was based on Nechayev.

Bakunin's International Brotherhood transformed into an open organisation – The International

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http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1864/10/27.htm (accessed June 8, 2010).

42 Karl Marx, *The General Rules of the Association* (1864) available online http://www.marxists.org/history/international/iwma/documents/1864/rules.htm (accessed June 8, 2010).

43 Karl Marx, *The General Rules of the Association* (1864).

44 Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom* (Montreal/New York: Black Rose Press, 1993), 28-29.

45 For a discussion of the 'International Brotherhood' see Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 30-34.

46 See Sergey Nechayev (1869), *The Revolutionary Catechism* available online http://www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/nechayev/catechism.htm (accessed August 27, 2010). For Bakunin's denunciation of Nechayev's manifesto see the pamphlet *Bakunin on Violence: Letter to S. Nechayev* (New York: Anarchist Switchboard, n.d.).

Alliance of Socialist Democracy – in 1867 in Geneva, when Bakunin and his supporters joined, and attempted to transform and radicalise the predominantly liberal and pacifist League of Peace and Freedom organisation.[47] Abandoning these efforts, Bakunin joined the IWMA in 1868, to much acclaim as his reputation, career as a revolutionary (particularly in the continental European uprisings in 1848), and imprisonment in Russia and Siberia were well known in the radical circles of the day. His admission into the IWMA, however, was only accepted on the condition that The International Alliance of Socialist Democracy be formally dissolved; this, in opposition to Bakunin's original proposal that the 'Alliance' be admitted as an autonomous section of the International. James Guillaume (1844-1916), one of Bakunin's closest friends and collaborators in the International, recalled that the General Council's decision was based on the fact that "the Alliance would constitute what amounted to a second international body in the International, thereby causing confusion and disorganization," to which he added, "Bakunin's idea of forming a dual organization was unfortunate. When this was explained to him by his Belgian and Swiss comrades, he recognized the justice of the General Council's decision."[48] The 'Alliance' disbanded in March 1869, and its membership became a section of the IWMA in Switzerland, although the legacy of this organisation and Bakunin's dealings with Nechayev would come back to haunt both Bakunin and his followers at a later stage.

In September 1869, Bakunin attended his first and only congress of the IWMA, held in Basel. During this congress, Bakunin delivered an impassioned address denouncing the institution of private property. This put him on the same plane as Marx and others in their confrontation with the Proudhonists in the International. The Proudhonists, who at this juncture had significantly decreased in size and influence in the IWMA, had advocated the economic theory of 'mutualism' which accepted small-scale private ownership of property and market exchange (this will be discussed in further detail in chapter 1). Marx and Bakunin found common ground on the issue of abolishing private property, as both were committed to the common ownership of the means of production and its realisation in

[47] Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 34-38.
[48] James Guillaume, *Michael Bakunin: A Biographical Sketch* (1907) available online: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/guillaume/works/bakunin.htm (accessed August 28, 2010).

revolutionary struggle, rather than through reformism or an evolutionary approach. Also, unusually perhaps considering what was to follow, Bakunin had voted at the Basel congress to extend rather than limit the administrative powers of the General Council. One of the main points of contention between Bakunin and Marx, revealed at this congress, was Bakunin's insistence in the abolition of the right of inheritance as a foundation of private property and the state.[49]

Between the years 1869-1871, two developments in the IWMA are of note. The first is that the "International was experiencing a marked decline in membership and considerable apathy in the industrial countries. Wherever the International was spreading, it was doing so under the mantle of Bakuninism."[50] This was particularly true of the spread of the IWMA into Spain, parts of Italy and France, and Switzerland. The second development were the effects of the Franco-Prussian war, and the rise (and rapid decline) of the Paris Commune in 1871. It is in this context that the disputes between Marx and Bakunin began to accelerate.

The first direct attack and slander on Bakunin came not from Marx, but rather, from Nicholas Utin, a Russian exile in Switzerland. Utin embarked on a prolonged smear campaign against Bakunin in order to discredit him in the eyes of Marx. To these ends, Utin began spreading the old rumour that Bakunin was a secret Tsarist agent and an advocate of pan-Slavic nationalism, and by connecting him to the nihilism of the *Revolutionary Catechism* (written by Nechayev), intimated that Bakunin was out to dismantle the International from within. This misinformation was dutifully provided by Utin to Marx. One might legitimately ponder what Utin's true motivations were in fostering these divisions, as he later "made his peace with Czardom, returned to Russia and ended his days as a wealthy and respectable government contractor."[51]

Utin's claims against Bakunin created a major rift in the *Fédération romande* (the French-speaking, Swiss section of the IWMA): on the one side stood Utin, backed by the General Council, forming the

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[49] Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 38-39 and Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 309-311.

[50] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 319.

[51] Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom* (Montreal/New York: Black Rose Press, 1993), 58-59.

Geneva section of the International, while Bakunin and his supporters, formed the Jura Federation. In the meantime, the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war had resulted in the cancellation of a proposed congress of the IWMA in Mainz. The Paris Commune of 1871 – which was blamed on the machinations of the International (while IWMA activists participated in the Commune, Louis Auguste Blanqui and his followers were a much more significant political force) – provided a brief glimmer of hope, while its suppression caused a counterrevolutionary terror and restrictive political atmosphere in France and beyond. The fall of the Commune resulted in the loss of tens thousands of lives in combat and in executions, and resulted in the exile of thousands more. Stringent anti-socialist laws were passed in France, and later in Germany, in order to prevent similar working-class insurrections from occurring, and in so doing, created extremely difficult conditions for labour organising and above ground socialist activity.

As tensions rose, both Bakunin and Marx began to caricature each other in a series of sectarian attacks, and in doing so, curiously came to resemble these caricatures themselves.

> Marx acted – or, what is more to the point, seemed to Bakunin to be acting – in such a way as to confirm and reconfirm Bakunin's worst suspicions and most horrible imaginings; in so doing he in a sense became what Bakunin suspected him of being all along. Bakunin, for his part, acted in such a way, or seemed to Marx to be acting in such a way, as to confirm – and in Marx's eyes to validate – Marx's worst suspicions of him, so that he too became, or turned into, his antagonist's version of him. In this way each side's misgivings about the other became progressively confirmed, in a kind of spiral of suspicion and confirmation.[52]

With the expansion of the International into Switzerland and Southern Europe, largely under the influence of Bakunin, Marx saw the spread of irresponsible 'conspiratorial' secret societies sowing nihilism and disorganisation; elements that Marx reasoned would only further weaken and divide the IWMA following the suppression of the Paris Commune and the ensuing reaction. For Bakunin, Marx and the General Council were totally compromised by an inherent authoritarianism, and were bent on nothing less than the total centralisation and control of both the International and the revolutionary socialist movement.

The next meeting of the IWMA was held in London in September 1871. This irregular meeting of

[52] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 253.

the IWMA, held in lieu of the cancelled Mainz Congress, was only empowered to pass 'administrative' resolutions. However, the Conference helped deepen the fault lines between the now dissident Jura Federation and the General Council.

> The Conference, in short, looked like a stage-managed affair, and indeed was little else; it consisted of the General Council and its selected (and voting) guests. It adopted resolutions – which were 'administrative' in name only, each one having ideologically charged implications – of an unprecedented rigidity, particularly since now they were made binding on all sections of the International.[53]

Among the resolutions adopted were the advocacy of 'political action' as an instrument for social emancipation; the authorisation of the General Council to set the time and location of subsequent congresses, meaning that further congresses might be postponed indefinitely, and in their stead, carried out by unrepresentative conferences under the tutelage of the General Council; and the extension of the powers of the General Council to admit or refuse any new group affiliation to the IWMA.[54] The Jura Federation responded by organising a conference in November 1871 in Sonvillier. This conference denounced the decisions of the General Council as illegitimate and unconstitutional, outlined in the *Sonvillier Circular*, which called into question the structure of the IWMA – particularly the resolution concerning political action – and called on the dissolution of the General Council in favour of a federation of autonomous sections.[55] The charges of the 'authoritarianism' in the Sonvillier Circular were subsequently countered in Marx's pamphlet *Ficticious Splits in the International*, which suggested that the proposals of the Jura Federation would only further divide the International, and insisted that the conspiratorial Bakuninist 'Alliance' still existed. Marx, however, did not address the conception put forward by the Jura Federation that the International ought to prefigure the socialist society that it aspired to create, but interestingly, concluded with the lines:

> Anarchy, then, is the great war horse of their master Bakunin, who has taken nothing from the socialist systems except a set of slogans. *All socialists see anarchy as the following program* [emphasis added]:
>
> Once the aim of the proletarian movement — i.e., abolition of classes — is attained, the power of the state, which serves to keep the great majority of producers in bondage to a

[53] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 320
[54] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 320-321.
[55] Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 60-61.

> very small exploiter minority, disappears, and the functions of government become simple administrative functions.
>
> The Alliance draws an entirely different picture.
>
> It proclaims anarchy in proletarian ranks as the most infallible means of breaking the powerful concentration of social and political forces in the hands of the exploiters. Under this pretext, it asks the International, at a time when the Old World is seeking a way of crushing it, to replace its organization with anarchy.[56]

The upshot of these debates was The Hague Congress of the IWMA in 1872 – a Congress that was similar to the 1871 London Conference in the sense that the General Council had 'stacked' selected delegates, and a chosen a location which was favourable to themselves and hostile to Bakunin and the Jura Federation. One of the congress resolutions was the decision to expel Bakunin and James Guillaume from the International, on the charge of belonging to The Alliance for Socialist Democracy, "a society hostile to the International, insofar as it aims at dominating or disorganising the latter."[57] Although the official report found "insufficient evidence" for the existence of the Alliance after 1869, Marx (who was in attendance) appears to have influenced the committee responsible for the enquiry by producing a letter from Nechayev addressed to him. In this letter Nechayev threatened Marx with reprisals if Bakunin (who was advanced a sum of money for translating volume one of Marx's *Capital* into Russian) was asked to return the advance.[58] Predictably, the Jura Federation and the sections close to Bakunin withdrew from the IWMA following The Hague Congress, and shortly thereafter, founded the short-lived 'anti-authoritarian' International, which disbanded in 1877. The resolution, advocating political action, first raised at the London Conference in 1871, was also formally adopted and added to the General Statutes.[59] Finally, it was also at The Hague Congress that Engels, backed by Marx, put forward the resolution to relocate the seat of the General Council of the IWMA to

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[56] Karl Marx, *Ficticious Splits in the International* (1872), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/03/fictitious-splits.htm#p1 (accessed August 19, 2010).

[57] Frederich Engels, *Report on the Alliance presented in the name of the General Council to the Hague Congress* (1872) available online: http://www.marxists.org/history/international/iwma/documents/1872/hague-conference/bakunin-report.htm (accessed August 19, 2010).

[58] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 327-328.

[59] See "Resolution I: Resolution Relating to the General Rules" in *Resolutions: Adopted by the Hague Congress as Article 7 of the General Statutes, September 1872* (1872) available online: http://www.marxists.org/history/international/iwma/documents/1872/hague-conference/resolutions.htm (accessed August 20, 2010). It should be noted that the precise nature of "political parties" and "the conquest for political power" is not elaborated on in this short statement, and left, perhaps intentionally, vague.

New York from London.

## 4. Marx and Bakunin: The Historiography of a Schism

The motivations behind the relocation of the seat of the General Council to New York are a matter of debate, although it is generally accepted that in so doing, the International was effectively, if not immediately, dissolved. This, and other matters in the history of the IWMA, have been interpreted by multiple scholars, historians and activists. The split in the International between Marx and Bakunin is crucial as it came to assume the role of an origin story for the divisions between 'Anarchism' and 'Marxism' through the twentieth century.

This is particularly evident in the years following the Second World War and with the onset of the Cold War. The most influential historical treatments of anarchism during this era assumed the form of political obituaries. "Classical anarchism," wrote anarchist historian George Woodcock in 1962, "had receded far enough into the past to make it material for historians."[60] This was at a point where it appeared as though the anarchist tradition had all but disintegrated as a vital force in the working-class movement, and the dominant international political orientations on the Left or centre-left were thoroughly state-centric: Keynesianism and social democracy in Western liberal democracies and variants of Marxist-Leninism in the Communist states. One of the notable features of the anarchist histories of this period, in addition to the Marxism it was defined against, was the version of anarchism that was articulated. Indeed, anarchist ideas are often defined against, and in contrast, to Marxism, a feature apparent in even more recent analyses.[61] This is evident in the two most influential histories of the anarchist movement published in this period, George Woodcock's 1962 *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (which was, until the publication of Peter Marshall's *Demanding the Impossible* three decades later, probably the most widely read standard history of anarchism), and

[60] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 456.

[61] As Miller states, "Anarchist revolutionary ideas cannot be properly understood unless we see that they took shape in direct opposition to the principles propagated by Marx, Engels, and their followers." David Miller, *Anarchism* (London and Melbourne: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1984), 78.

James Joll's 1964 *The Anarchists.*[62]

Woodcock depicted anarchism as the "cult of the natural, the spontaneous, the individual, [this] sets him against the whole highly organized structure of modern industrial and statist society, which the Marxist sees as the prelude to his own Utopia."[63] Marx was, for Woodcock, "the most authoritarian of socialists."[64] Woodcock argued that the incompatibility of Marx's vision of socialism with that of anarchism, and the methods required to usher it in, were foreshadowed in his contact with Proudhon, showing "the first signs of the irreconcilable conflict between authoritarian socialism and anarchism that was to reach its climax twenty-five years later in the heart of the First International."[65] The essential theoretical outlines of the Marx-Bakunin debate were summarised by Woodcock thusly:

> Marx was an authoritarian, Bakunin a libertarian; Marx was a centralist, Bakunin a federalist; Marx advocated political action for the workers and planned to conquer the state; Bakunin opposed political action and sought to destroy the state. Marx stood for what we now call nationalization of the means of production; Bakunin stood for workers' control.[66]

James Joll, another influential historian of anarchism, echoed this sentiment, and asserted that "much anarchist thinking seemed to be based on a romantic, backward-looking vision of an idealized past society of artisans and peasants, and on a total rejection of the realities of twentieth-century social and economic organization."[67] According to Joll, this theoretical limitation, namely, the alleged resistance to the centralising requirements of modern industry and organisation, had practical consequences for the viability of the anarchist doctrine:

> the theoretical differences between Marx and Bakunin meant in practice bitter strife and bloodshed [...] it was the anarchist who had failed to take the lead in a great revolution, just because their principles made organization so difficult. The Marxists, by their success in Russia, now appeared to be a far more effective revolutionary force than the anarchists.[68]

As can be gleaned from the above depictions of anarchism as a cult of the individual, romantic,

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[62] James Joll, *The Anarchists* (London: Methuen, 1979), 259.
[63] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, 23.
[64] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, 78.
[65] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, 100.
[66] George Woodcock, *Anarchism*: *A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, 100.
[67] James Joll, *The Anarchists*, 259.
[68] James Joll, *The Anarchists*, 176.

opposed to modern society, and backward looking, Woodcock and Joll's elaboration of anarchist doctrine was that of an essentially individualistic and retrograde political philosophy. This depiction had a remarkable symmetry with the standard Marxist critiques of anarchism. Marxist critics of anarchism have traditionally maintained that anarchist social theory corresponded to the ideals of late nineteenth-century 'petit-bourgeois' elements, primarily small shopkeepers, workers employed in small-scale craft production, and the peasantry. For instance, as George Lichtheim wrote in his *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (first published in 1961), the anarchist movement of the 1870s and 1880s represented:

> a radical protest movement of impoverished artisans (in Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland), or downtrodden rural labourers (in Spain and Southern Italy), against society and the state; while 'Marxist Socialism' during the same period had in practice come to stand for reformism in the spirit of the 1864 *Inaugural Address*: the birth certificate, as it were, of modern Social-Democracy.[69]

For Lichtheim, and others, the 'back-ward looking' elements who rallied behind anarchist movement, as a protest against the impact of industrialisation on their livelihoods, were doomed to extinction as a social class due to irresistible predominance of industrial mass production. In his 1965 *Primitive Rebels*, historian Eric Hobsbawm discussed the Ukrainian Makhnovists and Andalusian peasant anarchists as examples of 'primitive rebellion' in 'pre-political' rural societies.[70] At a later stage, Kolpinksy articulated the official Soviet position stating that “The anarchists’ extreme individualism and subjectivism were a reflection of the petty-bourgeois protest against the development of large-scale capitalist production, which tended to ruin the petit bourgeoisie, against the exploiting essence of the state, which safeguarded the interests of big capital, and against the capitalist forms of the industrial revolution.”[71] Thus in effect, anarchism, for its many Marxist critics, represented at best a distraction from the task of building political organisations, and at worst, an irresponsible or potentially reactionary

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[69] George Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 223.

[70] Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries* (London/New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965), 28; 74-92.

[71] N.Y. Kolpinksy (ed.), *Marx, Engels, Lenin: Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 7.

politics. In a later work, Lichtheim made the claim that anarchists provoked the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War through their alienation of more moderate elements and the assassination of right-wing politicians. Lichtheim attributes this to the Bakuninist destructive doctrine. “Bakunin’s disciples remained true to the legacy of their master. Ruin and disaster followed them wherever they went, and the working class had to suffer the consequences.”[72] In making this assertion, Lichtheim relied on the anarchist histories of Joll and Woodcock for his portrayal of Bakunin’s 'millenarianism' and 'destructive urge.'[73]

Similarly, from a Trotskyist perspective, Hal Draper in his 1966 essay *The Two Souls of Socialism* claimed that the central divide in the history of socialist movements is between two competing conceptions – “socialism-from-above” and “socialism-from-below” – arguing that anarchism belonged in the former category since "Anarchism is not concerned with the creation of democratic control from below, but only with the destruction of ‘authority’ over the individual, including the authority of the most extremely democratic regulation of society that it is possible to imagine." Draper substantiated this claim by citing Woodcock’s statement that "even were democracy possible, the anarchist would still not support it [...] Anarchists do not advocate political freedom. What they advocate is freedom from politics." This statement, along with Bakunin’s pre-1866 conspiratorialism, and Proudhon’s alleged anti-Semitic and sexist remarks, formed the basis of Draper’s argument. Thus, the schematic representation of Bakunin as the successor of Proudhonian mutualism, transmitted through Woodcock’s text, paints an individualistic portrait of anarchism as a doctrine championing the individual over society, with no limitation or accountability to the collectivity. Anarchism, wrote Draper, “is the other side of the coin of bureaucratic despotism, with all its values turned inside-out, not the cure or the alternative.” In short, a masked authoritarianism.[74]

Perhaps the most sophisticated English-language scholarly treatment of anarchist-Marxist

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[72] George Lichtheim, *A Short History of Socialism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 213.
[73] George Lichtheim, *A Short History of Socialism*, 105; 208.
[74] Hal Draper, *The Two Souls of Socialism* (1966) available online: http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/contemp/pamsetc/twosouls/twosouls.htm (accessed August 8, 2010).

relations, from a self-professed Marxist perspective, is Paul Thomas' *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*. Thomas, as with the historians above, regarded anarchism and Marxism as incompatible ideologies for philosophical reasons. Anarchism was depicted as a kind of out-growth of the classical liberal tradition. The 'negative liberty' of the anarchist doctrine was demonstrated by its distrust of centralised political power, and the incursion and corrupting effects of this power on otherwise natural, harmonious social affairs. Furthermore, the 'negative liberty' of the anarchists was regarded as a theoretical link between the 'classical anarchism' of the nineteenth-century and the right-wing libertarianism of Robert Nozick.[75] The Marxist tradition, in contrast, following the thought of Jean Jacques Rousseau (transmitted through Hegel), was said to view both power and liberty differently:

> [Rousseau's ] view of liberty was not negative but positive, [seeking] not to minimize power but to admit the need for power legitimized as authority. Once it is legitimized, power is a promise, not a threat [...] it is Rousseau's perception of the problem to which Marx, following Hegel, subscribes; and that there is a divide, a watershed in Enlightenment thinking about power, authority and politics. Marx is on one side of it, the anarchists on the other.[76]

Furthermore, this philosophical incompatibility was thought to be manifest throughout Marx's disagreements with the anarchists.

> All of Marx's objections reveal a method of social and political analysis that was fundamentally at variance with the anarchists' approach [...] the method in question has attributes and an intellectual lineage that separate Marx decisively and irreversibly from the anarchist tradition, whose attributes and lineage are quite separate.[77]

Thomas' study of these objections to anarchism covers Marx's criticisms of the major anarchist thinkers he came into contact with during his lifetime, namely, Max Stirner, Pierre Joseph Proudhon,

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[75] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 8. Conflating 'right-wing libertarianism' [or what Bookchin labelled 'proprietarianism' for its championing of the institution of private property, Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeble Chasm* (San Francisco/Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995), 2] with 'socialist anarchism' is a standard feature of 'orthodox Marxist' critiques of anarchism, often combined with the view of anarchism as a form of 'pre-modern' rebellion. Hobsbawm, for instance, in analysing the resurgence of anarchist thought in the '60s New Left wrote that "It is possible to construct a theoretical model of libertarian anarchism which will be compatible with modern scientific technology, but unfortunately it will not be socialist. It will be much closer to the views of Mr. Goldwater (and his adviser Professor Milton Friedman of Chicago) than to the views of Kropotkin [...] the extreme versions of individualist liberalism are logically as anarchist as Bakunin." Eric Hobsbawm, *Marxism & Anarchism: Are they compatible?* (pamphlet produced by Birbeck College and London University union communist students, 1969), 4.

[76] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 11.

[77] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 14.

and Michael Bakunin. With Bakunin, however, a distinction was made, since:

> anarchism, largely under the aegis of Bakuninism became not just a doctrine but also, much more importantly, a movement, and this shift has important implications. The Marx-Bakunin dispute was unlike Marx's earlier disagreements with anarchists because its protagonists were actually agreed on two basic fundamentals: revolution as opposed to reform, and collectivism as opposed to individualism, be this the truculent egoism of Stirner or the "social individualism" of Proudhon.[78]

In Thomas' conclusion, he stated that Marx "misjudged Bakuninism's nature and expansive potential" and the his methods "served mainly to reinforce accusations that he was dogmatic and 'authoritarian'; he became in this way the victim of his own earlier arguments."[79] Thomas parts company with most other socialist historians in their treatment of anarchism in two ways. First, Thomas recognized Bakunin's theoretical and practical achievements in the formation of the international anarchist movement as a current of 'collectivist anarchism' distinct from the ideas of Stirner and Proudhon. The failure to recognise this, suggested Thomas, was Marx's chief intellectual blunder in his quarrels with Bakunin. Second, Thomas lamented the evolution of subsequent Marxist-oriented Internationals after the Marx-Bakunin split. While differences in Thomas' view were based on fundamentally irreconcilable philosophical outlooks and traditions, the split in the IWMA had the effect of reinforcing regrettable elements in orthodox Marxism, representing:

> the climax and upshot of a long series of anti-anarchist arguments and manoeuvres which did so much to ensure that 'proletarian internationalism' would turn into the dogma it need (and should) never have become, and that future Internationals would be ideologically monolithic in a way the First International was never originally intended to be. The doctrinal rigidity of future Internationals is on no account to be defended. It reinforced tendencies within Marxism we would all be better off without; it is a sorry story of hidebound inflexibility, bureaucratization and the stifling of questioning and initiative from below.[80]

However, in common with the interpretations of the Marx-Bakunin schism outlined above, Thomas maintained that the anarchist and Marxist traditions split – irreconcilably and on fundamental issues – after their first major encounter as revolutionary social movements, and continued as antagonistic political currents thereafter. Thomas noted that anarchism:

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[78] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 14.
[79] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 352.
[80] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 352.

> overlaps significantly with that of the growth of Marxist doctrine; but such an overlap does not suggest the possibility of any future convergence, unless we assume, against all the evidence, a homogeneity of outlook within the Left, or an equally unlikely willingness to compromise of the type that neither Marxists nor anarchists have yet been eager to reveal.[81]

## 5. Popular Polarisations: Authoritarian Socialism and Individualist Anarchism

That the tendency to neatly divide 'Anarchism' and 'Marxism' into two irreconcilable camps, or to use one as a homogenous yardstick with which to assess the other, has been a standard feature of socialist historiography, as demonstrated above by the Marx-Bakunin conflict. While this conflict is typically treated as a critical episode in sectarian conflicts, foreshadowing subsequent encounters, other events also contributed to the discourse of divergence and polarisation.

One such episode transpired during the process of re-grouping socialist groups into the International Workers' Congress in 1889, or the so-called 'Second International'. Anarchists, seated primarily as trade union delegates for the Brussels in 1891 and Zurich 1893 congresses, had felt a place for themselves in this organisation as active participants in the working-class movement. However, anarchists and other anti-parliamentary socialists were expelled from the 'Second International' during its fourth congress in 1896 following the decision to include groups that accepted political, electoral activity to be an acceptable method of furthering socialist aims. Historian Geoff Eley writes that the anarchist "disregard of open and accountable frameworks (like a party or public society) was self-disabling," and attributes their "wrecking presence" in the Second International as the chief cause of their expulsion.[82] While Eley's claims of an anarchist disregard of open and accountable organisational frameworks are certainly contestable, the late nineteenth-century did represent one of the high-water marks for the practice of 'propaganda by the deed' and a string of assassinations by some anarchists, contributing to the well-known stereotype of the anarchist terrorist.[83] Plekhanov, in

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[81] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 2.

[82] Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The history of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 96-97.

[83] For a summary of the concept of 'propaganda by the deed' and anarchist revolutionary violence in the late nineteenth-century and beyond, see Ruth Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginners Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld

his highly polemical 1895 work *Anarchism and Socialism* declared:

> An Anarchist will have nothing to do with “parliamentarism”, since it only lulls the proletariat to sleep. He will none of “reforms”, since reforms are but so many compromises with the possessing classes. He wants the revolution, a “full, complete, immediate, and immediately economic” revolution. To attain this end he arms himself with a saucepan full of explosive materials, and throws it amongst the public theater or cafe. He declares this is the “revolution”.

In his assessment of anarchism's nihilistic morality and tactics, Plekhanov concluded that anarchism represented nothing more than an expression of bourgeois individualism.

> “Do as thou would’st,” proclaim the Anarchists. The bourgeosie “want” to exploit the proletariat, and do it remarkably well. They thus follow the Anarchist precept, and the “companions” are very wrong to complain of their conduct. They become altogether ridiculous when they combat the bourgeosie in the name of their victims. “What matters the death of vague human beings” – continues the Anarchist logician Tailhade – “if thereby the individual affirms himself!” Here we have the true morality of the Anarchists; it is also that of the crowned heads.[84]

Lenin, in 1905, dismissed anarchism in a similar fashion, namely, as bourgeois and individualistic owing, in part, to their rejection of party politics. Lenin argued that “The philosophy of the anarchists is bourgeois philosophy turned inside out. Their individualistic theories and their individualistic ideal are the very opposite of socialism.”[85] Lenin would revise this position somewhat a little over a decade later – as will be seen in chapter 3 – accepting that anarchists belonged in the socialist camp and were correct in calling for the abolition of the state, only disagreeing on when and how the state was to be abolished.

While anarchist participation in the 'Second International' certainly challenges any final settling of accounts between anarchists and Marxists following the collapse of the 'First International', the codification of Marx's ideas as 'scientific socialism' also emerged in this context. In its strongest, most deterministic version, the theory of 'scientific socialism' asserts that the economic 'base' of society – the dominant mode of production and material conditions – determines cultural, political, and religious

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Publications, 2005), 132-135.

[84] G.V. Plekhanov, *Anarchism and Socialism* (1895), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1895/anarch/index.htm (accessed January 12, 2011).

[85] V.I. Lenin, *Socialism and Anarchism* (1905), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/nov/24.htm (accessed January 12, 2011).

'superstructure' of society. This interpretation of Marxism would remain a key feature of 'orthodox Marxism,' formulated during the ascendancy of social democracy, and later, was inherited by Bolshevism. One of the political implications of this for 'orthodox Marxism', from the perspective of its radical critics, was to assign to party intellectuals, or the *nomenklatura*, a privileged role in interpreting the unfolding of objective historical forces. It also provided the intellectual grounding for 'stagist' notions of revolution, where societies would have to pass through various transitional arrangements of indefinite duration – from capitalism to various gradations of state socialism – before becoming historically ripe for full communism. For some anarchists, like Rudolf Rocker, 'scientific socialism' or 'economic determinism' represented one of the defining elements of Marx's thought, and was responsible for its authoritarian character.[86] Bolshevik suppression of the anarchists in Russia, the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising in 1921, the suppression of the *Makhnovschina* in the Ukraine, as well as Soviet interference in the Spanish Civil War and Revolution, furnished sufficient proof for many anarchists that there was essentially, in the words of Bakunin's biographer Mark Leier, “a straight line from *Capital* to the gulag.”[87]

Even some more recent, and sophisticated, examinations of the relationship between Marxism and anarchism repeat many of the standard claims about Marxist authoritarianism. Schmidt and van der Walt for example, in their 2009 work *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* which focuses on the class struggle tradition in anarchism, acknowledge that in relation to Marxism “the broad anarchist tradition is not necessarily as stark or polarised as sometimes assumed; the two are deeply entangled” and that “the imprint of Marx's economic analysis can clearly be seen in the thinking of the anarchists.”[88] Despite what the authors call a 'critical appropriation of Marx' by anarchists, they nonetheless maintain that the “predominant element” in Marx's thought “has been overwhelmingly authoritarian and statist,” and moreover, claim that “there is a direct link between

[86] See Rudolf Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1998), 23-41.
[87] Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 2006), 262.
[88] Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 83-87.

Marx's strategy of a centralised dictatorship headed by a vanguard party as the agent of revolution and the one-party dictatorship established in Russia, China, and elsewhere."[89]

Echoes of these well-worn polemics can also be detected, for instance, in the recent debates between philosophers Simon Critchley and Slavoj Žižek. Žižek, in a review of Critchley's book *Infinitely Demanding*, accuses contemporary anarchists of possessing a kind of fatalistic view that accepts the continued and inescapable existence of liberal democracy, one which cannot be confronted head on, but rather through the creation of temporary autonomous experiments on the margins of statist/capitalist society. For Žižek, this retreat from the "real word" of political action is not only surrender, but represents a form of "moralising self-satisfaction" that is in no way threatening to power. Hugo Chavez and his consolidation of power in Venezuela is offered by Žižek as a positive example of a "vehicle for the mobilisation of new forms of politics."[90] Critchley, in turn, in a lengthy reply concludes that "there are two main traditions on the non-parliamentary, non-liberal left: authoritarianism and anarchism," continuing that "If Žižek attacks my position with characteristic Leninist violence for belonging to the latter, then it is crystal clear which party he supports." Žižek 's Leninism is described as a support for "dictatorship and a centralized state defended with military power" and a "crypto-Bismarckian Leninist authoritarianism."[91]

## 6. Chomsky, Guérin, and the Convergence of Anarchism and Marxism

Daniel Gu*é*rin and Noam Chomsky are two of the most well-known proponents of a 'libertarian socialist' politics that encompasses both anarchist and Marxist currents. Gu*é*rin argued that "Marxism and anarchism are not merely influenced by one another, they belong to the same family" and in the beginning "drank at the same proletarian spring."[92] Gu*é*rin claimed that the schism between Marx and Bakunin in the IWMA was "a disastrous event for the working class as each of the two movements

[89] Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, *Black Flame,* 24-25.
[90] See Slavoj Žižek, "Resistance is Surrender" in *London Review of Books* (November 2007), available online: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n22/slavoj-zizek/resistance-is-surrender (accessed January 20, 2011).
[91] Simon Critchley, *Violent Thoughts about Slavoj Zizek* (2009), available online: http://nakedpunch.com/articles/39Violent (accessed January 20, 2011).
[92] Daniel Gu*é*rin, *Anarchism and Marxism* (Orkney: Cienfuegos Press, 1981), 6.

would have needed the theoretical and practical contribution of the other,"[93] alluding to the creation and evolution of the so-called 'Second International' as a strictly politically-aligned labour organisation.[94] Guérin also objected to the versions of anarchism offered in the histories of the movement provided by Woodcock and Joll:

> British writer George Woodcock saw fit to accuse the anarchists of being idealists swimming against the dominant current of history, feeding on an idyllic vision of the future while clinging to the most attractive features of a dying past. Another English specialist on the subject, James Joll, insists that the anarchists are out-of-date, for their ideas are opposed to the development of large-scale industry, to mass production and consumption, and depend on a retrograde romantic vision of an idealized society of artisans and peasants, and on a total rejection of the realities of the twentieth century and of economic organization.[95]

In contrast, Guérin held that the 'constructive anarchism' of Michael Bakunin expressed the best elements of that tradition which "depends on organization, on self-discipline, on integration, on federalist and noncoercive centralization. It rests upon large-scale modern industry, up-to-date techniques, the modern proletariat, and internationalism on a world scale."[96]

In his introduction to Guérin's history of anarchism, Noam Chomsky maintained that 'libertarian socialism' represented the dominant idea within the anarchist tradition, which merged with Marxist currents. Taking anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker and council communist Anton Pannekoek as major reference points, Chomsky placed anarchism firmly within the socialist tradition and claimed that:

> a consistent anarchist, then, will be a socialist, but a socialist of a particular sort. He will not only oppose alienated and specialized labour and look forward to the appropriation of capital by the whole body of workers, but he will also insist that this appropriation be direct, not exercised by some elite force acting in the name of the proletariat.[97]

Genuine socialism, then, would not be tantamount to state ownership of industry. Rather, socialism entailed that all productive enterprises and services would be directed 'from below' by organs of

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93 Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism and* Marxism, 13.
94 This organisation excluded anarchist groups from participating and continued the development of one of the major trends in orthodox Marxism, social democracy.
95 Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, 153.
96 Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, 153-154.
97 Noam Chomsky, "Introduction" in Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), xv.

popular control self-managed by the workers' themselves. Both Guérin and Chomsky found ideological counterparts to this insistence on workers' self-management in the dissident left-wing Marxist tradition, particularly in the works of Rosa Luxemburg and the council communists, a tradition which broke with and fiercely criticised the Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union (see chapter 3). Chomsky saw one of the main points of "convergence between left-wing Marxism and socialist anarchism" in the common critique of state socialism and in the "principle that the state must disappear, to be replaced by the industrial organization of society in the course of the social revolution itself."[98] In considering these forms of industrial organisation that would replace the state, Chomsky again pointed to the council communist example.

> One might argue that some form of council communism is the natural form of revolutionary socialism in an industrial society. It reflects the intuitive understanding that democracy is severely limited when the industrial system is controlled by any form of autocratic elite, whether of owners, managers and technocrats, a "vanguard" party, or a state bureaucracy.[99]

## 7. Contestations

The views held by Guérin and Chomsky regarding the compatibility of anarchist and Marxist outlooks, would however, not go unchallenged. Fittingly, George Woodcock would contest the perspective of a convergence between 'left-wing Marxism' and 'socialist anarchism', and in this context it is also important to note, revisit his claims of the death of the anarchist movement through the impact of the 'new social movements' in the New Left. Woodcock's *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* had, controversially, issued the death certificate of the 'classical anarchist movement' in 1939, after the defeat of the anarcho-syndicalist and Popular Front forces in the Spanish Civil War. Woodcock, however, did not anticipate anarchism's revival in the late 1960s. This lead to a re-evaluation of his previously held view. Woodcock asserted that *classical anarchism* was no longer feasible as a mass revolutionary movement, but affirmed the *anarchistic* and *libertarian* sensibilities of the 1960's new social movements, expressed primarily as a moral response to authoritarianism

[98] Noam Chomsky, *Government in the Future* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), 24-27.
[99] Noam Chomsky, "Introduction" in Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, xvi.

through the expansion of libertarian alternatives in areas such as communal living and alternative education.

While Woodcock certainly acknowledged the resurgence of anarchism, he suspiciously remarked how difficult it was to determine to what extent the ideas on workers' councils during the events of May 1968 in France were "derived from German Left Communist theories, which certainly influenced the Situationists, and how far from surviving anarcho-syndicalist traditions."[100] Further, he applauded the shedding of 'Old Left' concepts and categories by the new social movements, in particular:

> the idea of the class struggle as a dominant and constructive force in society, the romantic cult of insurrectionism and terror, and even – though this they rarely admitted – a vision of proletarian dictatorship that lingered particularly among the anarcho-syndicalists who envisaged a society run by monolithic workers' unions.[101]

Class analysis and class struggle were, for Woodcock, intimately bound up with Bakunin's 'destructive urge', Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat, and the view of society administered by labour unions, all of which he felt were potentially tyrannical and authoritarian.

Woodcock later criticized both Gu*é*rin and Chomsky by asserting "I am doing neither [...] an injustice in stating that neither is an anarchist by any known criterion; they are both left-wing Marxists."[102] This statement was in reference to Guérin's *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* and the introduction written by Noam Chomsky. The basis for this claim centred around Chomsky's assertion that the primary dividing point between Marx and Bakunin was the seizure of state power or its immediate destruction. Woodcock maintained that other divisive factors of equal importance were inherited from Proudhon, such as decentralisation and federalism as organisational principles opposed to Marxist centralism.[103] Woodcock would conclude by emphasizing that "by regarding Marxism as primary, [Chomsky] selects from anarchism those elements that may serve to diminish the contradictions in Marxist doctrines; thus both Chomsky and Gu*é*rin in fact impoverish the anarchism

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[100] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, 460.
[101] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, 418.
[102] George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists: Essays by George Woodcock* (Kingston: Quarry Press, 1992), 225.
[103] George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists: Essays by George Woodcock*, 225.

they portray by abandoning its essential extremities."[104]

Woodcocks's conceptions of 'classical anarchism' and anarchism's revival in the 1960's, were both based on a highly individualistic, liberal humanist conception informed (at least initially) by Woodcock's own pacifist background. The anarchist, for Woodcock, was a dissenting moral agent, rejecting both the incursions of capitalist and statist authoritarianism on his or her individuality, but equally, dismissing sustained, large-scale organised movements for a radical social transformation as relics from the past. "The anarchist," wrote Woodcock, "seeks neither the good of a minority, nor the good of the majority, but the good of all men considered as individuals."[105] This, in striking contrast to the 'socialist anarchist' perspective of a society divided by classes, rather than a 'single humanity', a view for which Woodcock had a strong aversion. This is also illustrated in Woodcock's recollections of his experiences in the Freedom anarchist group in London.

> The anarchists of the 1940s had been bellicose barricaders, dreaming inoffensively of the violent overthrow of the state, and identifying themselves with the great assassins like Ravachol and Emile Henry as a hearth cat might imagine himself a lion. Only a minority of us followed the pacifist revolutionary line and, provided we were allowed an occasional say in Freedom, we did not obtrude our point of view. The tradition of Bakunin and the syndicalist cult of romantic death still hung heavily over the movement; our yesterday was Spain.[106]

Here we begin to see the broad outline of the tensions and divergences *within* the broader anarchist milieu between proponents of an individualistic outlook, or what was famously described by Murray Bookchin as "lifestyle anarchism"[107], and a pro-organisational anarchism rooted in working-class struggles. Rarely, writes Keefer, are the "two souls of anarchism" distinguished: one form which he describes as "petty bourgeois, anti-democratic, individualist, and based on a strategy of liberation from above" and the other "working class, liberatory anarchism which on numerous occasions in history has taken part in great mobilizations against capital, state, and authoritarian socialist

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[104] George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists: Essays by George Woodcock*, 228.
[105] George Woodcock, Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements, 80.
[106] George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists: Essays by George Woodcock*, 45.
[107] Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeble Chasm* (Edinburgh/San Francisco: AK Press, 1995).

dictatorships."[108] Furthermore, the ideas and practices of the 'libertarian socialists' of the New Left, and the perspectives of Guérin and Chomsky, suggest that currents of 'socialist anarchist' thought are not so easily disentangled from 'left-wing Marxism,' if the ideas of Marx and the practices of various Marxisms are not to be regarded as synonymous with either Bolshevism or social democracy.

## 8. Ideology and Ideological Morphology: The Conceptual Approach

What accounts for the discrepancy between these two positions, namely, anarchism and Marxism as divergent or irreconcilable socialist tendencies and the view that the differences between the two have been overstated?

One possible explanation is that the 'irreconcilability narrative' was largely constructed during the ascendancy of Leninism (particularly in the Soviet Union and Soviet satellite states) and social democracy (and other variations in the form of the post-war Keynesian settlement) on the Left; factors which dominated socialist discourse in one way or another for decades. In other words, the perspective of anarchism and Marxism as antagonistic ideologies may be considered to be an analysis tainted by a hindsight bias, or a decontextualisation of historical events filtered primarily through the lens of subsequent political developments. It might further be argued that the conclusions Woodcock and Joll reached were principally informed through a 'second-hand' reading of Marx, filtered through Lenin and the experience of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution, just as 'orthodox Marxists' did not bother to distinguish between the variety of anarchisms. As Crump observed:

> just as the anarcho-communists have made no distinction between Marxism and Leninism, so the other non-market socialist currents have reciprocated by indiscriminately lumping the anarcho-communists together with all other varieties of anarchists, be they Stirnerite individualists, anarcho-capitalist 'libertarians' or whatever.[109]

In contrast, in the current post-Soviet period anti-statist conceptualisations of socialist thought have

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[108] Tom Keefer, "Marxism, Anarchism & Socialism from Below" in *Upping the Anti: A Journal of Theory and Action* 2 (2005), 65.

[109] John Crump, "The Thin-Red Line: Non-Market Socialism in the Twentieth-Century" in Maximilien Rubel and John Crump (eds.) *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: MacMillan Press, 1987), 49.

had more political space to manoeuvre, out from the shadows of 'really existing socialism', just as similar perspectives had emerged during the 'De-Stalinisation' and the crisis of Marxist-Leninism in the mid-1950s and 1960s.

Another, complementary, explanation requires a more fundamental examination into the nature of anarchism and Marxism as ideologies. Given that there are multiple expressions of anarchist and Marxist ideas and practices, how are the broad contours of political agreement between common elements within these anarchisms and Marxisms to be demarcated? The conceptual approach to the study of ideology, as pioneered by political theorist Michael Freeden, is a useful methodological tool in teasing out commonalities.

The very concept of ideology is a contested, even controversial, term in political studies. The word often conjures up images of totalitarian governments which impose political orthodoxy, artificially from above, through mechanisms of surveillance and brute force. In the 1960's, and again in the 1990's, some scholars, such as Francis Fukuyama, famously declared the 'end of history' or the 'end of ideology', meaning that governance in the form of liberal democracy had achieved a hegemonic status and would henceforth reign supreme: 'There is no alternative', in the words of former Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Political life would now be the realm of pragmatic, expert administrators. Thus, in many circles, ideology is used as a pejorative term denoting a fixation on abstractions or as divisive and outdated concept. Conversely, some contemporary political theorists like Slavoj Žižek have observed how contemporary claims of non-ideological, utilitarian, and pragmatic politics and practices are themselves ideologically motivated, as illustrated in even mundane, everyday practices, as described in one famous scatological metaphor.[110] "The school of ideology as dogma, as a closed and abstract 'ism'", writes Freeden, "is wishful thinking, a streamlined generalization which is itself a highly ideological product of the cold war."[111]

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[110] Slavoj Žižek, "Knee-Deep" in *London Review of Books* 26:17 (September 2004) available online: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n17/slavoj-zizek/knee-deep (accessed September 19, 2010).

[111] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 23.

Freeden's understanding of ideology asserts that ideologies are evolving constellations of political thought and the main vehicles through which political thinking is articulated and put into practice. Ideologies are defined by Freeden as:

> the complex constructs through which specific meanings, out of a potentially unlimited and essentially contestable universe of meanings, are imparted to the wide range of political concepts they inevitably employ. Political concepts acquire meaning not only through historically transferred traditions of discourse, and not only through the pluralist disparities of culture, but also through their particular location within a constellation of other political concepts. That meaning is crucially imparted through the morphological attributes of ideologies, for, whatever else they are, ideologies are particular patterned clusters and configurations of political concepts. An ideology is hence the macroscopic structural arrangement that attributes meaning to a range of mutually defining political concepts. But this is no simple structuralist assertion. For the history of an ideological tradition, the conventions through which it is understood and perceived, and its geographical variations, play central roles in attributing meaning to the ideology in question, superimposing diachronic on synchronic analysis [...] An ideology is thus located at the meeting point between meaning and form: it constitutes a significant sampling from the rich, but unmanageable and partly incompatible, variety of human thinking on politics, contained within and presented through a communicable and action-inspiring pattern.[112]

To begin to unpack this definition, the starting point is the basic unit of analysis, the political concept. Political concepts are the main conceptual components of political thinking and the central unit of investigation in the analysis of ideologies. In this, Freeden is informed by the insights of Saussurean linguistics: “theory is to concepts what language is to words: an organizer, a regulator, a set of rules and uniformities, a grammar, a system.”[113] As such, the political concept makes sense only in relation to its position in an arrangement of other concepts.[114] Thus, for instance, the concept of 'liberty' takes on an entirely different meaning when coupled with 'property' than with 'equality'.

Ideologies as constellations, or clusters, of political concepts, function by “decontesting” the political language they employ. Since a political concept may have numerous and potentially unlimited interpretations or connotations, ideologies operate by limiting this range of possible meaning to the point of political relevance. This decontestation:

> prioritize[s] certain concepts over others, and certain meanings of each concept over other meanings. The external manifestation of this thought-practice is a unique conceptual

[112] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 54.
[113] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 48.
[114] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 50.

> configuration that competes over its legitimacy with other conceptual configurations. This practice arises from and indicates a plural world of meaning, and that in turn provides a justification for influencing the exercise of choices among sets of meanings.[115]

All political concepts also exhibit "ineliminable components". Freeden's use of the term "ineliminable" rather than "core" feature is intentional:

> Many political theorists suggest that concepts have a clear core or centre and a hazy circumference where they merge into other concepts [...] If a core implies a pivotal and specific element, lucidly spelt out, and able to stand on its own, to which more peripheral components are added in order to enrich it, the main political concepts do not possess cores. Rather, they have components that are ineliminable not in a logical sense, but simply in the sense that an empirically ascertainable cultural commonality ascribes to them some minimal element or elements.[116]

Thus, the ineliminable features of political concepts are ineliminable because of a shared or common usage: "all known usages of the concept employ it, so that its absence would deprive the concept of intelligibility and communicability."[117] For example, for all its diversity, it would be meaningless to discuss socialism without some concept of 'common ownership'. This constitutes one of the key 'family resemblances' within the socialist tradition. Political concepts, however, cannot be reduced to this ineliminable feature. This is because the ineliminable features of a political concept cannot fully express the meaning of a concept by alone. Political concepts require adjacent and peripheral components to develop and fully articulate their meaning, which may shift in importance, from adjacent to peripheral, or vice versa.[118] So, for example, while 'common ownership' may be an ineliminable feature of socialist thought, this concept alone tells us little about how this common ownership is to be implemented, and by whom.

Morphological analysis, or the task of analysing conceptual changes or shifts within an ideological grouping, diverges from philosophical or analytical approaches in that the study of ideology is not a normative exercise. Rather than assessing the truth, falsity or rational elements of political utterances, the study of ideologies combines theoretical analysis with the examination of concrete manifestations

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[115] Michael Freeden, "Practicing Ideologies and Ideological Practices," in *Political Studies* 48:2 (2000), 307-308.
[116] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 63.
[117] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 62.
[118] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 64.

of political thinking. The focus, then is:

> on the patterns, continuities, and discontinuities political thinking displays, and the manner in which it shapes the politically possible, and not as focusing on its critical replacement with more coherent structures, or normatively preferable positions which are often unrelated to the contexts in which political thinking actually occurs.119

The approach of ideological morphology proffered by Freeden, and the study of ideology as a major genre of political thought, combines three main elements:

> employing the conceptual analysis that political theorists have been trained to handle; utilizing the type of empirical and contextual inquiry in which historians are versed; and appreciating the morphological patterns which contribute to the determination of ideological meaning.[120]

This is precisely due to the relation between practice and ideology and which entails a communicable and group-orientation. "All producers of political language are also consumers of such language, and their comprehension both of words and concepts – a comprehension mediated by accepted social meanings – is a major clue in the reproduction of political language in which they engage."[121]

Freeden's conceptual approach to the study of ideologies has similarities with another major perspective, that of political theorist Quentin Skinner, in its contextual focus. However, it also differs in several key ways. Skinner's analysis provides important insights in its emphasis on "context and on the retrieval of meaning," however:

> Skinner's approach regards political texts as a written reflection of deliberate and purposive speech-acts, and emphasizes the need to reconstruct the conscious intentions of the thinker within his or her social context as the prime method of making sense of an ideology or political theory.[122]

Freeden brings up three objections to this view:

> First [...] though some aspects of ideologies may be intentional, others may not. Second, it would be misleading to ascribe ideologies to an individual producer. Third, to concentrate on the production of ideologies is to overlook features which ought to attract equal interest. For unlike other sets of political ideas, two central characteristics of ideologies are their action-orientation and group-orientation.[123]

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[119] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 39.
[120] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 14.
[121] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 108.
[122] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 100-101.
[123] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, 104-105.

So while sharing certain features with political theorist Quentin Skinner, the conceptual approach to ideologies parts company with Skinner in that, instead of contextualising the thought of a particular political philosopher, it emphasizes the group and action orientations of ideologies. As such, the material appropriate for analysis can range from pamphlets, newspaper articles, manifestos, statements of aims and principles, and other literature meant for public consumption.

## 9. The Broad Arc of Libertarian Communism: An Historical-Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this section is to provide an historical-conceptual framework showing significant historical markers that challenge the dichotomous anarchist/Marxist divide, which will then be further examined in the case studies.

To summarise some key points discussed thus far, this thesis seeks to challenge some of the dominant polarised conceptions of the relationship between anarchism and Marxism, frequently presented by partisans of each tradition as an incompatible due to serious philosophical differences. Further, it seeks to examine the conceptual space and overlap between communist anarchisms and anti-parliamentary Marxisms as the basis for the elaboration of a particular set of ideas and practices in the revolutionary socialist tradition – libertarian communism.

This thesis claims that this examination must be situated in, and sensitive to, actual concrete manifestations of these ideas and their evolution over time. It claims that an approach, based on a contextual analysis of political concepts and a movement-driven approach, may provide some insight on the relationships between the 'red' and 'black' largely missing from what strictly analytical or normative approaches can tell us. The adoption of this perspective also borrows from Rosa Luxemburg's understanding of the relationship between ideas and practices in her assertion that "the false steps which a real revolutionary labour movement makes are historically immeasurably more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of the best central committee."[124] In other words, even failed revolutionary experiments instigated by popular movements are of immense value in furthering forms

[124] Quoted in Leilo Basso, *Rosa Luxemburg: A Reappraisal* (New York: Praeger, 1975), 103.

of radical praxis, and much preferred to timeless ahistorical theorising, if the lessons derived from these 'false steps' are applied to the present – an approach which informed the praxis of the movements under consideration in this thesis. The underlying assumption here, and a key to understanding the contributions to revolutionary praxis by the movements under examination is simply that participation in struggle changes both ideas and people. Martin Glaberman once noted in an interview that:

> in order to create a new society we need new people. New people are created in activity and we need a revolution not only because the old ruling class can only be overthrown in a revolution, but you need a revolution in order to transform the people making it. So they become qualified to create a certain society.[125]

As noted earlier, the specific concentration in this thesis will be on the convergences between two revolutionary socialist trends as the basis of a libertarian communist politics: the Bakuninist anarchism which developed an anarchist-communist outlook and the revolutionary left-wing of the Marxist tradition that looked to forms of working-class self-organisation for inspiration. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the division between the ideas of Bakunin and those of Marx are far from being insurmountable, and in fact, can be seen as being complementary. To be sure, Marx and Bakunin remained divided on the issues of reform and the potential for the state to be used as an instrument of revolution. "Bakunin was not unalterably opposed to reform," but was "much less enamored with the process than Marx."[126] For Bakunin reforms such as a shorter working day or increases in wages helped relieve very real burdens for working people. Reforms were especially valuable if won through collective action and if they resulted in the increased the confidence of the working class, but a focus on reform could also bring significant drawbacks. If Marx's economic theories and brilliant analysis of the capitalist mode of production was his main contribution to the international working-class movement – a fact that Bakunin readily and repeatedly acknowledged – it was the political dimension of his ideas that remained vague and widely open to interpretation, both in his lifetime and beyond.

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[125] Martin Glaberman, *Revolutionary Optimist* (2000) available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/glaberman/2000/xx/interview.htm (accessed January 10, 2013).
[126] Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion*, 271.

> He said a great many things about revolution and reform, and it is possible to read him in many different ways. Thus we may look for and find both a revolutionary Marx, just as we may find a Marx who insisted that history was a fairly mechanical process of economic development and one who said it was moved by class struggle, that is to say, by humanity.[127]

Bakunin's major contribution to revolutionary socialist theory was his critique of the state, and specifically, the corrupting effects of power on those who wield it. This was especially important as it related to political representatives, state officials, and other elites who professed to speak on behalf of the working classes. The bureaucracies that formed around professional politicians. Managers, and salaried staff could not be trusted as they formed their own class interests separate from the masses, perpetuating class privilege.

> Capital and the state were not interested in dealing with 'the people' at the bargaining table; they spoke to representatives ... Put plainly, it meant that power had shifted from people to the delegates, from the masses to an elite. Once tangled up in the spirit of negotiating, bargaining, and conceding, it was easy to forget just what the real point was ... Furthermore, the rewards of status, power, and position made it easy for reformers themselves to be corrupted.[128]

These insights, although expressed in an era when liberal democracies in Europe were far from the norm and often posed against a strawman Marx, in part, differentiated Bakunin from Marx. However, the organisational commitment to self-management and anti-bureaucratic orientation was adopted by many anarchists as standard practice as well as anti-statist Marxists, although the debt to Bakunin rarely acknowledged with the latter. But Bakunin, in contrast to Marx, continued to identify a communist economic system with Jacobinism and a centralised state apparatus. “I detest communism,” he wrote, “because it is the negation of liberty. I cannot conceive of humanity without liberty. I am not a communist because communism concentrates and absorbs all the powers of society in the state.”[129]

The period following the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871 presented a moment when Marx and Bakunin came closest to a rapprochement. Both had celebrated the first modern working-

[127] Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion*, 273.
[128] Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion*, 272.
[129] Quoted in Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion*, 191.

class insurrection and praised the radical, democratic potential and self-organised nature of the Commune. As will be shown in the next chapter, Marx later revised some of his earlier ideas on the state, and to a large extent, adopted Bakuninist ideas with reference to the revolutionary potential of communal social forms in areas peripheral to industrial capitalist development. However, "the opportunity the Commune offered for unity," writes Leier "was squandered in another wave of mutual distrust and maneuvering."[130] It is interesting to note, in terms of the ways that political language often comes into being, that it was in this context that the term 'Marxist' came into use[131], much in the same way that other political terms first emerge, namely, pejoratively.

In the decade following the fall of the Commune, the focal point of labour radicalism shifted to the United States. In particular, it was in the radical segments of the Midwestern labour movement centred in Chicago – what came to be known as the 'Chicago Idea' – that the unity of Marx and Bakunin in the post-Commune period was retained. As will be shown in chapter 2, proponents of the Chicago Idea – many of whom were German immigrants and some, former members of the IWMA – anticipated revolutionary syndicalism by asserting that the labour union would be the basic unit of social struggle as well as the basic unit prefiguring communist society. Borrowing from Marx's economic analysis and vision of communism, and Bakunin's anti-statism and prefigurative practice, the Chicago Idea differed from the electoralism of the Socialistic Labor Party, the individualism and mutualism of the American Proudhonists, and to a somewhat lesser extent, the insurrectionary anarchist-communism of their organisational brethren on the East coast of the United States. That May first, International Workers' or May Day, holiday is commemorated by nearly all left-wing

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[130] Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion*, 262.

[131] Georges Haupt provides an excellent overview of the origins of the terms 'Marxist' and 'Marxism'. In the context of the IWMA, Haupt writes: "In the First International, Bakunin and his supporters in their merciless polemic against Marx and the General Council were to use the noun 'Marxides', the then current expression 'Marxians' (a synonym for 'dynasty of Marxides', 'law of Marx', or 'authoritarian communism'), and also a new onomastic term: 'Marxist'. All these labels were used more for polemical purposes, as accusations against Marx and his followers, than to define his ideas. In his systematic use of these onomastic terms, Bakunin was merely repaying Marx in kind, since the latter's writings were profuse with qualifying adjectives such as 'Proudhonist' or 'Bakuninist' which were intended to disqualify or ridicule his opponents [...] It was immediately after the split at the Hague Congress of the IWMA (International Working Men's Association), in September 1872 that the term 'Marxist' began to spread." Georges Haupt, *Aspects of International Socialism, 1871-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2-3.

tendencies – and still celebrated as *el Día de los Mártires de Chicago* (the Day of the Chicago Martyrs) in Mexico – shows the cultural legacy of the Chicago Idea. The ideological and organisational heritage of the movement, as will be shown in chapter 2, belongs to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

Importantly, the Chicago Idea represents a significant early labour movement expression of anarchist-communism. The major shift in the anarchist tradition in the late nineteenth-century, from collectivism to communism, was informed in part through Marx's ideas – as can be detected in the Chicago Idea. If Bakunin accepted historical materialism, he was nonetheless hesitant to call himself a communist, identifying it with Jacobinism and state control. His preference was instead for collectivized industries to be owned and managed by their workers and for remuneration to be on the basis of labour performed. It was not so with Cafiero, Malatesta, and Kropotkin, who envisaged a non-state communism powered through federated communities and industries with remuneration based on the principle "from each according to ability to each according to needs." Although Peter Kropotkin is undoubtedly one of the clearest exponents and the name most closely associated anarchist-communism, it was Carlo Cafiero that had originally instigated the shift to communism amongst anarchists. It is interesting to note that in reflecting on this period, Malatesta complained of the Marxist influence transmitted from Bakunin and carried on afterwards. "Though none of us had read Marx," wrote Malatesta, "we were still too Marxist."[132] Although quite revealing in terms of the acknowledgement of Marxist influence, Malatesta's statement is also disingenuous, as Malatesta's close comrade Carlo Cafiero was well-known for his popularised book on Marx's *Capital*, as will be discussed in chapter 2.

By the early twentieth-century, anarchist-communism had become the dominant perspective amongst anarchists, and revolutionary syndicalism, the most visible, mass expression of anarchistic ideas.[133] Many syndicalist unions, most famously the Spanish National Confederation of Labour, had

[132] Vernon Richards (ed.), *Errico Malatesta's Life and Ideas* (London: Freedom Press, 1977), 209.
[133] Tensions, however, remained as demonstrated by the debates between French revolutionary syndicalist

explicitly advanced the view that 'libertarian communism' was the desired end goal which was to be achieved through militant labour union activity. Meanwhile, social democracy was firmly entrenched as the dominant expression of Marxist orthodoxy until the outbreak of the Great War, and the crisis that it provoked on the Left. The 'Second International' and affiliated parties stood largely discredited in the eyes of revolutionary socialists after several affiliates, notably the German and French, supported their government's national war efforts. Syndicalism and anarchist-communism did not emerge unscathed either, as the leadership of the French syndicalist General Confederation of Labour and prominent anarchists like Peter Kropotkin rallied behind the war effort. The stage was set for a new powerful challenger on the revolutionary Left in the form of Bolshevism and an era during which the revolutionary aspirations of various anarchist and Marxist currents were put to the test on a mass scale for the first time. These revolutionary periods, and ultimately defeats, contributed to a revision of ideas and strategies amongst both anarchists and Marxists.

This is particularly evident with the inter-war period anarchist and Marxist currents examined in chapter 3, not only in with reference to the divisions amongst anarchists surrounding appropriate forms of revolutionary organisation and forms of anti-state working-class power, but also in the evolving perceptions of anarchism as a social theory by Marxist theorists like Anton Pannekoek and Karl Korsch. With its origins in the Luxemburgian left-wing of social democracy, the Dutch-German council communist current formulated a libertarian communist praxis with its basis in workers' councils, rejecting both social democracy and Bolshevism. Councilist industrial strategy – informed in part with reference to the experience of the American IWW – and anti-parliamentary outlook were positions that overlapped with the communist variants of anarchism. During this historical period the analyses of the reasons why anarchist movements failed to successfully usher in and defend emancipatory arrangements in Russia and Spain became central concerns. Perhaps most famously, and controversially, the critical reflections of many leading figures in the Makhnovist movement contained

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Pierre Monatte and anarchist-communist Errico Malatesta. See Robert Graham (ed.), *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One, From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)* (Montreal: Black Rose Press, 2005), 206-211.

in the 1926 'Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft).' The 'Platform', which offered a particular conception of anarchist organisation was pitted against a competing vision, and understanding of the defeat of anarchism in the Soviet Union, in the form of the anarchist 'Synthesis.' The 'Platform' demanded a greater degree of ideological and tactical cohesiveness in order to counter what it claimed was an undesirable, disorganised condition stemming from a lack of accountability based on principles of absolute individual freedom. This disorganised condition was further argued by the proponents of the 'Platform' to have been the main contributing factor in defeating the realisation of anarchist-communism in Russia and the Ukraine. The 'Synthesis,' sometimes referred to as 'United anarchism,' understood the defeat of revolutionary movements in Russia and the Ukraine as the result of severe Bolshevik government repression and recommended the creation of large, umbrella anarchist federations uniting what it regarded as the three main strands of anarchist praxis: communism, syndicalism, and individualism. Some historians, as will be discussed in chapter 3, have remarked that the debates between 'Platformists' and 'Synthesists' reflect a fundamental antagonism in anarchist-communism, divided between conceptions of organised and disciplined collective action and notions of revolutionary spontaneity. The 'Platform' was criticised by 'Synthesists' and others in the international anarchist movement as an attempt to 'Bolshevise' anarchism by introducing rigid and potentially authoritarian organisational methods into the body of libertarian thought. This charge was similarly levelled against the 'Friends of Durruti' affinity group during the Spanish Civil War and Revolution in their criticisms of the labour union anarcho-syndicalist leadership and their call for the creation of the 'revolutionary junta' composed of working-class groups to supplant governmental authority in Catalonia.

The 'Platform' and the 'revolutionary junta' of the Friends of Durruti represent key innovations in libertarian praxis that not only distinguish their perspectives from their anarchist contemporaries but also parallel similar ideas expressed by anti-Bolshevik Marxist formations like the council communists. ‘Proletarian dictatorship’, envisaged as the suppression of counter-revolution through the direction of the workers’ councils (rather than a power exercised by a party elite); a notion of a ‘vanguard’ as the

leadership of advanced ideas rather than a substitutionist body of professional revolutionaries; and an organised ‘party’ formed for the purpose of propaganda and uniting militants rather than an organisation devoted to electoralism or capturing state power, were also expressed by the Platformists and Friends of Durruti, although using different political vocabulary. The General Union of Anarchists or anarchist federation was used in place of the term ‘party’, although this term along with ‘vanguard’ were also employed but much less so as both terms acquired close associations with Leninism. The democratic militia formations – tied to ‘free soviets’, workers’ councils, or syndicates – described as a ‘revolutionary junta’ by the Friends of Durruti, matched the councilist conception of proletarian dictatorship. The council communists, along with the anarchists, were also among the first to denounce the Soviet Union as a form of state capitalism.

The 'libertarian socialist' current that developed from dissident Trotskyism, discussed in chapter 4, was not rooted in mass movements in the same way that the inter-war revolutionary movements were, but is still deserving of attention. One of the defining episodes that informed their ideas was the large-scale workers' uprising in the Hungarian revolution in 1956. This event helped to put workers' councils and the conception of self-management back on the agenda. Also, as groups located in Western Europe and the United States, their perspectives were deeply informed by changes resulting from the post-war social democratic settlement in liberal democratic nations. The institutionalisation and bureaucratisation of labour unions was argued to have fundamentally changed the nature of unions. More importantly, they increasingly saw the rise of technocracy and bureaucracy in the West as the mirror image and counterpart to Soviet-style state capitalism, in so far as the control and direction of the working-class was concerned. The role of the vanguard party, as elaborated by Lenin and Trotsky, was discarded in favour of 'autonomous' social forms. Similarly, the idea of socialism as the nationalisation of the means of production was firmly rejected. These perspectives would help bring these groups into contact with councilists and anarchists.

To further anticipate the intellectual itinerary developed in this study, on the level of revolutionary praxis, and through the 'black' and 'red' intersections, is the constant internal dialogue revolving

around issues of appropriate revolutionary strategies and tactics in response to specific conditions. With regards to revolutionary organisation, it is important to note the contradiction within both the anarchist and Marxist traditions identified by Daniel Guérin, that is, the relation between a conscious, revolutionary minority and the spontaneity of the collectivity, one of the continuous themes in this study:

> both the anarchist and his brother and enemy the Marxist confront a grave contradiction. The spontaneity of the masses is essential, an absolute priority, but not sufficient in itself. The assistance of a revolutionary minority has proved to be necessary to raise mass consciousness. How is this elite to be prevented from exploiting its intellectual superiority to usurp the role of the masses, paralyze their initiative, and even impose a new domination upon them?[134]

The contradiction that Guérin identified was a feature of all the movements examined in this thesis, but was expressed most clearly in the two main revolutionary episodes which bookend the interwar period. As will be demonstrated, the anarchist-Marxist dichotomy has limited analytical utility in drawing out the lessons and implications of this tension.

[134] Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 35.

# CHAPTER 1

# MARX AND BAKUNIN REDUX: THE INELIMINABLE COMPONENTS OF MARXISM AND ANARCHISM

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Contents



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## 1. Introduction

> *"...it should be obvious that the unbridgeable gap which certain social democrats perceive between anarchism and socialism exists only as a figment of their imagination, not in reality. Even less is this gap to be found in the writings of Marx and Bakunin, although they were cited most often by the disciples of each tendency. Anarchism is one species of socialism, as is social democracy itself. Socialism and social democracy are by no means identical. The essence of socialism is the common ownership of the means of production and the achievement of human community through the struggle of the organized forces of the working class. All the anarchist leaders agree with this, except for a few individualist anarchists who have never found roots among the workers. And this is all that matters. Everything else is but a means to an end, and not the end in itself."* - Ervin Szabó[1]

> *"All I know is that I am not a Marxist."* – Karl Marx[2]

In the previous chapter, the conceptualisation of anarchism and Marxism as two hostile and irreconcilable ideologies was problematised through a critical overview of the secondary literature. In contrast to the 'orthodox Marxist' view of anarchism as the ideological expression of a social class threatened by the encroachment of modern industrial capitalism, and the symmetrical 'liberal humanist', 'lifestylist', or 'individualist' anarchist embrace of pre-modern societies opposed to

[1] Ervin Szabó, *Marx and Bakunin* (Barikád Kollektíva/Barricade Collective, pamphlet, n.d.), 27.
[2] Quoted in Engels to C. Schmidt in Berlin (London, August 5, 1890), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_08_05.htm (accessed September 29, 2010).

Marxism's alleged techno-statist proclivities, it was argued that both anarchism and Marxism encompass a variety of outlooks, tendencies, and perspectives, and as such, it was suggested that it is more fruitful to think in terms of multiple *anarchisms* and *Marxisms.* The work of Guérin and Chomsky, in particular, was discussed as it pertained to highlighting the convergence of 'socialist anarchism' and 'left-wing Marxism' as the nexus of a libertarian vision of a socialist economy directed from below by popular forms of self-organisation. From Guérin and Chomsky's embrace of both council communism and revolutionary anarchism, and the historical movements recovered by the 'libertarian socialists' of the New Left, the broad parameters of convergent *anarchisms and Marxisms* began to emerge. However, an overarching analysis of these historically-situated intersections was identified as a subject constituting a lacuna in the scholarly literature. The conceptual approach to the analysis of ideologies – as evolving, or morphing, constellations of political concepts – was reviewed as an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding how ideologies function, and for drawing out common conceptual features within the broader 'left-wing Marxist' and 'socialist anarchist' currents. Finally, an historical-conceptual framework was provided that highlighted significant historical moments which challenge the popular, polarised views of anarchism and Marxism.

The aim of this chapter is to construct a somewhat idealised, or synchronic, version of 'libertarian communism' as a kind of baseline understanding for the purposes of establishing a set of criteria for diachronic analysis and evaluation. However, as an important caveat, it should be noted that the idealised libertarian communism offered here will, by its very nature, be incomplete and insufficient. In order to gain a clear understanding of ideologies and their development, it is necessary to analyse their development over time; particularly through changes and innovations brought about through political practices. This is doubly true for ideological formations in the socialist milieu. The reconceptualisation and reformulation of conceptual elements are prominent features of socialist thinking which – more so than, for example, liberalism or conservativism – exhibits the tension between the critique of status quo and prescriptions for a liberatory future society. Political theorist Michael Freeden emphasises this morphological attribute in socialist ideologies, stating that “Socialism

offers a permanent reminder that political theory emanates from practice, that practice itself is an embodiment of conceptual structures."[3]

To these ends, this chapter will begin by identifying the ineliminable conceptual features of Marxism and anarchism by returning to the ideas of Marx and Bakunin. These ineliminable components are the communist critique of the capitalist mode of production and alienated labour and the libertarian critique of hierarchy and authoritarian social relations respectively. These two conceptual features, when linked together as mutually reinforcing ideas, form the fundamental basis of a libertarian communist politics. In addition to these two central conceptual components, it will be argued that a consistent libertarian communism must include three further political positions, or adjacent concepts, that help to flesh out its ideological profile and tactical orientation. These are an anti-parliamentarianism as a critical orientation towards established forms of political practice based on bourgeois representation; internationalism, as a rejection of nationalism and all national boundaries as expressions of capitalist class rule; and a prefigurative conception of radical social change, or the principle that form must, as closely as possible given prevailing conditions, follow function.

## 2. Libertarian Communism

The terms 'libertarian socialism' and 'libertarian communism' have no standard definition. They have been used as synonyms for those currents of anarchism most concerned with proletarian emancipation[4], but have also been utilised as broader umbrella terms for a variety of political currents, although the latter usage has not been well-developed. Robin Hahnel, for example, uses the term broadly to include "Anyone who advocates direct control by workers and consumers over their own economic activities, and believes capitalism must be replaced by equitable cooperation", bringing currents such as the anarcho-syndicalists, anarcho-communists, council communists, and others in

[3] Michael Freeden, *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 419.

[4] See the next chapter for a discussion of the origins of this term in the late nineteenth-century, and for another similar usage, see also Isaac Puente, *Libertarian Communism* (1932), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/liberty/libcom.html (accessed September 29, 2010). Puente's version of libertarian communism, was, however, contested by figures such as Daniel Guérin (see chapter 3). In the post-war period, the terms 'libertarian socialist', 'libertarian communist' and 'libertarian Marxist' were applied to former Trotskyist groups which had broken with Leninism (see chapter 4).

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under this heading. Hahnel also notes that he looks “forward to reading a definitive history of libertarian socialism in the twentieth century” but “none is available at present.”[5] The definition adopted in this thesis will follow and develop the usage employed by Daniel Guérin. Guérin's notion of libertarian communism was understood to be “a combination of the best of both anarchism and the thought of Marx.”[6] More specifically, an evolving synthesis combining the Marxist critique of the capitalist mode of production and alienated labour – utilising the methods of the materialist conception of history “without doctrinal rigidity or mechanical inflexibility”[7] – with the anarchist critique of hierarchy and authoritarian social relations. From the variety of anarchisms and Marxisms Guérin delineated the “constructive, gregarious anarchism, the collective or communist anarchism” as the variety of anarchism least distanced from what he referred to as an “authentic Marxism”, or the conception of “a socialism powered from the bottom up by workers' councils” as elaborated, for example, in the writings of Karl Marx on the Paris Commune and Rosa Luxemburg's ideas concerning the 'mass strike' and the relationships between spontaneity and organisation.[8] Guérin's conception of libertarian communism had its fundamental basis in the various autonomous organs of popular self-organisation created directly through the process of revolutionary struggle and as realised in multiple episodes through the twentieth-century: workers' councils, factory and neighbourhood committees, communes, and so on. These social forms were considered to be the embodiment of the social revolution and the only genuine forms on which a post-capitalist economy and polity could be constructed.

Libertarian communism can be considered to be an evolving group of ideas and practices in the international working-class movement that seek to realise a networked, self-regulating society based on non-hierarchical forms of popular self-organisation (libertarianism or anarchy) and the common

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5 Robin Hahnel, *Economic Justice and Democracy: From Competition to Cooperation* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 392-393, n.1 and n.2.

6 Daniel Guérin, *Towards a Libertarian Communism* (1988), available online: http://libcom.org/library/towards-libertarian-communism-daniel-guerin (accessed February 8, 2010).

7 Daniel Guérin, *Towards a Libertarian Communism* (1988).

8 Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism and Marxism* (Orkney: Cienfuegos Press, 1981), 5-7.

ownership of all productive resources distributed according to needs (communism), in place of state institutions and capitalist exchange economies. Liberty and communism are viewed as being mutually reinforcing ideas as genuine democratic participation in social affairs and liberty, decontested as free association and the possibility for individual self-realisation, are understood to be severely restricted in arrangements where the social wealth, and its corollary political institutions, are controlled by a ruling elite. Thus the state, as an institution of class rule necessary for the protection of private property, is rejected both in its reformist (parliamentary) or revolutionary (party dictatorship) connotations as an instrument to usher in a stateless and classless society in favour of directly democratic institutions which typically emerge as products of the revolutionary process.

It should be noted that both terms, 'libertarian' and 'communist', have roughly a similar vintage and have both, in more recent times, come to signify the very opposite of their original meanings. Karl Marx is commonly thought of as the founder of modern communism. Marx, however, did not in fact coin the term. The term 'communism' was introduced into the lexicon of the political Left by English Owenite socialist and Unitarian Christian John Goodwyn Barmby in 1840, who took the term from the French *communiste*, used to designate the ideas of the followers of French revolutionary Babeuf.[9] However, in one of the most widely read and influential political tracts, the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels further developed and popularised the term to mean a society based on the common ownership of the means of production and the abolition of the wage system, classes, and national frontiers. 'Libertarian', as a synonym for anarchism, was coined by French anarchist Joseph Déjacque in 1857 to distinguish his political and social views from those of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon[10], and was later adopted by more socialist oriented anarchists both to evade censors and to distinguish their ideas from individualists, illegalists, and proponents of propaganda by the deed in the late nineteenth

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[9] Donald F. Busky, *Communism in history and theory: From Utopian socialism to the fall of the Soviet Union* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 82.

[10] See Robert Graham (ed.), *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume 1: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005), 60-63; 68-71 and Maximilien Rubel and John Crump (eds.), *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: MacMillan Press, 1987), 62-64.

century (more on this in the next chapter). However, communism, in the popular mind, has become associated with totalitarian state dictatorships, while libertarian has come to mean a particular brand of 'classical liberal' economic thought emphasizing unregulated free market capitalism with minimal or no state intervention in the economy. In terms of the uses, and changes, in political language, the prophetic words of anti-parliamentary communist William Morris, penned in 1886 seem especially relevant: "I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name."[11]

## 3. Marx and the Communist Critique of Capitalism

Marx's ideas are best understood as a rigorous critique of the capitalist mode of production and the analysis of the social dynamics of capitalist economies. It is this feature that all *Marxisms* ascribe to, although, as will be illustrated in chapters 2, 3, and 4, with varying interpretations based on the adoption and placement of other conceptual components.

Marx argued that the production of goods and services necessary to life form the basis of human societies, and that the domination of production by capital is the dominant form in modern societies. For Marx, the defining features of capitalism were:

> -the commodity-form as the basic unit of production, with the exchange-value of the commodity-form contrasted to use-value.
> -the separation of the worker from their product through the private ownership of the means of production and the resultant class antagonisms arising from this arrangement as the driving force of history.
> -a social condition, alienation, arising from the festishisation of the commodity-form and the extraction of surplus-value in the labour process.

In addition to this, Marx advanced the 'materialist conception of history' as an explanatory method of analysing how the material, or economic basis of human societies, intersects with and helps to shape the dominant social and political institutions in class-stratified capitalist societies.

Marx, in what might be considered his *magnum opus*, begins *Capital* with an examination of

[11] William Morris, *A Dream of John Ball* (1886), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1886/johnball/johnball.htm (accessed September 28, 2010).

commodities. “The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails", he stated, "appears as an ‘immense collection of commodities’".[12] The commodity was understood to be the basic building block of capitalism. Embedded in the commodity-form are both its use-value, simply the utility of an object to satisfy a desire or need, and exchange-value, or the monetary value of a commodity in the marketplace. The exchange-value, and the production of products or provision of services for others through market mechanisms, are the distinguishing features of a commodity.

Marx argued that the capitalist mode of production emerged in Europe during a period of 'primitive accumulation.' The feudal social relations where the peasant was tied to the land gave way to labour as a commodity, or of labour as a product to be bought and sold on the marketplace; the value or price of labour, like that of a commodity, determined by the average amount of labour required to produce it. The worker, with the disintegration of feudalism, was now 'free' to sell his or her labour to any employer, but was compelled to do so in the absence of any independent method of securing the means for survival. The antagonisms between the class interests of wage workers, or proletarians, and those owning the means of production, capitalists or the bourgeoisie, are expressed through class struggle. Further, Marx believed that every period of human history could be examined through the dominant relations of production:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.[13]

However, it should be noted that Marx himself did not use the terms 'historical' or 'dialectical materialism' to describe his conception of history.[14] Marx's view of social change, and the place of

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[12] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production: Volume 1* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), 43.

[13] Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972), 30-31.

[14] Joseph Dietzgen (1828-1888) was responsible for coining the term 'dialectical materialism' in 1887, independent of Marx and Engels. The term was subsequently adopted by Gregori Plekhanov, and later, codified as the official doctrine of Stalinism. See Paul Thomas, *Marxism and Scientific Socialism: From Engels to Althusser* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 86. The irony, as will be apparent in the next chapter, is

agency in this process, is perhaps best summed up by his statement that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."[15]

The capitalist mode of production, as a social relationship and historically contingent form, was, for Marx, primarily associated with alienation. This social condition arose from the worker being separated from his/her product in the process of production, but also, through the commodity-form as a medium for organising capitalist societies. The commodity confronted the worker as an alien force; something outside of her/him. Social relationships between human agents become mediated by the commodity-form, confronting them as a 'mystified' object. Marx used the term 'commodity fetishism' to describe this, borrowing the term 'fetishism' from the analysis of religious idolatry. By commodity fetishism, Marx meant that commodities, through their exchange and the obscuration of the labour process that created them, had become imbued with a social power or with characteristics generally thought of as belonging to human beings rather than objects.

Marxism, as Wallerstein reminds us, “is not the summa of the ideas and writings of Marx but rather a set of theories, analyses, and recipes for political action, no doubt inspired by Marx’s reasoning, that were made into a sort of dogma.”[16] Wallerstein states that the dominant forms of Marxism through the

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that Dietzgen himself championed a merger of anarchist and Marxist praxis, and would have rejected doctrinaire or rigid interpretations of his dialectical materialist philosophy. Furthermore, one of Dietzgen's most prominent intellectual disciples, Anton Pannekoek, used Dietzgen's philosophical ideas to critique the foundations of Leninism and thus the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. See Anton Pannekoek, *Lenin as Philosopher: A Critical Examination of the Philosophical Basis of Leninism* (Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2007), 34-44. The notion of 'historical materialism,' on the other hand, understood to mean the codification of Marx's ideas into a 'scientific socialism,' is attributed to Freidrich Engels and his 1878 work *Anti-Dühring,* available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/index.htm (accessed April 20, 2012) and further expanded in his 1880 *Socialism: Scientific and Utopian*, available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/index.htm (accessed April 20, 2012). Maximilien Rubel, a strong critic of *what* is regarded as Engel's revisions to Marx's ideas, notes that labelling Marx's method 'historical materialism' is “misleading in so far as it attributes to Marx a philosophical intention which he did not have. He was not concerned either with the ontological problem of the relation of thought and being, or with problems of the theory of knowledge. Speculative philosophy of this kind was what Marx rejected ... Marx spoke simply of the 'materialist basis' of his method of investigation.” Marximilen Rubel and T.B. Bottomore (eds.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), 35-36.

[15] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Chapter 1, available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm (accessed September 15, 2010).

[16] Immanuel Wallerstein, *After Liberalism* (New York: New Press, 1995), 219.

twentieth-century were “the product of two historical parties that constructed it, in tandem and successively, jointly but not in collaboration with each other: the German Social-Democratic Party (especially before 1914) and the Bolshevik Party, later to become the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.”[17] According to Wallerstein, this form of Marxism is based on five central propositions: the revolutionary strategy of seizing state power as a requisite for the creation of a communist society; the formation of a mass party to carry out the task of seizing and retaining state power; a stagist conception of progress and social evolution, or the idea underdeveloped countries must first pass through a capitalist and bourgeois democratic stage of economic and political development in order to create the material preconditions for socialism; the 'construction of socialism' through national development and rapid industrialisation; and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as a transitional period of indefinite duration between capitalism and communism.[18] The main theorists associated with this version of Marxism are Karl Kautsky, Georgi Plekhanov, and Vladimir Lenin. However, it took decades, from Marx's later years, up to his death, for the crystallisation of the 'orthodoxy' of social democracy to emerge as the dominant interpretation of Marxism in the early twentieth-century. During this period, and after, not all Marxists accepted the propositions stated above as valid. The variants of Marxism under consideration in this thesis, on the other hand, placed emphasis on the capacity of the working class to challenge capitalism, often in direct confrontation not only with the owning class but also with trade union and party officialdom. If 'historical materialism' came to be viewed by Marxist orthodoxy as a predictive mechanism for determining the historical stage of development of a society and its economic base – with the privileged role of party functionaries or central committees in interpreting the unfolding of history – 'left-wing Marxists' like Anton Pannekoek understood historical materialism as an explanatory method.

> Whereas a physicist easily believes in gravitation as a real something floating in space around the sun and the planets, it is more difficult to believe in “progress” or “liberty” hovering round us and floating over society as real beings that conduct man like a ruling fate [...] Through the immense complication of social relations “laws” of society are much

[17] Immanuel Wallerstein, *After Liberalism*, 219.
[18] Immanuel Wallerstein, *After Liberalism*, 220-226.

> more difficult to discern, and they cannot now be put into the form of exact formulas. Still more than in nature they may be said to express not the future but our expectation of the future. It is already a great thing that, whereas former thinkers were groping in the dark, now some main lines of development have been discovered. The importance of Marxism as a science of society is not so much the truth of the rules and expectations it formulated, but rather what is called its method: the fundamental conviction that everything in the world of mankind is directly connected with the rest. Hence for every social phenomenon we have to look for the material and social factors of reality of which it depends.[19]

For Pannekoek, a scientific, positivist understanding of the 'laws' governing human relations could not be determined with the exactitude of the physical sciences. Rather, the merit of Marx's materialist conception of history was an understanding human relations and social evolution, not in isolation, but as a connected to the material foundations necessary for life, an explicit affirmation that the forms that human societies take have a history and did not emerge 'ready made,' and that these forms are malleable.

## 4. The Libertarian Critique of Hierarchy

Pierre Joseph Proudhon was the first to declare himself an anarchist, taking the seemingly paradoxical statement 'anarchy is order' to mean that liberty, rather than authority, is the greatest guarantor of peace and order. Hierarchy, authoritarianism, and centralisation, he maintained, contained the social roots of war, oppression, and human misery. The term anarchy itself, however, has ancient roots, from the Greek *anarchos* literally meaning 'no rulers' or 'absence of rulers'. Anarchy has often, through the history of Western thought, been applied pejoratively to various ideas and movements challenging the status quo. Republicans and democrats, challenging the legitimacy of absolute monarchies, were said to be promoters of anarchy and mob rule. Interestingly, the term *anarchia* was also used during the time of the American Revolution to describe a psychological disorder defined as 'the excessive love of liberty.'[20]

Common to all modern expressions of anarchist thought, from the formation of the IWMA onwards, is, in general, the desire to eliminate hierarchy and authority from social life, and in particular, the

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[19] Anton Pannekoek, *Lenin as Philosopher: A Critical Examination of the Philosophical Basis of Leninism* (Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2007), 43-44.

[20] See Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 235.

dissolution of its chief political instrument, the state. Hierarchy, for anarchists, is an impediment to both the flourishing of genuine human community and individual self-realisation. Top-down, pyramidical organisational forms divide humanity into a minority of rulers and a numerically larger class of subjects. The domination of human over human in its myriad forms (sexism, racism, homophobia, and other oppressions) are, for anarchists, inherently harmful. Here might be added Rosa Luxemburg's famous libertarian dictum, directed as a criticism at Lenin in 1918:

> Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of "justice" but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when "freedom" becomes a special privilege.[21]

Hierarchical authority (political, social, economic, or ecclesiastical) debases the subject, artificially severing bonds of mutuality and usurping decision-making functions, which, for anarchists, ought to flow from the bottom upwards. Authoritarianism, it is argued, is embodied and flourishes in social institutions organised along hierarchical principles. The state is for all anarchists an illegitimate, coercive social institution, and one that ought to be dismantled. The state is understood as being a social institution above society, composed of various territorial administrative organs as well as mechanisms of social control, including the military and police.

Theoretically, the chief disagreements between anarchists are, generally, located within the sphere of economics and, by extension, considerations of what institutions might replace the state. In other words, differences over what kinds of social relations might be considered hierarchical and authoritarian. Some individualist anarchists do not regard market-based capitalist economies as inconsistent with anarchist values, and feel that an unhindered free market system with the principle of private property intact would either:

> a) evolve towards a socialistic system through a federated network of small-proprietorship, cooperative enterprise, and a banking system that would gradually abolish capitalist

[21] Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution* (1918), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/russian-revolution/ch06.htm (accessed September 28, 2010).

accumulation through free credit and the sale of goods and services at cost. This economic vision, known as mutualism, was advocated by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and, arguably, found its largest following in the United States in the nineteenth-century with Benjamin Tucker as one of Proudhon's major English-language interpreters and translators.

b) maintain private ownership, as the principles of a capitalist exchange economy would be considered the only guarantor of liberty and justice. All public institutions, under this scheme, would be replaced by privately owned institutions operated on a for-profit basis in an unregulated, or minimally regulated, capitalist economy. Anarcho-capitalism, a variant of the right-libertarian tradition of the Austrian school of economics which emerged in the 1950s, has Murray Rothbard as its most prominent theorist.

Common to both mutualism and anarcho-capitalism are the preservation of the wage system and the gradual replacement of the state by contractual, monetary agreements.[22]

The dominant trend within the anarchist movement, however, has traditionally identified itself more or less with communist economic arrangements, and will be the main focus of this thesis. It is for this reason that Bakunin is a central figure, as his major contribution was in formulating an anarchist praxis rooted in a revolutionary class politics. However, although 'Bakuninism' became synonymous with 'anti-state communism' in the years following Bakunin's death, as was noted in the previous chapter, Bakunin considered himself to be a 'collectivist' (an orientation which would preserve the wage system) and associated communism with an economy administered and directed by the state. The shift from 'collectivism' to 'communism' was an important ideological shift in the late nineteenth-century anarchism (which will be discussed in chapter 2), which owed something to both Bakunin *and* Marx. Bakunin, had, after all, frequently acknowledged his intellectual debt to Marx and accepted Marx's

[22] For a discussion of anarcho-capitalism, see Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2010), 560-565. For a discussion of the differences between mutualist or collectivist 'self-managed exchange economies' and communist arrangements see Maximilien Rubel and John Crump (eds.), *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 60-61.

critique of capitalism, as outlined above. The influence was reciprocal, if rarely acknowledged, as Marx came to adopt Bakuninist positions in years after the Paris Commune with reference to the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and pre-capitalist social forms.

## 5. Liberty and Equality

Bakunin's political philosophy was informed by a conception of individual freedom tied very closely to social equality. Bakunin asserted that:

> man realizes his individual freedom as well as his personality only through the individuals who surround him, and thanks only to the labor and the collective power of society [...] Society, far from decreasing his freedom, on the contrary creates the individual freedom of all human beings. Society is the root, the tree, and liberty is its fruit.[23]

Bakunin continued: “The freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation.”[24] Bakunin's oft quoted statement, "Liberty without socialism is privilege, injustice; socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality,”[25] expressed the ultimate political goal of transcending bourgeois notions of liberty based on the principle of private ownership and individualism, while avoiding bureaucratic manifestations of socialism. To remove either socialism or liberty from the equation would be to either maintain privilege or reintroduce slavery in a different form. A genuine social revolution would have to harmonise liberty and socialism, or be doomed to recreate the very oppressive social structures it sought to overcome in the first place. Individual freedom for Bakunin, therefore, is best attained and preserved through association with others. Hence the proposals for a radical social transformation based on the equitable distribution of wealth both create the material conditions for more meaningful community participation and the basis for realising individual creative potential. Thus, in Bakunin, there is an element of negative freedom (or freedom from the hierarchical constraints imposed by the state and capital) and positive freedom (free association and the freedom to maximise personal growth). Bakunin summarised this position in

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[23] Sam Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Press, 1980), 236.
[24] Sam Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchism*, 237.
[25] Michael Bakunin, “Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism” (September 1867), available online: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/various/reasons-of-state.htm (accessed August 8, 2010).

his essay on the Paris Commune:

> I am a convinced advocate of economic and social equality because I know that, without it, liberty, justice, human dignity, morality, and the well-being of individuals, as well as the prosperity of nations, will never amount to more than a pack of lies. But since I stand for liberty as the primary condition of mankind, I believe that equality must be established in the world by the spontaneous organization of labor and the collective ownership of property by freely organized producers associations, and by the equally spontaneous federation of communes, to replace the domineering paternalistic State.[26]

Marx's similar notions of a communist society were drawn from his critique of the capitalist mode of production and its necessary social form – the separation of the worker from his/her product and the division of labour. This, for Marx, was the chief cause of alienation. Alienated labour in the process of production reduces humans to an "exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood."[27] Marx was vague about what, exactly, a future society would look like. Indeed, intentionally so. The materialist view of society holds that 'action precedes consciousness'. Contradictions and antagonisms between capital and labour would be overcome, and emerge, through social forms created during the course of struggle, often as a intuitive response to exploitation rather than as a conscious response. Therefore, exact blueprints for change would be difficult (if not harmful) to predict in advance.

> Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.[28]

Marx believed that communist society would radically break from the condition of social alienation fostered by capitalism, ushering in a situation:

> where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the

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[26] Michael Bakunin, "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State" (1871), available online: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1871/paris-commune.htm (accessed September 21, 2010).

[27] C.J. Arthur (ed.), Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1991), 54.

[28] C.J. Arthur (ed.), Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, *The German Ideology*, 57.

> afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.[29]

To liberate human creativity from the constraints of capitalist social relations and the division of labour was also, for Marx, a prerequisite for human freedom. In place of capitalist relations, Marx sought to usher in a system in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."[30]

On a theoretical level, libertarian and communist critiques and commitments might be viewed as being complementary and assuming each other, if one takes the view that the main expressions of hierarchical power are to be located in economic and political structures of domination and exploitation and further, that the communist objective of common ownership and the abolition of the wage system undermines the material foundations and justification of state power as an organ of bourgeois class rule. Chomsky summarised this relationship:

> Under conditions of authoritarian domination, the classical liberal ideals, which are also expressed by Marx and Bakunin and all true revolutionaries, cannot be realized. Human beings will not, in other words, be free to inquire and create, to develop their own potentialities to the fullest; the worker will remain a fragment of a human, degraded, a tool in the productive process directed from above.[31]

## 6. The Critique of Bourgeois Representation: Anti-Parliamentarianism, Prefigurative Politics, and Internationalism

If the twin critiques of capitalism and hierarchy appear to converge, or be mutually reinforcing, when positioned against the backdrop of a socially-situated conception of human activity and an understanding of private property as an hierarchical power relation that creates obstacles to genuine liberty, this ultimately tells us little about the strategic and tactical orientation consistent with the aim of human emancipation. The form of praxis most consistent with these aims is anti-parliamentarianism. It is important to note that anti-parliamentarianism is related to, but distinct from the broader concept extra-parliamentarianism. Whereas extra-parliamentary activity might utilise non-electoral means

[29] C.J. Arthur (ed.), Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, *The German Ideology*, 54.
[30] Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 59.
[31] Noam Chomsky, *Government in the Future* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), 28.

outside of the dominant political process to secure its desired ends, unlike anti-parliamentarianism, it does not necessarily seek to radically transform forms of governance and the institutions of political power.

In charting out this more radical form of extra-parliamentary action, Philip Resnick positions this orientation as a critique of bourgeois representation. Representative government, and its theoretical foundations in the liberal notion of sovereignty developed by social contract theorists in the early modern period, was translated in political terms as the prevention of the formal democratic political process from penetrating into the economic sphere. The idea of the social contract meant that the people would cede some of their 'natural liberty' in a 'state of nature' to a sovereign in order to ensure mutual protection. This conception of sovereignty asserted that decision-making power would not be exercised by the people directly, but rather, it would be controlled by a sovereign with whom the people would be equal in terms of the law. Resnick defines representative government as:

> a form of counter-insurgency. It is the translation into political terms of the subordinate position that the working class occupies within the capitalist system. As such, it stands wholly opposed to the political and economic liberation of the working class through revolution, the means whereby the bourgeoisie of England, France, and the United States secured their own rise to domination.[32]

In contrast, an anti-parliamentary position – transmitted through the revolutionary traditions of the French Revolution and the theories of Marx and Bakunin – seeks to place all economic and political power directly in the hands of the majority of humanity, those who create the social wealth. The forms of this power are historically contingent, but have a common emphasis on direct democracy and grassroots institutions of popular self-rule. From this arises the rejection of 'substitutionism', or the substitution of a party or group for the direct rule of the majority directed 'from above' or introduced 'from the outside'. This is most clearly associated with the substitution of the role of the centralised vanguard party or central committee for that of the class in 'orthodox Marxism'. But substitutionism is also manifest in insurrectionary anarchist conceptions of direct action, where the exemplary actions of

[32] Philip Resnick, “The Political Theory of Extra-Parliamentarianism” in *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 6:1 (March 1973), 65.

a group or cadre are substituted for the perceived passivity of the masses in the hopes of raising revolutionary consciousness. Direct action as a non-substitutionist form of unmediated action, conversely, seeks to overcome hierarchical divisions in the workplace or community between leaders and led, or official representatives and constituents, and in so doing, aspires to forge solidarities through this action and create a sense of grassroots social power.

Prefiguration, or the principle that form must follow function in revolutionary politics, is the principle that most closely corresponds to this non-substitutionist orientation. The prefigurative forms of a radical socialist transformation – communes, popular assemblies, councils, and so on – are tied to notions of self-management in two senses: what might be termed self-managed struggle, or the direction and control of tactics and methods by those directly involved, and self-managed production, or the directly democratic control of productive activities. The former corresponds to methods, tactics, and strategies, and is not an absolute, but rather, it is practiced with regards to the available options, the balance of class forces, and so on. For example, while seeking to abolish the wages system, the state or militarism, few 'libertarian communists' would reject a pay increase at work as they are opposed to wage labour, call for the dissolution of state-run public health care systems from an anti-statist orientation, or in a revolutionary situation, dismiss the organisation of workers' militias for defense from counter-revolutionary elements on the grounds that all military formations are authoritarian. Self-management of production, on the other hand, corresponds to the ideal of how an economy and polity ought to function in a post-capitalist society. While the prefigurative dimension of anarchist social theory has been explored extensively[33] by contemporary theorists, it is important to note that this was also a feature of council communism and was elaborated in Marx's later writings.

Like the Paris Commune in 1871, the Russian *obshchina* (peasant commune) and societies on the periphery of capitalist industrial development had a profound impact on Marx's political ideas. His analysis of emergent social forms was considerably shaped with regards to their relation to social

[33] See for example Benjamin Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The means and ends of contemporary British anarchisms* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press and Dark Star, 2006), 97-114.

revolution to the peripheral, largely 'undeveloped' (meaning non-industrialised), agrarian-based Russian society of the late nineteenth century, and reveals a non-teleological, non-'stagist' theory of social revolution. These interpretations are derived from Marx's correspondence with Vera Zasulich, who inquired whether the Russian peasant commune had to proceed through a period of capitalist industrialisation, or if it could proceed directly to communism.[34] In Marx's estimation, the commune could feasibly proceed directly to communism without passing through the 'stages' of capitalist industrialisation towards socialist ownership. A later preface to the 1882 Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto* (the first edition was translated by Bakunin) also maintains that the peasant commune represented an important social form in the Russian revolutionary struggle. "If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development."[35] The correspondence with Zasulich was kept hidden by the leading social democratic Marxists of the day, and has since proved a source of controversy in Marxist circles. Some even asserted that Marx was in an advanced stage of senility or otherwise severely afflicted with health problems affecting his reasoning and mental capacity. In the best study of Marx's writings of this period, including the Zasulich correspondence, Sayer and Corrigan sum up the significance:

> What in our view 'Late Marx' has to offer is above all a sustained reflection – the culmination of a lifetime's reflection informed by a deep involvement in the political struggles of the day – on appropriate forms of socialist transformation. A search, on the one hand, for social forms within present forms of life and struggle which are capable of advancing the emancipation of labour – prefigurative forms, as we nowadays call them, not in any Utopian sense but as the only material and effective means for furthering socialism. And a sober identification, on the other hand, of the myriad social forms and relations – going well beyond manifest property relations: state, division of labour, forms of social classification and identity 'encouraged' by complex modes of moral and legal regulation – which fetter that emancipation.[36]

Just as the critique of bourgeois representation rejects the political and economic institutions of

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[34] For Marx's correspondence with Zasulich, see Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the 'peripheries of capitalism'* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 95-126.

[35] Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, "Preface to the Russian Edition of 1882" in *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 6.

[36] Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the 'peripheries of capitalism'*, 91.

capitalist class power, and looks instead to prefigurative forms of directly democratic self-organisation as the proper medium for administering human affairs, so too is the nation state rejected on the basis that it forms the territorial and intellectual framework for bourgeois political and economic affairs. The nation state, and its corresponding political expression in nationalism, asserts that there exists a mystical commonality – a horizontal relationship – between all members of an ethnic, linguistic, or cultural group that transcends other antagonisms. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels responded to the charge of "desiring to abolish countries and nationality" by asserting that "The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got."[37]

## 7. Conclusion

As ideas and as social movements, anarchism and Marxism emerged as organised and critical responses to the formation of the nation state and industrial capitalism, and these revolutionary traditions continued to develop and grow beyond their origins in the mid to late nineteenth-century, as did the targets of their critique: the state form, the capitalist mode of production, hierarchical power structures, social inequality and a variety of oppressions. Arguably, the continued, changing, and overlapping existence of these social forms in contemporary society has meant the continued relevance of these critiques. But perhaps more intriguingly, in terms of the purpose of this thesis, has been the variety of ways in which multiple anarchisms and Marxisms have repeatedly engaged with each other through different points of contact. This challenges the standard and well-established narrative of anarchism and Marxism as two hostile, irreconcilable, and diametrically opposed worldviews, and has limited hermeneutic utility in understanding the evolving relationships between anarchisms, Marxisms, and the dynamic of social revolutionary movements.

As complex ideological formations, the ineliminable concepts in the Marxist and anarchist traditions overlap and intersect. For instance, all anarchisms have as an ineliminable concept a notion of liberty developed through a critique of hierarchy and authoritarian social relations. Socialist anarchism differs from individualist varieties by placing, as a very close adjacent concept, the common ownership of the

[37] Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 54-55.

means of production and the view that genuine liberty can only be attained through association with others. This, as opposed to individualist anarchist ideas of the individual moral agent as the basic societal unit or subject. As important peripheral concepts, socialist anarchisms have maintained that autonomous labour or political organisations form the basis of a revolutionary praxis both in a combative and prefigurative capacity. These collective agents of social change are found to be consistent with ineliminable concepts in so far as they operate non-hierarchically, on a directly democratic basis, and do not participate in parliamentary or capitalist institutions. The precise social forms of this collective agency are largely context bound.

Different ideological outlooks may also have varying degrees of political agreement with each other. Thus, ideologies have shifting conceptual boundaries and often occupy overlapping political space. For instance, the Marxist critique of the capitalist mode of production has, as a distant or more immediate goal, the realisation of a classless and stateless society; a goal that Marxism ideationally shares with socialist anarchism as a constant point of intersection. The state, in most forms of Marxist political theory, is understood as a political instrument of class rule and would, by definition, cease to exist in a classless society. In the sphere of political practice, the greater the commitment to elitist vanguard organisation or electoralism as medium or long-term political strategies are, for example with Leninism or social democracy, the more remote the relationship is with anarchism. Conversely, the greater the commitment to the self-activity of collective agents in the revolutionary process, the increased likelihood of multiple points of ideological intersection. Thus, the placement of liberty (understood as popular self-organisation and free association) as an adjacent or peripheral concept in Marxist praxis helps to determine its proximity to socialist anarchism.

# CHAPTER 2

# ANARCHISM, MARXISM, AND THE IDEOLOGICAL COMPOSITION OF THE CHICAGO IDEA

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Contents



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## 1. The Haymarket Affair

The dramatic story of the 'Haymarket Affair' in 1886 (sometimes referred to as the 'Haymarket Tragedy' or 'Haymarket Riot') has been told many times. In addition to several indepth accounts[1], the Haymarket Affair has furnished material for numerous journal articles[2] as well as works of historical fiction[3].

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[1] Standard accounts include Henry David, *The History of the Haymarket Affair: A Study of the American Social-Revolutionary and Labor Movements* (New York: Collier Books,1963); Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont (eds.), *Haymarket Scrapbook* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, Publishing Company 1986); Bruce Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870-1900* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1988) and James Green, *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement and the Bombing that divided Guilded Age America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007)

[2] See for example, Edward Mittleman, "Chicago Labor Politics 1877-1896," in *Journal of Political Economy*, 28 (May 1920), 407-427; Michael Johnson, "Albert Parsons: An American Architect of Syndicalism," in *Midwest Quarterly* 9 (January 1968), 195-206; Robert K. Wallace, "Billy Budd and the Haymarket Hangings," in *American Literature*, 47:1 (March 1975), 108-113; Gary Cross, "Worktime Between Haymarket and the Popular Front," in *International Labor and Working-Class History,* 30 (September 1986); D.M. (ed.), "Haymarket Centenary." Special Issue. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 29 (March 1986), 1-82; Bryan D. Palmer, "CSI Labor History: Haymarket and the Forensics of Forgetting," in *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 3:1 (Spring 2006), 25-36; Shelley Streetby, "Labor, Memory, and the Boundaries of Print Culture: From Haymarket to the Mexican Revolution," in *American Literary History*, 19:2 (Summer, 2007), 406-433.

[3] These vary in quality. See for example, Frank Harris, *The Bomb* (London: Longmans, 1908), which gives a sensationalized version of the events while Martin Duberman, *Haymarket: A Novel* (New York: Seven Stories,

The saga of the Haymarket Affair is connected with the struggle for the eight-hour work day. In the United States, a mass workers' movement aimed at a reduction in working hours had strongly asserted itself. This movement was propelled into action by predominantly unskilled and unorganised workers, as well as newly-arrived immigrants to the United States, who heeded the call of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada that May 1st, 1886 would mark the official beginning of the eight-hour day. In what came to be known as the 'Great Upheaval', on May 1st, nation-wide upwards of half a million workers took part in actions aimed at winning this demand. Chicago had witnessed the largest strikes, demonstrations, and most intense agitation, where the revolutionary International Working People's Association (IWPA) and affiliated organizations – initially reluctant to participate in what was in essence a reformist demand[4] – were at the forefront of this mass movement. Three days later, on May 4th, a bomb was thrown at a protest rally in Chicago's Haymarket Square. The rally had been called in response to armed repression of striking workers at McCormick Reaper Works by police the previous day. In the aftermath of the explosion, seven policemen lay dead and an undetermined number of workers were injured or killed by police gunfire.

The identity of the bomb thrower has never been ascertained, although there has been much speculation.[5] This, however, was largely inconsequential at the time. After the bombing, Chicago's industrialists and ruling elite had at last gained the relevant pretext for carrying out a sweeping repression of the rapidly growing, militant workers movement. The repression was swift. Over the next few weeks following the bombing over two hundred IWPA members were arrested and jailed in

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2004) provides a more sympathetic account.

4 Albert Parsons wrote “Either our position that capitalists have no right to the exclusive ownership of the means of life is a true one, or it is not. If we are correct, then to concede the point that capitalists have the right to eight hours of our labour, is more than a compromise; it is a virtual confession that the wage system is right.” Quoted in Guy Aldred, *The Pioneers of Anti-Parliamentarism, “The Word” Library 7* (Glasgow: The Strickland Press/Bakunin Press, 1940), 58.

5 Historian Paul Avrich, for instance, while skeptically noting that the likelihood determining the true identity of the bomb thrower “beyond any shadow of a doubt has faded with the passage of time,” he nonetheless came to believe that a certain George Meng was the most probable candidate. See Paul Avrich, “The Bomb-Thrower: A New Candidate” in Roediger and Rosemont (eds.), *Haymarket Scrapbook* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 71-73.

raids. Of these, thirty one were indicted and eight were put on trial were for conspiracy to commit murder – August Spies, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Louis Lingg, Michael Schwab, Samuel Fielden and Oscar Neebe. The defendants' clear innocence mattered little as it was their political convictions that were on trial. As the state prosecutor had remarked:

> Law is upon trial. Anarchy is on trial. These men have been selected, picked out by the grand jury and indicted because they were leaders. They are no more guilty than the thousand who follow them. Gentlemen of the jury; convict these men, make examples of them, hang them and save our institutions, our society.[6]

Spies, Parsons, Fischer and Engel were executed by hanging by the state of Illinois on November 11, 1887 while Lingg took his own life in prison prior to his scheduled execution. Schwab, Fielden, and Neebe were given long jail sentences but were later pardoned, in 1893, by Illinois governor John Altgeld. In Altgeld's estimation, the extreme police brutality common place in Chicago's labour disputes was to be regarded as the primary reason for the Haymarket events.[7] In the late nineteenth-century, extreme poverty existed alongside fabulous wealth in Chicago. Social unrest was routinely suppressed violently by the police and other organs of 'law and order' such as the infamous Pinkertons, a private security agency formed in Chicago in 1850.

It is not difficult to understand why the Haymarket Affair, the trial and execution of five of its most outstanding militants, and its radical legacy have continued to capture the imagination of historians, activists, and artists alike. The Haymarket Affair not only represents the first American 'red scare', but also a grim turning point in American labour relations, in many ways foreshadowing the decades of violent class conflict between capital and labour through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this way, the radical tradition of the Chicago labour movement of the 1880s poses a challenge to notions of American exceptionalism and ideas that the historical trajectory of statism and capitalism were inevitable or 'natural' outcomes. In Gerald Friedman's view, in his comparative study of the French and American labour movements, "the failure of radical union institutions to survive in

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[6] Quoted in Albert Parsons, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis as Defined by Some of Its Apostles* (Chicago: Mrs. A. R. Parsons, 1887), 57.

[7] Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 124.

America" was simply the "result of greater government hostility toward unions" rather than a "conservative temperament" or rugged, individualist ethos.[8] On this level, some scholars have drawn parallels between the Haymarket Affair and later instances of state repression and injustice, such as the case of Italian-American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti.[9] Furthermore, the conviction and execution of the Haymarket Martyrs was a touchstone event for American and international socialist and labour movements. The Haymarket Affair furnished a set martyrs for the cause of the labour movement while inspiring a new generation of revolutionaries, whose sympathies were aroused by the deep injustices that the trial exposed. American radicals in the early twentieth-century, both foreign-born, like Emma Goldman, and native-born, like William "Big Bill" Haywood, cited the Haymarket as major turning points in their lives.[10] This reaction was not limited to the United States. The execution of the Haymarket Martyrs became the key inspiration for the adoption of May 1st as May Day, or International Workers' Day, a significant annual working-class event officially celebrated around the world, with two notable exceptions being the United States and Canada. Indeed, as Levy noted, in the pre-First World War era, May Day and the Paris Commune shaped the nascent internationalism of the early global working-class movement: "For the anarchists and radical socialists May Day in the 1890s was a one-day global general strike of international solidarity when the industrial suburbs overwhelmed bourgeois city centres."[11] November 11th, the day of the execution of the Haymarket Martyrs, was also commemorated for decades by revolutionary socialists, much like fall of the Paris Commune.

Another perhaps more buried aspect of the Haymarket Affair has, more recently, figured prominently as part of a dialogue between 'libertarian Marxist' Staughton Lynd and 'Balkan anarchist' Andrej Grubacic in their 2008 *Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism and*

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8 Gerald Friedman, "Strike Success and Union Ideology: The United States and France, 1880-1914," in *The Journal of Economic History*, Volume 48, Number 1 (March 1968), 3.

9 Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 12.

10 See William D. Haywood, *The Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood* (New York: International Publishers Company, 1966), 31 and Emma Goldman, Living My Life Volume One (New York: Dover 1970), 8-10.

11 Carl Levy, "Anarchism, Internationalism and Nationalism in Europe, 1860-1939" in *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 50:3 (2004), 334.

*Radical History*. In it, they cite the revolutionary ideology of the Haymarket Martyrs, or what came to be known as the "Chicago Idea", as "one of the most exciting, and [...] most neglected examples of anarchist-Marxist [synthesis]," in what they call the "Haymarket Synthesis."[12] Lynd and Grubacic are not alone in this assessment. Historian Paul Buhle calls the Chicago Idea a "*tertium quid*" between anarchism and Marxism.[13] "The 'anarchist' propaganda of the day," writes Buhle, "resounded, at one level, with natural rights doctrines of freedom, equality, and fraternity. On another level, the Social Revolutionaries encompassed as much Marxian economics as European-style Socialists."[14] In the opening pages of his historical treatment of the anarchist movement Daniel Guérin quoted Haymarket Martyr Adolph Fischer in his assertion that "every anarchist is a socialist but not every socialist is necessarily an anarchist".[15] Guérin's reading of the anarchist tradition through the twentieth-century emphasized the ideas as well as the "spontaneous actions of popular revolutionary struggle" which he regarded as having commonality with elements in the revolutionary Marxist milieu.[16] Indeed, one of the remarkable features of the theory and practice of the Chicago Idea militants is the absence of heated polemics between class struggle-oriented Marxist socialists and direct action-oriented anarchists – a perennial and familiar theme evident in most major studies of left and labour history. Chicago's social revolutionaries had, after 1880, used the terms 'anarchist' and 'socialist' interchangeably, and had openly drawn inspiration from both anarchist sources and the writings of Marx. McKean, in his 2006 study of Lucy Parsons (widow of Haymarket Martyr Albert Parsons and a founding member of the IWW) writes that:

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[12] Staughton Lynd and Andrej Grubacic, *Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism and Radical History* (Oakland: PM Press, 2008) 8.

[13] Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the USA: From 1870 to the Present Day* (London: Verso, 1987), 42.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970) 12-13. Guérin goes on to note that "Some anarchists consider themselves to be the best and most logical socialists, but they have adopted a label also attached to the terrorists, or have allowed others to hang it around their necks. This has often caused them to be mistaken for a sort of 'foreign body' in the socialist family and has led to a long string of misunderstandings and verbal battles – usually quite purposeless. Some contemporary anarchists have tried to clear up the misunderstanding by adopting a more explicit term: they align themselves with libertarian socialist or communism."

[16] Noam Chomsky, Introduction to *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, by Daniel Guérin (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), pp. vii-xx. Chomsky regards this reading as an appropriate method to understand anarchism as well as in guiding efforts towards social change.

> The Chicago Idea was characterized by a Marxist-influenced analysis of capital and labor (especially in the form of the labor theory of value), a rejection of reform and electoralism, a belief in the necessity of violent class warfare and the immediate dissolution of all hierarchy and coercive social systems, including the state.

He goes on to suggest that "Chicago Idea anarchism was characterized by a pluralistic approach to organizing and a non-dogmatic view of ideology." McKean, who focuses primarily on revolutionary anarchism, acknowledges that "the study of [...] the Chicago anarchists has yet to fully get off the ground, although it looks to be a promising venture for those interested."[17]

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the revolutionary ideology of the Haymarket Martyrs, emphasizing this convergence between anarchism and Marxism as important but neglected features of the Chicago Idea, and a consideration that has perhaps been overshadowed by bibliographical treatments. Previous scholarly accounts of the Haymarket Affair have tended to focus almost exclusively on the individuals associated with the trial or have emphasized the post-1883 anarchist characteristics of the movement. Various authors, such as the ones cited above, have recognised the unique anarchist-Marxist features of Chicago's social revolutionary movement, but lacking is a more thorough engagement with these political ideas. The result has been that the ideology of the Haymarket Martyrs and the movement of which they were a part has remained somewhat perplexing, or at the very least, indeterminate, in most histories of the movement. As Nelson argues, anarchism is "an inappropriate but widely used label" for the Chicago Idea.[18] He later comments that "If European anarchism is identified with Proudhon and Kropotkin, American anarchism with Josiah Warren and Benjamin Tucker, and immigrant anarchism with Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, then the membership of Chicago's IWPA was not anarchist."[19] Indeed, as will be demonstrated below, various other political labels have been attached to the Chicago Idea including 'anarchist', 'syndicalist' or 'anarcho-syndicalist', and 'revolutionary socialist', while the movement itself had identified itself at

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[17] McKean, Jacob. "A Fury For Justice : Lucy Parsons and The Revolutionary Anarchist Movement in Chicago" Senior Thesis in History (10/17/2006). Advisor: Professor Robin D. G. Kelley, available online: http://raforum.info/these/spip.php?article166 (accessed November 6, 2008)

[18] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 6.

[19] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 153.

various times between 1880-1886 as 'social revolutionary' or 'communistic-anarchist'.

From the outset, there are at least two possible objections to an investigation of Chicago Idea ideology. The first is the assertion that Chicago's working-class militants "devoted themselves far more to practical activity [...] than they did to creating coherent revolutionary theory"[20] and that its "culture, thought, and ideology were in a process of change and development."[21] In other words, the Chicago Idea developed on the shifting ground of political practice, which was reflected in its apparent theoretical inconsistencies, heterodoxy and action-orientation. The second possible objection, related to the first, is that Chicago Idea movement (in its most familiar form) existed for a very brief period, roughly between 1883 (the drafting of the 'Pittsburgh Proclamation') and 1886 (the Haymarket Affair). Thus, the movement's theoretical development was prematurely impeded by the repression meted out after the bombing, and therefore can not be considered to have had sufficient time to develop its ideas, making any conclusions about its ideology suspect.

However, following Freeden's 'morphological' approach (as outlined in the Introduction), in the following, the focus will be on a contextualised analysis of the development and continuity of the concepts of the Chicago Idea in the ten year period from the formation of the Workingmen's Party of the United States (WPUS) in 1876 through to the Haymarket Affair in 1886, and an extension of this understanding to the legacy of these ideas. While the Chicago Idea represents a brief sample, the evolution of its ideas from 1876 onwards exhibits certain continuities, commonalities and differences with both its contemporaries and the later manifestations of these ideas. The historic role of the working class in the overthrow of capitalism and labour unions as a key agent in the revolutionary process were continuous elements in Chicago's radical labour movement. Increasing disillusionment with electoralism contributed to the adoption of a consciously held anarchist praxis: capitalist exploitation was seen as being intimately tied with state power, therefore labour unions as anti-parliamentary and prefigurative organs of social change were understood as being most effective and

[20] Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 130.
[21] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 153.

consistent with social revolutionary aims. Thus, Marxist-inspired notions of class struggle and understandings of the dynamics of capitalist economies were synthesized with the anti-statism, direct action methods, and the critiques of hierarchy characteristic of the anarchist tradition. Chicago labour radicalism came to regard communism (common ownership of the means of production) as assuming anarchism (a stateless self-managed economy and polity), and vice versa. This arrangement also provides a conceptual lens through which to understand the revolutionary pluralism of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the main inheritor of the Chicago Idea, as well as associated labour radicalisms.

## 2. Perspectives on the Chicago Idea: Anarchism, Syndicalism, and Revolutionary Socialism

The Chicago Idea might be summed up as simply "anarchist means for socialist ends"[22], or as Avrich writes, a combination of "anarchism and revolutionary unionism."[23] More precisely, Chicago Idea ideology regarded labour unions both as instruments in the class struggle as well as prefigurative organs, or as "autonomous commune[s] in the process of incubation", of a post-capitalist society.[24] The precise origins of the term 'Chicago Idea' are unclear. One potential candidate is from a pejorative depiction of Chicago's labour radicals in half-page cartoon published in *Harper's Weekly* April 16, 1887, a highly influential liberal publication hostile to the cause of the 'Chicago anarchists.' The cartoon shows "four respectable citizens tossing a knife-brandishing Anarchist in a blanket labelled 'The Red Flag of Anarchy' [...] The cartoon is captioned, 'The Chicago Idea: Tossing the Anarchist in His Own Blanket – the Red Flag –.'"[25] It is possible that Chicago's militant unionists had, in 1887, reclaimed the term 'Chicago Idea' for themselves, much as the movement had previously embraced the 'anarchist' and 'communist' epithets slung at them by the press. The first scholarly use of the 'Chicago Idea' term appears much later, in Commons et al. *History of Labor in the United States*

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[22] Staughton Lynd, "The General Strike," *Industrial Worker* (September 2006), 6.
[23] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 73.
[24] John Commons, J. et al., *History of Labor in the United States: Volume II.* (Washington: Beard Books, 1918), 297.
[25] Clara Kirk and Rudolf Kirk, "William Dean Howells, George William Curtis, and the 'Haymarket Affair'", in *American Literature*, 40:4 (Jan., 1969), 493.

(1918), in a section written by Selig Perlman[26], although the term was in all likelihood in use within Chicago's lively radical labour and bohemian circles from at least 1914 onwards.[27] Perlman suggests that the Metal Workers Federation of America, formed in 1885, came the closest to embodying these revolutionary unionist ideals laid out by Chicago labour militants. Its Declaration of Principles maintains that reforms to the capitalist system will not succeed in bringing about the emancipation of labour. Rather, "the entire abolition of the present system of society can alone emancipate the workers; being replaced upon co-operative organization of production in a free society" brought about by union organizations designed to "educate its members for the new condition of society".[28] As an autonomous, self-organized labour union, the Declaration mirrors the rallying cry of the First International in that "the emancipation of the productive classes must come by their own efforts", and as such, it recommends against "meddling" in party politics.[29]

This conception of revolutionary unionism, of course, was not limited to Chicago.[30] Chicago was, however, its main stronghold. In the late nineteenth-century the city was not only the epicentre of the struggle for the eight-hour day in the U.S., but after the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, the struggle may well be considered to have been the international focal point for labour radicalism. The sheer scale of mobilisations for the eight-hour day, as well as the labour disputes and workers' uprisings over the previous decade, were largely unmatched elsewhere outside of the United States, no doubt due to the repressive atmosphere in Europe after the fall of the Paris Commune.[31] This fact that had not gone unnoticed by European revolutionaries such as Peter Kropotkin and Karl Marx, both of whom praised the growing militancy and innovative spirit of the American labour movement.[32] On

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[26] Others who have written extensively about the Chicago Idea, such as Paul Avrich and Salvatore Salerno, also reference this source.

[27] See Franklin Rosemont, *The Rise & Fall of the Dil Pickle: Jazz-Age Chicago's Wildest & Most Outrageously Creative Hobohemian Nightspot* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2003).

[28] Commons et al., *History of Labor in the United States, Volume II*, 297-298.

[29] Ibid.

[30] See for example Stephen Schwartz, *Brotherhood of the Sea: A History of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, 1885-1985* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1986), 9-10.

[31] See Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 245-251.

[32] Kropotkin wrote "This movement will have certainly impressed profoundly the proletariat of Europe and excited its admiration. Its spontaneity, its simultaneousness at so many different points, communicating by

the eve of the Haymarket Affair, Chicago's revolutionaries could boast the circulation of at least eight papers published in four different languages (German, English, Czech, and Danish)[33] – one of them, the German-language *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, a daily; an alternative labour union organization – the Central Labor Union – numbering some 20 000 workers[34], rivalling both the more conservative Trades and Labor Assembly and the Knights of Labor; a highly developed radical infrastructure of labour halls, mutual aid societies, and groups for self-education; as well as a variety of cultural activities including plays, picnics, dances, concerts and lectures.[35]

Bruce Nelson's invaluable 1988 study *Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870-1900* provides an excellent overview of this multi-ethnic, working-class radicalism and its culture. Significantly, Nelson's study departs from most standard historical or bibliographical analyses by examining the social, cultural, and political ideas of the predominantly immigrant rank and file membership of Chicago's socialist and anarchist organizations before and after the bombing. Nelson's study is also noteworthy as one of the only serious treatments of the Chicago Idea ideology. He writes that "The label 'anarchist' is an awkward fit on Chicago's social-revolutionaries for it was given, not chosen" and advises against the use of "twentieth-century labels" such as syndicalist, anarcho-syndicalist, and anarcho-communist to describe their movement.[36] "Chicago's anarchists," he goes on to say, "can be best understood as revolutionary socialists, the self-conscious heirs of the failed bourgeois revolutions of 1848."[37] Goyens also picks up on this theme. In his study of the late

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telegraph, the aid given by the workers of different trades, the resolute character of the uprising from the beginning, call forth our sympathies, quicken our hopes." Quoted in Sam Dolgoff, "Revolutionary Tendencies in American Labor Part 1", available online: http://www.iww.org/culture/library/dolgoff/labor4.shtml (accessed November 8, 2008). Marx, writing to Engels asked, "What do you think of the workers in the United States? This first eruption against the oligarchy of associated capital which has arisen since the Civil War will of course be put down, but it could quite well form the starting point for the establishment of a serious labour party in the United States [...] Thus a fine mess is in the offing over there, and transferring the centre of the International to the United States might, post festum, turn out to have been a peculiarly opportune move. Marx-Engels Correspondence (July 25, 1877), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/letters/77_07_25.htm (accessed November 8, 2008).

33 Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 124.

34 Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 126.

35 Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 127-152.

36 Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 153.

37 Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 156.

nineteenth-century German-American anarchist movement he stated that “In the United States, the anarchist label was not commonly used by revolutionary socialists until after the split with state socialists around 1880 [...] Because 'anarchist' had long been a term of derision, revolutionaries were at first apprehensive to adopt the label.”[38] For Nelson, the ideological development of the Chicago Idea passed from radical republicanism, to electoral socialism, and finally, to revolutionary socialism (the label that Nelson feels to best suit the Chicago Idea).

It bears repeating here that 'syndicalist' and 'anarcho-communist,' unlike 'anarcho-syndicalist,' are not in fact twentieth-century labels. The Chicago Idea certainly resembles some of the hallmarks of the pre-WWI French revolutionary syndicalist tradition, as expressed by the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT) in the Charter of Amiens (1906): the tactic of the general strike, union independence from political parties, and an emphasis on the creation of revolutionary unions.[39] The Chicago Idea, however, pre-dates the emergence of French syndicalism as a coherent tendency in the labour movement by over a decade, and the widespread use of the term 'anarcho-syndicalist' by over three decades.[40] Some evidence in fact suggests that Chicago's labour militancy may have significantly contributed to the syndicalist idea of the general strike. In his 1904 *Genesis of the Idea of the General Strike*, Emile Pouget, one of the chief theorists of revolutionary syndicalism, wrote that:

> In the United States, the idea of the general strike – fertilized by the blood of anarchists hanged in Chicago, following the events of May 1st 1886 – was imported to France. Here, it was as in the United States: the idea of the general strike, considered "unscientific", left theorists cold, both socialists and anarchists; it only allured workers and militants who had drawn their inspiration more from the facts of social life than from books.[41]

As Esenwein observed, the impact of the tactic of the general strike, as practiced by the movement of the Haymarket Martyrs, also had a similar influence on the 'collectivist' and 'communist' anarchist

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[38] Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914.* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 12.

[39] “Charter of Amiens” (1906), available online: http://www.fondation-besnard.org/article.php3?id_article=125 (accessed December 8, 2008)

[40] See Dave Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917-1945* (Edinburgh, Oakland, West Virginia: AK Press, 2009), 152 and Ralf Darlington “Syndicalism and the influence of anarchism in France, Italy and Spain,” in *Anarchist Studies* 12:2 (2009), 30-37.

[41] Emile Pouget, *La genèse de l’idée de grève générale* (1904), available online: http://www.pelloutier.net/dossiers/dossiers.php?id_dossier=59 (accessed November 4, 2008)

workers' movements in Spain.[42]

The label 'anarcho-communist' or 'anarchist-communist', on the other hand, was widely used in the nineteenth-century, increasingly so after the death of Bakunin in 1876, in accordance with the overall shift from collectivism (remuneration for labour) to communism (distribution according to need) amongst anarchists in the late nineteenth-century. Anarchist-communism, or 'communistic-anarchism,' perhaps comes closer to accurately defining the ideology of Chicago's revolutionaries, and certain parallels do exist between the ideas of European revolutionaries and those of the proponents of the Chicago Idea, especially as critiques of mutualist economic arrangements and in the syntheses of Marxist communism and anarchist anti-statism; considerations which we shall return to in section 5.

Nelson's point, however, like that of early Haymarket historian Henry David, is to caution against the temptation of applying more familiar categories of revolutionary theory to the Chicago movement and thereby oversimplifying a far more complex movement.[43] Yet, Nelson also runs the risk of diluting the political ideas of the Chicago movement by applying too broad a term. While Chicago Idea ideology, especially after 1880, certainly fits under the broad heading of 'revolutionary socialist' for its disavowal of gradualist methods and its overall anti-capitalist orientation, this label might be also applied to a variety of left-wing movements which vary widely in terms of strategy and tactics, particularly regarding questions of capturing or dismantling state power.

As David Roediger argues in his essay *Albert Parsons: The Anarchist as Trade Unionist*, “many of the tenets of 'Chicago-idea' anarchism had coalesced for Parsons well before he met Johann Most and joined the International Working People's Association in 1883,” through the experience of the Workingmen's Party of the United States (WPUS; renamed the Socialistic Labor Party in 1878), the first Marxist-inspired political party in America.[44] Aside from Parsons, the same could be said for the other Haymarket Martyrs and broad sections of the Chicago movement's rank and file, whose

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[42] See “The Haymarket Tragedy, the Origins of May Day, and Their Impact on the Anarchist Movement,” in George Richard Esenwein, *Anarchist Ideology and the Working-Class Movement in Spain* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 155-165.

[43] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 153.

[44] Roediger and Rosemont (eds.), *Haymarket Scrapbook*, 32.

adherents were primarily drawn from this milieu. “The overwhelming majority of Chicago's 'anarchists',” writes Nelson, “came from the Socialistic Labor Party; despite a sectarian split that became finalized in 1881, the political, social, economic, and cultural similarities between the 'socialist' and 'anarchist' movements reflect a fundamental continuity.”[45] The class struggle perspectives of the Chicago Idea, as will be illustrated in the section below, emerged from the Marxist 'trade unionist' faction of the WPUS, of which Chicago was the main stronghold, and must be understood in relation to the evolution of Marx's ideas after the Paris Commune.

## 3. The American Commune-ists: Marx and the Chicago Idea

If a part of the intellectual heritage of the Chicago Idea might be considered as Marxist, or informed by the ideas of Marx, this influence has little in common with what came to be considered as the dominant, or orthodox, expressions of Marxism through the twentieth-century. In the late nineteenth-century, neither 'Marxist' nor 'anarchist ideas had completely crystallised into definite form. As Levy points out, “well-defined Marxist and Anarchist ideologies are only really evident in the late 1870s or even 1880s. Marxism as 'scientific socialism' took decades to permeate into the socialist movement of Europe.”[46]

The Marx of the Chicago Idea was that of the *Civil War in France* and *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*, works responding directly to changed political conditions after the experience of the Paris Commune, a significant episode which had a profound impact on revolutionaries in the United States, and indeed, worldwide. In the words of Georges Haupt, the Commune represented both “symbol and example.” A symbol, as the image, collective memory, and ideological content of one of the first significant modern social revolutionary workers' insurrections. An example, through the attempts to draw theoretical and practical conclusions from the experience of the Commune. The Commune, as a short lived example of workers directly governing themselves, perhaps more so than any other development within the late nineteenth-century international socialist milieu and beyond, provided the

[45] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 5-6.
[46] Carl Levy, “Anarchism, Internationalism and Nationalism in Europe, 1860-1939”, 332.

main ideas for the practical foundations on which a revolutionary movement ought to be built.[47]

Albert Parsons affirmed the Commune as "an attempt by force of arms to secure labor's economic emancipation."[48] Philip Katz writes that "More than anyone else, the Chicago anarchists became the guardians of the Commune's memory in America. It was part of their ideology and part of their movement culture."[49] Marx's *The Civil War in France*, published in 1871, circulated widely and was translated into several languages, first appearing in the U.S. that same year as a pamphlet entitled *Defense of the Paris Commune*.[50] Indeed, news of the Paris Commune disseminated widely in the U.S. through the widespread use of the telegraph, a technological innovation which significantly altered the way that news was gathered and distributed, and first utilized to quench the growing thirst for up-to-date news of the American Civil War.[51]

The experience of the Paris Commune may well have contributed to Marx's later focus on societies on the periphery of industrial capitalist development and forms of human cooperation that might contribute to a radical social transformation. This emphasis along with the 'libertarian' revisions to revolutionary strategy after the Paris Commune, to use Daniel Guérin's term[52], had been preserved in the Chicago Idea, later forming an appropriate counterpart to anarchist social criticism and direct action methods. Rosemont writes that Marx's later interest in societies on the periphery of capitalist development[53] provides a "firm basis for the historical reconciliation of revolutionary Marxists and anarchists."[54] Indeed, one of the interesting intellectual links between Marx and Chicago Idea militants was a shared interest in Native American culture and indigenous forms of self-governance as living

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47 Georges Haupt, *Aspects of international socialism, 1871-1914*; translated by Peter Fawcett; with a preface by Eric Hobsbawm. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 22-36.

48 Philip M. Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre: Americans and the Paris Commune* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1998), 109.

49 Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre*, 186.

50 Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre*, 98.

51 Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre*, 62.

52 Daniel Guérin, *Libertarian Marxism?* (1969), available online: http://libcom.org/library/libertarian-marxism (accessed December 18, 2008).

53 See Theodor Shalin (ed.), *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984)

54 Franklin Rosemont, "Karl Marx and the Iroquois", http://libcom.org/library/karl-marx-iroquois-franklin-rosemont (accessed August 6, 2010)

models of egalitarian social organisation. This connection was also made by the mainstream press in the United States in relation to the Paris Commune, who equated the resistance and efforts to preserve or create forms of self-government of the 'Reds' of the Commune with the 'savagery' of the 'Red Indians' of North America.[55] Both Haymarket Martyr August Spies and Karl Marx, independently of each other,[56] were fascinated in the works of American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan and his ethnological studies of the Iroquois.[57] Spies had pursued this interest to the extent that he had spent several months in Canada living amongst the Ojibwa.[58] Chicago's social revolutionaries also gave vocal support to the Métis uprising against the Dominion of Canada in the Northwest Rebellion in 1885 lead by Louis Riel[59]. The Chicago movement was later joined by Honoré Joseph Jaxon. Jaxon, one of the guerrilla leaders of the Northwest Rebellion, later became a tireless radical union organiser and campaigner in defense of the Haymarket Martyrs.[60]

Marx's critique of the capitalist mode of production, the aim of class abolitionism, and a materialist conception of history – as elaborated in *Capital* and other works – were all central elements of the Chicago Idea. Included in Albert Parsons' posthumous *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis as Defined by Some of Its Apostles* (prepared while Parsons was in prison) is the entire *Wage Labour and Capital* pamphlet by Marx (minus the introduction)[61], as well as nearly the entire first chapter, 'Bourgeois and Proletarians', from the *Communist Manifesto*. The only missing section of the first chapter of the *Communist Manifesto*, the opening five paragraphs, are restated in Parsons' introduction to *Wage Labour and Capital*. Alongside these classic Marxist texts in Parsons' work are the first section of Peter Kropotkin's *Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles* (republished as *The Scientific Basis of Anarchy*) and Élisée Reclus' *An Anarchist on Anarchy*. The wide appreciation

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55 Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre*, 131-136.
56 Marx's notes on Morgan's ethnographies were unknown during his lifetime, published nearly 90 years after his death. See Lawrence Krader (ed.), *The ethnological notebooks of Karl Marx: Studies of Morgan, Phear, Maine, Lubbock* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972)
57 Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 122.
58 Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 121.
59 Roediger and Rosemont (eds.), *Haymarket Scrapbook*, 103.
60 See Donald B. Smith, *Honoré Jaxon: Prairie Visionary* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2007)
61 This is mistakenly cited by Parsons as a chapter from Marx's *Capital* and incorrectly identified by Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 161 as Chapter 19 of Capital Volume 1.

of Marx's works amongst Chicago's social revolutionaries beyond the leadership to the rank and file. In 1885, a report of the literature circulated by the Chicago Socialist Publishing Society showed that next to the *Pittsburgh Proclamation*, the *Communist Manifesto* was the most popular brochure, selling some 25 000 copies.[62]

This particular Marxist influence on Chicago's working-class radicals becomes more clear when put in the context of the early development of the Chicago Idea, from the years of 1876 to 1880. This originally found expression in the divisions between Lassallean state socialists and Marxist revolutionary unionists in the formation of the WPUS in 1876. Of the Haymarket Martyrs, Louis Lingg who arrived in American in 1885, was the only one who had not been a member of the WPUS/SLP.[63]

The origins of the WPUS can be traced to the dissolution of the IWMA. After the repression of the Commune, Marx had the headquarters of the International relocated to New York. This move has been widely considered as a strategic manoeuvre to keep competing factions of the International (primarily 'Bakuninist') from capturing the organisation. This moment might be considered quite paradoxical for two reasons. First, as Haupt writes, “the Commune had given a boost to the International and at the same time sounded its death-knell.”[64] Second, the experience of the Commune had re-established some common ground between Marx and Bakunin while at the same time intensifying their rivalry. Haupt points to the nearly identical use of words and phrases in Marx and Bakunin's positive assessments of the Commune.[65]

The re-located International did not fare very well in its new American environment, and the organisation folded four years later, in 1876. That same year, the nineteen remaining American sections of the First International met with several other American socialist organizations, the most important being the Lassallean Social Democratic Party of North America, at a unity congress in Philadelphia. Out of this congress the WPUS was launched. This merger brought together two

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62 Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 121.
63 Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 94.
64 Haupt, *Aspects of International Socialism*, 36.
65 Haupt, *Aspects of International Socialism*, 28-29.

distinct socialist tendencies. George A. Schilling, a WPUS member and a later proponent of the Chicago Idea, in *The History of the Labor Movement in Chicago* writes that the "amalgamation of the Internationals and Social-Democrats brought together two opposite elements of Socialists." The Internationals "opposed political action as a means of economic emancipation" while the social democrats "insisted that the ballot was the surest means by which the enlightenment of the masses could be secured." Further, the Internationals "advised members of the party to join trade unions, and through the force of economic organization secure concessions by degrees, while the [social democrats] denounced all attempts at amelioration under the present system." The 'International' or 'trade union' and 'social democratic' or 'political' factions of the WPUS represented Marxist and Lassallean ideas respectively.[66] The Marxists of the WPUS had secured a ban on electoral activity in the party, which, however was compromised by a another policy put forward which accepted electoral activity in municipal elections in favourable circumstances.[67] Significantly, during this period the reformist/revolutionary divisions on the American Left were originally along Lassallean/Marxist lines, rather than between anarchists and Marxists.

The reasons for the unity congress in 1876, leading to the creation of the WPUS, and the particular anti-electoral stance of former members of the First International and followers of Marx resulted from issues arising from the Gotha unity congress in 1875 – the impetus behind the formation of the WPUS came from Germany. "The socialist party in America", writes Goyens, "was modelled on the German party, and it developed similar divisions among its members."[68] This congress brought together the Lassallean *Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein* (ADAV, General German Workers' Association) and the Marxist *Eisenach* faction of the German socialist movement to form the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (later renamed the German Social Democratic Party). In the United States, "News of the Gotha Congress in 1875 forced socialists of all stripes to rethink their strategy by putting aside their

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66 George A. Schilling, "History of the Labor Movement in Chicago" in Lucy Parsons and Albert Parsons *Life of Albert Parsons with Brief History of the Labour Movement in America*, (Chicago, Mrs. Lucy Parsons, Publisher and Proprietor, 1889), XV-XVI.

67 Commons et al., *History of Labor in the United States*, 270.

68 Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 53.

differences."[69] Marx and Engels were highly critical of this merger. Marx meticulously ripped apart Lassallean ideas in his letter (published in 1891) as *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*. The letter was directed towards the *Eisenach* faction, with whom Marx and Engels were in close contact, arguing against concepts such as the 'iron law of wages,' the reformist consequences and bourgeois foundations of focusing on the development of a 'free state.'[70] Instead of fostering the development of the class struggle, which would create new social forms through the revolutionary process, Marx accused the Lassalleans of fetishising the state "as an independent entity that possesses its own intellectual, ethical, and libertarian bases."[71]

Daniel Guérin argued that Marx and Engels were "goaded by Bakunin's criticisms," and following the experience of the Paris Commune, "felt the need to correct the overly statist ideas they had held in 1848."[72] In a letter to W. Bracke accompanying critical notes on the Gotha Programme dated May 5, 1875, Marx comments on the importance of distancing himself from the positions expressed in the Gotha Programme:

> This is indispensable because the opinion — the entirely erroneous opinion — is held abroad and assiduously nurtured by enemies of the Party that we secretly guide from here the movement of the so-called Eisenach Party [ German Social-Democratic Workers Party ]. In a Russian book [ Statism and Anarchy ] that has recently appeared, Bakunin still makes me responsible, for example, not only for all the programmes, etc., of that party but even for every step taken by Liebknecht from the day of his cooperation with the People's Party.[73]

Commenting on the Lassalleans, in a letter to August Bebel in March 1875, Engels writes:

> All the palaver about the state ought to be dropped, especially after the Commune, which had ceased to be a state in the true sense of the term. The people's state has been flung in our teeth ad nauseam by the anarchists, [...] with the introduction of the socialist order of society, the state will dissolve of itself and disappear. Now, since the state is merely a transitional institution of which use is made in the struggle, in the revolution, to keep down one's enemies by force, it is utter nonsense to speak of a free people's state; so long as

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69 Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 61.

70 Karl Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875), Chapter 2, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch02.htm (accessed November 6, 2008)

71 Karl Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme, Chapter 4, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch04.htm (accessed November 6, 2008)

72 Daniel Guérin, *Libertarian Marxism?* (1969), available online: http://libcom.org/library/libertarian-marxism (accessed December 18. 2008)

73 Marx to W. Bracke in Brunswick (May 5, 1875), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/letters/75_05_05.htm (accessed December 18, 2008)

> the proletariat still makes use of the state, it makes use of it, not for the purpose of freedom, but of keeping down its enemies and, as soon as there can be any question of freedom, the state as such ceases to exist. We would therefore suggest that Gemeinwesen ["commonalty"] be universally substituted for state; it is a good old German word that can very well do service for the French "Commune".[74]

Although the positions of Marx and Engels on the Gotha congress remained largely hidden outside of small circles of German socialists until the 1890s (and the adoption of the Erfurt Programme), divisions amongst socialists emphasizing class struggle and union activity, and those favouring reformist approaches, remained pronounced.

Along with the views expressed by Marx in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, the statement in Marx's appraisal of the Paris Commune that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes"[75] might be considered one of the basic positions of the International or 'trade union' faction of the WPUS, of which Chicago was the centre.[76] As Nelson writes, "Where electoral activity proved intermittent, and success elusive, unionism and socialist agitation within the trade unions were a continuous thread from the 1860s through to Haymarket."[77] *Der Vorbote*, a paper connected to the Chicago Idea, founded in 1874 (originally as a paper of the Workers' Party of Illinois), had remained firmly within the trade unionist faction within the WPUS through to the Haymarket.[78] The "eclectic socialism" of the *Vorbote*, to use Buhle's term, never lost its "admiration for Marx, nor confidence in their ability to define a Marxism appropriate to the time and place."[79]

The significance of the Commune for Chicago's social revolutionaries cannot be overstated. Massive commemorations and annual celebrations of the Commune were held in the United States and internationally.[80] In the United States, these events earned left-wing movements in Chicago, and

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74 Engels to August Bebel in Zwickau (March 18-28, 1875), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/letters/75_03_18.htm (accessed December 18, 2008)
75 Karl Marx, "The Paris Commune," *The Civil War in France* (1871), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/ch05.htm (accessed November 15, 2008)
76 Commons et al., *History of Labor in the United States*, 272.
77 Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 35.
78 Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 61.
79 Buhle, *Marxism in the USA*, 38.
80 Haupt, *Aspects of International Socialism*, 27.

elsewhere, the label 'communist' in the mainstream press.[81] One such commemoration of the Commune, in Chicago in 1879, drew a multi-ethnic, working-class audience of between 20 000 to 40 000, filling the Exposition Building.[82] A mere eight years after the repression of the Commune, this celebration was perhaps more alarming for the city's ruling class for two reasons. The first was that two years prior, in 1877, the expanding American railroad was shaken by an enormous strike. Avrich notes that "Spreading to seventeen states, it encompassed the widest geographical area and involved the largest number of participants of any industrial strike of the nineteenth century."[83] This massive industrial action, encompassing nearly one million workers employed in different industries, would become known as the "Great Strike of 1877".[84] In one "extreme situation," Buhle writes that "in St. Louis where city government fell to the crowd, they became in effect the Executive Committee of a short-lived Commune."[85] Indeed, the spectre of the Paris Commune, which had fallen less than 6 years prior, loomed large, striking terror into the hearts and minds of the American ruling class.[86] The second was the appearance of armed workers' militias. Groups such as the *Lehr-und-Wehr-Verein* (the Instruct and Defend Association, a German and Bohemian left-wing militia formation created in 1875) "marched through the streets of the city, weapons and ammunition boxes prominently displayed" to the massive Commune celebration in 1879.[87] These militias had multiplied in Chicago, and other cities, in the aftermath of the railway strike, where armed government forces had violently and brutally broken up demonstrations and gatherings resolving "never again to be shot and beaten without resistance. Nor would they stand idly by while their meeting places were invaded or their wives and children assaulted."[88] The growing militancy of Chicago's socialists would also exacerbate some of the previous divisions between the 'trade unionist' and 'political socialist' divisions in the WPUS/SLP

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[81] See Philip Foner (ed.), *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969) 166,180; Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 54; and Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre*, 168.
[82] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 79.
[83] Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, 72.
[84] Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre*, 169.
[85] Buhle, *Marxism in the USA*, 39.
[86] Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, 35.
[87] Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, 46.
[88] Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, 45.

and contributed to a schism in the party soon after.

## 4. Communistic-Anarchism: From the Revolutionary Socialistic Party to the Pittsburgh Proclamation

The anarchist contributions to the Chicago movement included the critique of hierarchy and the emphasis on a prefigurative political praxis, contributions which became particularly pronounced after the arrival of German anarchist-communist Johann Most to America in 1882. This complemented not only the anti-capitalist and trade unionist tendencies within Chicago's socialist movement, but also the extension of emancipatory aims outside of the process of production which had already been an element of American radical republicanism in the post-Reconstruction period. Parsons whose earliest critical political engagement began in post-American Civil War Texas, for example, felt that the system of chattel slavery had been replaced by wage slavery.[89] Although some of these conceptual features, like the emphasis on labour unions, were already apparent in the Chicago movement prior to the split with state socialists in 1881, the more familiar form of Chicago Idea ideology took shape after this break through the adoption of more consciously held anarchist, anti-statist positions. This is particularly evident with the drafting of the 'Pittsburgh Proclamation' (sometimes called the 'Pittsburgh Manifesto') in 1883 and the regroupment of the movement into the International Working People's Association (IWPA).

The divisions between state socialists and the Chicago Idea movement had grown considerably after poor results at the polls in 1880. Not only had the socialist percentage of the popular vote decreased, but there were also widespread instances of electoral fraud. One illustrative episode of this was in 1880 when Chicago SLP candidate Frank Stauber, an incumbent councillor, was denied his re-election through fraudulent means. George Schilling describes how two election judges responsible for tallying votes “took the ballot-box and tally-sheet home, and on learning that the election had resulted in the defeat of the candidate [...] stuffed the box and changed the result.” He continued:

[89] Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, 19.

> a long litigation ensued, costing the workingmen about $2,000 and keeping Mr. Stauber out of this seat for nearly a year [...] the two election judges who had stuffed the ballot-box and forged the tally sheet, were tried for the offence and acquitted, Judge Gardner declaring that, while they had violated the law, there had been no evidence showing that had been their intent.[90]

Albert Parsons, who also felt that he was cheated out of a municipal seat through fraudulent means, recalled in his autobiography that the experience of electoral fraud began to change the perceptions of party members about the potential of the ballot-box in social change:

> the conviction began to spread that the State, the Government and its laws, was merely the agent of the owners of capital to reconcile, adjust, and protect their – the capitalists' – conflicting interests; that the chief function of all Government was to maintain economic subjection of the man of labor to the monopolizer of the means of labor – of life – to capital.[91]

The trade union factions in the movement, already lukewarm to political campaigns, also felt increasingly alienated from the executive committee of the party from its compromises with the more reformist Greenback Party, the denouncing of armed workers' militias, and the “fundamental remodelling” of the party towards electioneering.[92]

Throughout the United States, breakaway factions of the SLP reorganized themselves into Social Revolutionary Clubs, breaking with the former “because they could no longer believe in the ballot or accept the dictates of the executive committee. Instead, they pinned their hopes on direct action and armed struggle to accomplish social change.”[93] These factions that had split from the SLP had maintained a belief in the common ownership of the means of production while disavowing parliamentary action. “While abandoning the principles of the SLP [...] the social revolutionaries continued to regard themselves as socialists – but socialists of a distinctive type, anti-statist, anti-parliamentarian, and anti-reformist, who called on the working class to abjure politics and involve itself in a direct and final confrontation with capitalism.”[94] In Chicago, the factions that broke away from the party in 1880 constituted around 70% of SLP's former membership while retaining the movement's

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[90] Quoted in Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 68.
[91] Foner, *Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs*, 36-37.
[92] Commons et al., *History of Labor in America*, 278-279.
[93] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 51.
[94] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 55.

papers and readership.[95] Culturally, both the SLP and RSP (Revolutionary Socialistic Party) (and later, the IWPA) continued to celebrate “the anniversary of the Paris Commune, but the anarchists commemorated the death of Marx while the socialists preferred their Lassalle fests.”[96]

In October 1881 in Chicago, a congress of American social revolutionaries regrouped the dissident factions of the SLP into the RSP. The gathering was “not limited to anarchists. Socialists of all shades [...] were invited to participate.”[97] Still viewing elections as opportunities for propaganda, the RSP “adopted a compromise resolution which recognized the right of each group to determine for itself whether or not to engage in political activity.”[98] Michael Schwab, in his autobiography writes that he had written the original draft of the RSP constitution, “The object was propaganda of socialism, as laid down in the 'Communistic Manifesto' [sic] by Marx and Engels.”[99] Schwab also recalls the non-hierarchical emphasis in the party's organizational structure which featured the recourse to an immediate recall of delegates from the central committee if they acted against the wishes of their local, the practice of officers working on a volunteer basis to prevent the formation of an entrenched bureaucracy, and resolutions binding on only those groups which voluntarily accepted them.[100] The inspiration behind this congress was a similar gathering held by social revolutionaries and anarchists in London the same year. The International Social Revolutionary Congress had drawn such luminaries as Peter Kropotkin and Élisée Reclus. It was during this period that the bulk of the European anarchist movement had come to accept communism, rather than collectivism, as an ethical foundation for a post-capitalist economic system.

The RSP, as a organized political tendency, lasted only two years before its sections were integrated into the newly formed International Working Peoples Association (IWPA). The anti-statist ideas of the IWPA formed a part of the essential outlines of the Chicago Idea. Parsons, in his

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[95] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 70.
[96] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 73
[97] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 59.
[98] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 60.
[99] Foner, *Autobiograhpies of the Haymarket Martyrs*, 124.
[100] Ibid.

autobiography, understood the IWPA to be simply the revival of the IWMA, “which was originally organized at the world's labor congress held at London, England, in 1864.”[101]

The founding congress of the IWPA in Pittsburgh in 1883 was precipitated by the arrival of Johann Most, who many scholars attribute as a “galvanizing” force on the revolutionary Left.[102] Most had twice been a socialist member of the German Reichstag between 1874 and 1878, but was expelled from the German Social Democratic Party “because of his growing extremism” while in exile in London.[103] After his arrival in the United States in 1882, “It was Most's aim to unite the various socialist currents – at any rate, those that accepted a revolutionary program – under a common banner.”[104] To these ends, the unity congress in Pittsburgh brought together delegates or proxies from twenty-six different cities. Two key factions emerged. From the eastern states, an insurrectionary position, personified by Johann Most, that “declared their opposition to unions and to the struggle for immediate economic gains” which, they argued, “would only blunt the revolutionary ardor of the workers, weaken their will to resist, and delay the final overthrow of capitalism.” From Chicago and the Midwestern states, were advocates of “a militant, revolutionary unionism, which sought to get at the roots of labor's difficulties by changing the very basis of society.”[105] The Chicago Idea “was endorsed by a majority of the delegates [...] But the victory of the Chicago faction was more apparent than real” as:

> the congress proceeded to adopt a declaration of principles that was framed entirely in the spirit of Mostian intransigence and contained no mention of trade-union action. For the sake of unity, it would seem, each side had made concessions, and for the remainder of the convention an atmosphere of harmony prevailed.[106]

The Pittsburgh Proclamation, the IWPAs declaration of principles, was drafted during the congress by a committee elected by secret ballot consisting of Most, Chicago's Albert Parsons and August

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[101] Foner, *Autobiograhpies of the Haymarket Martyrs*, 38.
[102] Chester McArthur Destler, “Shall Red and Black Unite? An American Revolutionary Document of 1883,” *Pacific Historical Review* 14 (December 1945), 435.
[103] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 64.
[104] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 68.
[105] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 72.
[106] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 74.

Spies, Victor Drury, a former member of the International and veteran of the 1848 Revolution in France[107], and Joseph Reifgraber, who was to become president of the Metal Workers Federation of America. Most is generally credited as the main author of the document. Goyens suggests that "Much of the language came from Most's essay *Unsere Grundsatze* (Our fundamentals), which had appeared in *Freiheit* [Most's German-language newspaper] two days before the convention."[108] The document, however, begins with a quotation from the American Declaration of Independence as a familiar republican justification for the use of armed resistance against tyranny, no doubt drawn from Parsons' extensive knowledge of the American Revolutionary traditions celebrated by the Chicago movement[109]:

> ...But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them (the people) under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government and provide new guards for their future security.[110]

The Proclamation suggests "Agitation for the purpose of organization; organization for the purpose of rebellion" as methods to overcome bourgeois society towards the goal of "all implements of labor, the soil and other premises of production, in short, capital produced by labor" becoming "societary property." The state is identified as an institution "of the propertied class; their mission is the upholding of the privileges of their masters." Six points are put forward as the main principles of unity for the IWPA as an organization created for the overthrow capitalist exploitation and statist domination: the destruction of class rule; the establishment of cooperative production; production for use rather than profit; racial and gender equality; and political administration through federated, autonomous communes.[111]

As a loose political organization of autonomous sections, the Chicago locals of the IWPA focused

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[107] For an excellent bibliographical sketch of Drury's career, Robert Weir, "'Here's to the Men Who Lose!': The Hidden Career of Victor Drury" in *Labor History* 36:4 (Autumn 1995) 530-556.
[108] Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 107.
[109] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 163.
[110] Manifesto of the International Working People's Association (1883), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/ksl/bullet22.htm (accessed October 12, 2008)
[111] Ibid.

their energies on the organization of the working class into militant unions. As Goyens writes, "Chicago remained a leader in labor activism [...] The attitude toward trade unionism and the preoccupation with sending propaganda material to Europe continued to be the main difference between" New York and Chicago. "The former issue made Chicago a city of anarchists participating in the workers' movement, while the latter made New York a support base for European radicals, which in turn accounted for a more congenial attitude toward revolutionary violence against oppressors."[112]

By the time of the Haymarket Affair, there were twenty-six locals[113] of the IWPA in Chicago with a combined membership of about 2800.[114] This represented one fifth of the entire IWPA membership.[115] The main organ of self-organised, working-class resistance in the IWPA – the 20 000 strong Central Labor Union (CLU) established in the summer of 1884[116] – united workers from several trades into an alternative city-wide, revolutionary labour council as a rival to the more conservative Trades and Labor Assembly and the much farther to the left than the Knights of Labor.

## 5. The Chicago Idea and its Contemporaries

How might we understand the ideological composition of the Chicago Idea? Two perspectives will be considered by way of a conclusion. First, the particular conceptual arrangement of Marxism, particularly on the post-Commune focus on building militant unions, and anarchism, the commitment to non-hierarchical and prefigurative revolutionary structures, represents an early manifestation of what Daniel Guérin and others have termed 'libertarian communism.' This particular arrangement of the ideas of Marx and the anarchists can be distinguished not only from the insurrectionary anarchism of the Eastern sections of the IWPA and the state socialism of the WPUS/SLP, but also the American individualist anarchism of Benjamin Tucker and the 'Boston School.' Second, the legacy of the Chicago Idea, in the focus on workers' self-activity, is shown by the extent that later labour radicalisms, like the Industrial Workers of the World and Dutch-German council communists, made reference to

[112] Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 108.
[113] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 103.
[114] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 81.
[115] Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 126.
[116] Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 40.

and developed these ideas. This dimension will be examined in the next section.

The pluralist nature of the Chicago Idea was not eclecticism. Various shifts, convergences and divergences, in organisational strategy, tactics, and methods were and continue to be a fixture of all ideologies. One instance of this already discussed in this paper was the late nineteenth-century convergence between Lassallean and Marxist ideas leading to the formation of the German Social Democratic Party and the WPUS/SLP. Those who maintained a belief in the self-emancipation of the working class through economic action drifted out of this orbit, while statist positions in the socialist milieu crystallized around this position. After 1880, the differences between Chicago's social revolutionaries and the Socialistic Labor Party became quite clear. Proponents of the Chicago Idea had rejected parliamentary methods towards socialism. In place of the political machinery of electoralism, the Chicago movement had placed the revolutionary labour union as both a combative vehicle of class struggle and embryonic post-capitalist social form. Parsons wrote that “Legalized capital and the state stand and fall together. They are twins. The liberty of labor makes the state not only unnecessary, but impossible.”[117] Therefore, anti-capitalist movements could not rely on the state apparatus for social change, nor could an anti-statist perspective ignore the impact and coercive nature of capital.

The insurrectionary anarchist-communism of the eastern sections of the IWPA, as mentioned above, also differed in some respects with the Chicago Idea – specifically with regard to appropriate revolutionary methods. The insurrectionists emphasized the role of revolutionary warfare in the class struggle, feeling that labour organisations could, like a political party, potentially blunt the revolutionary edge of the masses by merely ameliorating the worst aspects of capitalism. Inspired by similar perspectives within European anarchist circles, the insurrectionary wings of the IWPA felt that highly visible instances of 'propaganda by the deed' could arouse the revolutionary consciousness of the masses and spark the spontaneous revolt of the oppressed. Johann Most's advocacy of the 'propaganda by the deed' led him, in 1884, to write an instructional pamphlet entitled *The Science of*

[117] Roediger and Rosemont (eds.), *Haymarket Scrapbook*, 28.

*Revolutionary Warfare*, covering topics such as the use and manufacture of explosives.[118] While often using fiery, violent, and insurrectionary rhetoric in their speeches and propaganda, the Chicago movement had not in fact utilised insurrectionary tactics in their organising. Of course, the Chicago militants also maintained no illusions about radical social change transpiring without the resistance of the bourgeoisie, taking the example of the Paris Commune.

Perhaps a more significant division within the anarchist milieu was between proponents of the Chicago Idea and native-born individualist anarchists, a position which, in the United States was advocated most strongly and consistently by Benjamin Tucker. Tucker, along with others grouped in the 'Boston school' like Josiah Warren and Lysander Spooner, were the most prominent American-born voices of individualist anarchism. The translator of Proudhon and Stirner's works into English, Tucker had broken with working-class radicalism at the time of the Pittsburgh Congress in 1883. His newspaper *Liberty* had been an official organ of the RSP, however, Tucker's market-oriented vision of anarchism became more distinguished against the communist views of the IWPA:

> Tucker had shifted ground from revolutionary to evolutionary anarchism [...] He had also become an implacable opponent of collective ownership of property, a central plank in the platform of the social revolutionaries, whom he had ceased to regard as his allies. Tucker, in fact, was emerging as the foremost exponent of individualist anarchism in the United States, propagating views that were sharply at odds with those of Most and his associates.[119]

Tucker vehemently opposed Most's assertion that “Communism is perfectly consistent with Anarchism.”[120] Tucker's evolutionary perspective, and the view that wage labour and private ownership might continue as a guarantor of individual liberty and still be consistent with the non-coercive aims of anarchism, differentiated Tucker from proponents of the Chicago Idea.[121] The

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[118] Johann Most, *The Science of Revolutionary Warfare* (El Dorado: Desert Publications, 1978).

[119] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 70.

[120] Benjamin Tucker, *Liberty* No. 42 (May 17, 1884), available online: http://travellinginliberty.blogspot.com/2007/08/index-of-liberty-site.html (accessed November 19, 2008).

[121] It is worth noting that anarcho-capitalist Murray Rothbard, although rejecting the labour theory of value that Tucker embraced, nonetheless held early American individualist anarchists in high esteem and credited them with influencing his ideological development: “Lysander Spooner and Benjamin T. Tucker were unsurpassed as political philosophers and nothing is more needed today than a revival and development of the largely forgotten legacy they left to political philosophy.” Murray Rothbard, “The Spooner-Tucker Doctrine: An Economist's View,” in *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 20:1 (Winter 2006), 5.

divergence between these outlooks is perhaps stated most clearly in Adolph Fischer's autobiography. Following Fischer's oft quoted statement “every anarchist is a socialist, but every socialist is not necessarily an anarchist,” he goes on to distinguish the two main schools of anarchist thought: “the communistic anarchists and the Proudhon or middle-class anarchists.”[122] The chief distinction between the two schools is that the communist anarchists advocate the common ownership of the means of production while Proudhonian anarchists accept private ownership and market economies. Fischer, writes that

> The 'International Working People's Association' is the representative organization of the communistic anarchists. Politically we are anarchists, and economically, communists or socialists [...] The Proudhon anarchists [...] although being opposed to the state and political authority, do not advocate the co-operative system of production, and the common ownership of the means of production, the products and the land.[123]

Similar critiques of market-oriented, or individualist anarchism, were already being expressed as early as 1857. French anarchist Joseph Déjacque had coined the term *libertaire,* or libertarian, to distinguish his conception of anarchism from that of Proudhon. Déjacque's objected to Proudhon's embrace of small proprietorship and an alleged sexist bias while seeking to further extend the anarchist critique of hierarchy into the economic sphere and all coercive social relations. Although any direct influence on American “communistic-anarchism” is difficult to discern, Déjacque had expressed these views in his paper *Le Libertaire* published while he was living in New York between 1858 and 1861.[124]

According to anarchist historian Max Nettlau, James Guillaume, Bakunin's close friend and collaborator, originally instigated the shift from collectivism to communism amongst anarchists in his August 1876 *Idees sur l'organisation sociale* (Ideas on Social Organisation).[125] In this work, Nettlau observed that:

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[122] Foner, *Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs*, 81.
[123] Ibid.
[124] See *Le Libertaire: Journal du mouvement social* http://joseph.dejacque.free.fr/libertaire/libertaire.htm (accessed November 1, 2008)
[125] James Guillaume, *Ideas on Social Organisation* (1876), available online: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/guillaume/works/ideas.htm (accessed May 18, 2010).

> Guillaume emphasises the principle of the availability of goods – limited or abundant – which would permit society to proceed from limitation of consumption to the widest possible freedom of consumption. Hence he did not promise immediate communism but rather a communism to be reached by creating abundance in the first place.[126]

A pamphlet published in Geneva in February 1876 by *François* Dumartheray entitled *Aux travailleurs manuels partisans de l'action politique* (To Manual Workers Partisans of Political Action) was, however, "the first to mention anarchist communism in print."[127] The evolution from collectivism to communism was further developed by Carlo Cafiero, the first great populariser of the anarchist-communist perspective. Cafiero began his political activism as a 'special agent' in Italy for the General Council of the IWMA reporting directly to Marx and Engels shortly after the fall of the Paris Commune.[128] During this period Italian anarchist Ericco Malatesta, one of Cafiero's close comrades in the IWMA, would recall that in the 1870s, the revolutionary anarchist movement, "Bakunin included, theoretically fully accepted the criticism that Marx applied to the Capitalist system and were enthusiastic Marxists."[129] According to Drake, Cafiero "thought that Bakuninists and Marxists had much more in common than each group cared to acknowledge. Cafiero saw his task as one of creating unity between them."[130] His 1878 popular summary of Marx's *Capital – Compendio del Capitale* ('Compendium to Capital', published in French as *Abrégé du Capital de Karl Marx*[131]) – was one of the few summaries of *Capital* praised by Marx himself.[132] Of Cafiero's synthesis of Marx's writings and anarchist thought, Drake writes, in terms that might easily be applied to the Chicago Idea:

> the conjoining of Bakuninism and Marxism into a single socialist synthesis would become the supreme cause of [Cafiero's] life. He saw anarchism and communism as synonyms for liberty and equality, the two fundamental terms 'of our revolutionary ideal.' 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs': with these immortal words Marx had pithily summed up the essence of the most exalted social system yet devised. Nevertheless, communism required a corrective that anarchism alone could furnish. The

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126 Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 1996), 138.
127 Ibid.
128 Richard Drake, *Apostles and Agitators: Italy's Marxist revolutionary tradition* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 31.
129 Guy Aldred, *The Pioneers of Anti-Parliamentarism,* 30.
130 Drake, *Apostles and Agitators: Italy's Marxist revolutionary tradition*, 32.
131 Carlo Cafiero, *Campendio del Capitale* (1878), available online: http://www.marxists.org/italiano/marx-engels/1867/capitale/compendiocafiero.html (accessed November 23, 2009); Carlo Cafiero, *Abrégé du Capital de Karl Marx* (Marseille: Le Chien Rouge, 2008).
132 Drake, *Apostles and Agitators: Italy's Marxist revolutionary tradition*, 43-4.

> statist political solution of communism, in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, remained a blot of Marx's social system. The stateless polity of anarchism would bring Marxism to perfection, in the same way that the unparalleled rigor of *Capital* would give anarchist theory the socioeconomic insights it lacked. Under the anarchist-communist synthesis, men at last would become what nature had intended them to be: collaborators, friends, and brothers.[133]

The term 'libertarian' was later used as a synonym for anarchism and 'libertarian communist' for anarchist-communism in France from the 1880s onwards both to evade state censors as well as to distinguish pro-organisational, working-class anarchists from individualist anarchists, illegalists, and proponents of the 'propaganda by the deed'. According to Nettlau, anarchist-communism was adopted as the programme of the Jura Federation at its congress in October 1880. "Cafiero delivered his speech '*Anarchism and Communism*'; Kropotkin and Reclus supported the communist-anarchist idea with their powerful defense, and the Congress adopted it," while 'libertarian communism', as a synonym for anarchist-communism, was adopted: "at the French regional Congress at Le Havre (16-22 November 1880). The term 'anarchist communism' soon came into general use in France; a manifesto of January 1881 used the term '*Libertarian or Anarchist Communism*'."[134]

The Chicago Idea – as an ideological current both outside of Tucker's individualist anarchism, distinct from Most's brand of insurrectionary anarchism[135], and hostile to the parliamentary socialism of the SLP – fits within this usage of the term 'libertarian communist' as an anti-statist, social revolutionary, working-class movement. It further matches, or anticipates, the later use of the term 'libertarian communist' as a synthesis of anarchism and Marxism.[136] The appreciation of, and

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[133] Drake, *Apostles and Agitators: Italy's Marxist revolutionary tradition*, 44.

[134] Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism*, 144-145.

[135] Insurrection and the notion that a radical social transformation would necessitate violence were accepted by many in the Chicago movement. Notably, in 1884 Lucy Parsons counselled the unemployed to "Learn the use of explosives." See Lucy Parsons (1884), *To Tramps, The Unemployed, the Disinherited, and Miserable*, available online: http://www.lucyparsonsproject.org/writings/to_tramps.html (accessed April 20, 2012). However, the chief distinguishing tactical orientation between the primarily New York-based insurrectionary anarchist-communists, with Johann Most as their most prominent spokesman, and the Chicago movement was that the advocates of the Chicago Idea viewed labour unions as organs of social revolution while insurrectionists were suspicious or skeptical of the merits of labour organising. For a useful summary and criticism of contemporary insurrectionary anarchism see Joe Black, "Anarchism and Insurrectionalism" in *Red & Black Revolution: A Magazine of Libertarian Communism* 11 (2008), 3-10.

[136] See Daniel Guérin, *Towards a Libertarian Communism*, available online: http://www.anarkismo.net/article/424 (accessed January 20, 2009).

references to, Marx's works within the Chicago Idea movement, before and after the split with the SLP, shows that whether or not they were not aware of the schism between Marx and Bakunin in the International, they certainly were not overly concerned with it. Marx and Bakunin had, after all, collaborated within the International prior to the 1872 Hague Congress against reformist and individualist elements in the organisation. The Chicago Idea might be understood precisely as an ideology that preserved this unity vis-à-vis the Paris Commune.

Alongside Déjacque and Cafiero's contributions, another tantalizing, if somewhat tenuous, link in trans-Atlantic radical thought is the shamefully neglected pamphlet *An Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto*, written by Jospeh Lane (1851-1920), and first published in 1887. "If we are Atheists in point of philosophy and Anti-Statists in point of politics," declared Lane, "we are communists as regards the economic development of human society."[137] Lane, as Nicolas Walters informs us in the introduction to 1978 reprint of this pamphlet, was along with William Morris a leading member of the Socialist League in Britain. His early activism had brought him into contact with Johann Most, and he had attended the International Social Revolutionary Congress in London. His activity in later years included participation in the "Chicago Commemoration Committee" for the Haymarket Martyrs in 1888.[138] Lane's Manifesto is but one example of how the merger of anti-statist, anarchist ideas (although not explicitly expressed as such, as Lane conflated anarchism with individualism) and Marxist class struggle and communist notions continued to find strong advocates in other parts of the world during this era. The Chicago Idea, however, was its classic exemplar.

## 6. The Industrial Workers of the World andthe International Diffusion of the Chicago Idea

The fusion of Marx's analyses of capital and anarchist-inspired organisational forms and tactics was carried out most consistently by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the organisation most often cited as the main inheritor of the Chicago Idea tradition. There are many parallels between the

[137] Joseph Lane, *An Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto* (1887), available online: http://libcom.org/library/an-anti-statist-communist-manifesto-joseph-lane (accessed November 22, 2009).

[138] Introduction by Nicolas Walters, *An Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto* (1978), available online: http://libcom.org/history/lane-joseph-1851-1920 (accessed November 22, 2009).

Chicago Idea conception of militant unions as combative and prefigurative instruments in the class struggle, the IWW conception of revolutionary industrial unionism, and the strategy of 'dual unionism', or forming independent workers' organizations as alternatives to the more established conservative craft or trades unions. The formation of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1905 in Chicago, 19 years after the Haymarket Affair, with Chicago Idea militants like Lucy Parsons, Jay Fox, and Al Klemensic in attendance lends a certain personal continuity.[139] Perhaps more indicative was the theory of revolutionary industrial unionism, developed through the consideration of deskilling in the labour process and the realities of mass, industrial production which, from the perspective of the IWW, had rendered craft union organisation as an outmoded form. Labour leaders like Eugene Debs and William “Big Bill” Haywood, had recognized that unions formed on the basis of crafts or trades weakened the labour movement. Their attempts at industrial organisation through the Pullman Strike and the open class warfare between miners and mine owners in the Western states, had contributed to this concept. A union organized on a class basis, uniting all workers in the same industry regardless of skill, ethnicity, or trade into 'One Big Union', was the basic perspective of the IWW brand of revolutionary industrial unionism. This form of organisation would anticipate the distributive and productive functions of an economy reorganised without wage labour along the principles of workers' self-management, or what was frequently referred to in IWW movement literature as 'industrial democracy' or the 'co-operative commonwealth'.[140] As Salerno notes, “More than resembling the 'Chicago Idea,' the I.W.W.'s principles of industrial unionism resulted from the conscious effort of anarchists like [Thomas] Hagerty, who continued to affirm in the face of great adversity the principles which the Chicago anarchists gave their lives defending.”[141] As the IWW Preamble, drafted by

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[139] Salvatore Salerno, *Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World* (Albany: State University of New York Press) 73.

[140] See for example William E. Trautman, *One Big Union* (1913); Joseph Ettor, *Industrial Unionism: The Road To Freedom* (1913); and Grover H. Perry, *The Revolutionary I.W.W.* (1913), available on the Workers' Education website: http://www.workerseducation.org/crutch/pamphlets/pamphletsdate.html (accessed September 29, 2010).

[141] Salvatore Salerno, *Red November, Black November, 79.*

Chicago labour militant Hagerty[142], states:

> It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.[143]

The IWW also continued the Chicago Idea's engagement with the anti-statist strand of Marxism. This resurfaced most notably within the internal debates concerning the role of a revolutionary political party versus direct action in the workers' movement within the early years; reminiscent of earlier Lassallean/Marxist divisions. Daniel DeLeon, a founding member of the IWW and prominent SLP member, evoked the Lassallean 'iron law of wages' to argue for the necessity of a political party: DeLeon's political strategy involved parliamentary action, which would provide a popular mandate for broad social change, and economic action, which would lay the organisational groundwork for a socialist economy. Since a rise in wages would be offset by a corresponding increase in prices, DeLeon argued that a revolutionary party was crucial in breaking this circuit, and constituted an essential political counterpart to revolutionary industrial unions. DeLeon's position was countered by arguments drawn from Marx's labour theory of value, directed firmly against the formal affiliation to a political party and in favour of direct action tactics and workers' autonomy. DeLeon's opponents, like Irish revolutionary James Connolly (then living in the United States), argued that the value (price) of labour, like that of a commodity, was determined by the socially necessary labour required to produce it. The anti-political faction reasoned that “if a rise in wages caused a rise in prices, employees would welcome instead of oppose wage increases,” and further, DeLeon's position would relegate the union to “no or only secondary importance.”[144] As Kornbluh notes, “the direct-actionists questioned the value of reforms gained through the state, since the capitalist government was [...] 'a committee to look after the interests of the employers' [...] sheer economic power alone would decide economic and social

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[142] Salvatore Salerno, *Red November, Black November,* 76.

[143] Fred Thompson, Jon Bekken, and U. Utah Phillips, *The Industrial Workers Of The World: Its First One Hundred Years 1905-2005*, (Cincinnati: Industrial Workers of the World, 2006), iv.

[144] Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: Volume IV: The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1965), 105.

questions between conflicting forces."[145] These debates came to a head during the 1908 IWW convention, during which the political socialist position (and DeLeon, its chief proponent) was defeated with support from rank-and-file, itinerant workers from the Western states. The mobile, precarious existence of these workers, along with their often very remote locations of employment, made the issue of political parties and the dominant political process inaccessible and inapplicable to their social and economic reality.

The libertarian-infused, IWW variant of Marxism is one of the distinguishing elements of revolutionary industrial unionism. In his 1938 *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, Rocker commented that "What chiefly distinguished the I.W.W. from the European Syndicalists was its strongly defined Marxist views."[146] Rosemont also noted that "All but a few Wobblies also disavowed the 'syndicalist' label. Syndicalist organizations in other countries differed substantially from each other, as well as from the IWW; most, for example, were based on craft rather than industrial unionism."[147] As an economic, class-based organisation, diverse political backgrounds or influences did not prevent former IWW General-Secretary Treasurer and Socialist Party member Fred Thompson[148], or union organizer and staunch anarcho-syndicalist Sam Dolgoff,[149] from being active and life-long members of the same organisation. Buhle appropriately captures this pluralist sentiment, it's tactical toolbox, and later relevance, from the perspective of the rank-and-file IWW militant:

> the anonymous Wobbly, native born or Italian, Slavic, even Mexican by origin [...] considered himself a 'bird of flight', in ceaseless movement back and forth across oceans and borders. For this self-taught philosopher in work clothes with an ongoing mental dialogue in several languages and half a dozen cultures, the very notion of a single national conflict, or of a fixed hierarchy of skills and ethnic traits signifying leadership in Socialist or Communist movements, seemed absurd. He took Marx seriously, but Marxism – as then constituted – less so. Doctrine, organizational practice, had yet to be reformulated to suit his taste. He had figured out what the most brilliant of the

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[145] Joyce Kornbluh (ed.), *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1998), 35.
[146] Rudlof Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Phoenix Press, 1994), 77.
[147] Franklin Rosemont, *Joe Hill: The IWW & the Making of a Revolutionary Workingclass Counterculture* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2003), 26.
[148] For Thompsons' biography see Dave Roediger (ed.), *Fellow Worker: The Life of Fred Thompson* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1993).
[149] For Dolgoff's autobiography see Sam Dolgoff, *Fragments: A Memoir* (Cambridge: Refract Publications, 1986).

> parliamentary Socialists (including those who would become Communist leaders) did not know: that only by staying ahead of the Fordist strategy of connecting wages and consumption, by refusing the single identity of the 'home guard' worker in the conservative-minded union of the future, could he pose a revolutionary alternative. The Italian extra-parliamentary left of the 1960s-70s, reclaiming the 'revolt against work', would designate him as the crucial human link between the First International and the post-Leninist era.[150]

IWW and Chicago Idea historian Franklin Rosemont emphasized this continuity as well, stating that the IWW had always been "a major locus" of the reconciliation between Marx and Bakunin.[151] This point is all the more compelling when the intellectual heritage of the IWW is viewed through the conceptual lens of the Chicago Idea, and considering the international diffusion of IWW ideas. Theorists and groups ranging from the enigmatic author B. Traven (allegedly the German anarchist-communist Ret Marut[152]) and the Italian traditions of *operaismo* and *autonomia*[153] to the council communists, amongst others, all found in the IWW a source of inspiration, a common point of reference, and a social revolutionary lineage outside of the orbit of Bolshevism and social democracy.

German council communist theorist Paul Mattick, who relocated to Chicago in the late 1920s, had been a member of the IWW and sought to refound the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* newspaper of the Haymarket Martyrs.[154] Although Mattick's engagement with the IWW was brief he did maintain an appreciation for the Wobblies. In his 1939 essay *Council Communism* Mattick writes that the American labour movement had been integrated into the functioning of bureaucratic capitalism. In Mattick's view, in the United States with "the exception of the Industrial Workers of the World, the labour organizations of

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[150] Buhle, *Marxism in the USA*, 88-9.

[151] Franklin Rosemont and Charles Radcliffe (eds.), *Dancin' in the Streets!: Anarchists, IWWs, Surrealists, Situationists & Provos in the 1960s as recorded in the pages of The Rebel Worker & Heatwave* (Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2005), 41.

[152] B. Traven, who is thought to be Bavarian Soviet Republic veteran Ret Marut, published in 1925 *The Cottonpickers* (*Der Wobbly* in the original German) – a semi-autobiographical novel of exploitation and workers' resistance in Mexico. Traven also wrote extensively on the indigenous of Chiapas – see his 'Jungle Novels' series.

[153] See for example Sergio Bologna, *Class Composition and the Theory of the Party at the Origins of the Workers' Council Movement* (1972), available online: http://libcom.org/library/class-composition-sergio-bologna (accessed August 6, 2010); Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire*, (Harvard University Press, 2000), 207-208; Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 176-197.

[154] Gabriella M. Bonacchi, "The Council Communists between the New Deal and Fascism" (1976), available online: http://www.kurasje.org/arkiv/5300t.htm (accessed November 9, 2008).

recent history were always considered as complementary to capitalism – as one of its assets."[155] Anton Pannekoek, another well known council communist, also found common ground between his conception of workers' councils and the industrial unions of the IWW. As early as 1912, Pannekoek had considered the principles of the IWW "perfectly correct".[156] The council communist General Workers' Union of Germany (AAUD; *Allgemeine Arbeiter Union Deutschlands*) – a network of factory organisations formed in opposition to traditional trades unions – was modelled on the IWW, and as early as 1919, identified themselves as the German IWW.[157] Pannekoek, originally hostile to anarchism as a "petit bourgeois" ideology, substantially revised this view. In the late 1940s, Pannekoek argued that the workers' council form had synthesized liberty and organisation, transcending the limitations of both 'classical anarchism' and 'orthodox Marxism'. This perspective led Pannekoek to contribute to various syndicalist publications as well as the main organ of the IWW, the *Industrial Worker*.[158] In doing so, Pannekoek followed in the footsteps of one of his main philosophical influences, worker-intellectual Joseph Dietzgen.[159] Dietzgen, a close associate of Marx and Engels most famously known for his conception of materialist dialectics, had been editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and, as Buhle states, "a fierce partisan of the Chicago Idea."[160] Dietzgen had stated, in no uncertain terms, that the divisions between anarchism and Marxism had been overstated. "For my part," wrote Dietzgen, "I lay little stress on the distinction, whether a man is an anarchist or a socialist, because it seems to me that too much weight is attributed to this difference." He continued:

> While the anarchists may have mad and brainless individuals in their ranks, the socialists

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[155] Paul Mattick, *Anti-Bolshevik Communism* (London: Merlin Press, 1978), 78.

[156] Quoted in Phillipe Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left: A contribution to the history of the revolutionary movement, 1900-1950* (London: Porcupine Press, 2001), 78.

[157] See Hans Manfred Bock, *Syndikalismus und Linkscommunismus von 1918-1923: Zur Geschichte und Soziologie der Freien Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands (Syndikalisten), der Allgemeinen Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands und der Kommunistischen Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands* (Meisenheim: Verlag Anton Hain, 1969), 355-357.

[158] John Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek and the Socialism of Workers' Self-Emancipation 1873-1960.* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers and Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 1989), 198.

[159] See Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek and the Socialism of Workers' Self-Emancipation*, 12-27 and Anton Pannekoek, *Lenin as Philosopher: A Critical Examination of the Philosophical Basis of Leninism*, (Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2007), 34-44.

[160] Buhle, *Marxism in the USA*, 42.

> have an abundance of cowards. For this reason I care as much for one as the other. The majority in both camps are still in great need of education, and this will bring about a reconciliation in time.[161]

Other groups associated with the anti-Bolshevik, left communist tradition also took inspiration from the IWW, for example, the British Workers' Dreadnought group, headed by Sylvia Pankhurst. As an organization outside of the Third International, the Workers' Dreadnought group adopted an industrial strategy informed by the IWW. The Unemployed Workers' Organization (UWO), formed in 1923 as an alternative to the Communist Party of Great Britain's National Unemployed Worker's Movement, was "modelled word-for-word on the 1908 Preamble of the Chicago IWW [...] the UWO's Manifesto declared that 'by organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.'"[162] The Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation (APCF), which may be regarded as the ideological successor to the Workers' Dreadnought group, simultaneously adopted a more self-consciously hybrid anarchist-Marxist approach while following the example of the IWW industrial union strategy.[163] In a pamphlet charting the history of the left anti-parliamentary movement, Guy Aldred, a leading figure in the APCF, and later, the British United Socialist Movement, included the Haymarket Martyrs as 'pioneers' of the anti-parliamentary communist tradition.[164] In Aldred's correspondence with council communist Paul Mattick – in which he discussed the preparation of this pamphlet on the history of the anti-parliamentary movement – Aldred wrote that "I have urged the view since 1906 that Marxism implies Anti-Parliamentarism" and continued:

> So far as action is concerned, whilst believing that the basis is Marxism, my sympathies and tendencies are Bakuninist. But I do not allow that to interfere with my general friendliness; for I hold that we have got to get a broad basis for working class struggle, into communion, and federal organisation.

Furthermore, Aldred considered Johann Most (who Aldred closely associated with the Haymarket

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[161] Roediger and Rosemont (eds.), *Haymarket Scrapbook*, 151.

[162] Mark Shipway, *Anti-Parliamentary Communism: The Movement for Workers' Councils in Britain, 1917-45* (London: MacMillan Press, 1988), 98.

[163] See "Principles and Tactics of the APCF" (1939) in *Class War on the Home Front - revolutionary opposition to the Second World War: the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation* (1986), available online: http://libcom.org/library/apcf-class-war-home-front-1 (accessed August 9, 2010).

[164] Guy Aldred, *The Pioneers of Anti-Parliamentarism* (Glasgow: The Strickland Press/Bakunin Press, 1940), 37-73.

Martyrs) as being positioned “somewhere between Marx and Bakunin” and admirably noted that “In point of fact we should be Socialists, develop the class struggle, promote Anti-Parliamentarism, and never bother to name ourselves with words that suggest we are the shadows of dead men.”[165]

In the interwar period, IWW methods and strategies also found exponents in the Russian Revolution among many of the Russian and Ukrainian immigrants who had returned, or had been deported, to Russia. In North America, anarchist émigrés from Imperial Russia formed the Union of Russian Workers of the United States and Canada (UORW), the Russian-language affiliate of the IWW, an organisation which in 1919 claimed some fifteen thousand members. As Zimmer writes, “the entire editorial staff of the UORW's paper *Golos Truda*, with their printing press in tow,” were included among the four hundred Russian revolutionaries who returned to Russia between March and June 1917, while in “July 1917 the IWW's General Executive Board (GEB) approved a request that the Cyrillic type from the union's defunct Russian-language newspaper be sent to repatriates in Vladivostok 'to be used in starting a Russian I.W.W. paper there'.”[166] Perhaps the most significant contribution of returned Russian IWW émigrés was their success, as Maximoff recalled, “in organising on the platform of the American IWW between 25 and 30 thousand miners of the Debaltzev district in the Don Basin. The Cossack massacre, which led to the murder of comrade Koniayev, the organiser of this union, and the subsequent civil war, destroyed those beginnings.”[167] It is not unreasonable to assume that the Makhnovist movement (discussed in the next chapter) was aware this activity and the 'IWW platform', as the Don Basin region was adjacent to the Makhnovist area of influence (which will be discussed in the next chapter). Moreover, Grigorii Gorelik, Yossif the Emigrant, Fanya and Aron Baron, were among the many anarchists involved with the Makhnovist movement who had been

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[165] Guy Aldred (Glasgow). *Letter to Paul Mattick, February 25, 1935*. Paul Mattick Papers, 1939-1981 (-1982), 350420, 2 leaves, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

[166] Kenyon Zimmer, “Premature Anti-Communists?: American Anarchism, the Russian Revolution, and Left-Wing Libertarian Anti-Communism, 1917-1939”, *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 6:2 (September 2009), 47-9.

[167] G.P. Maximoff, “Syndicalists in the Russian Revolution”, (London: Direct Action Pamphlet, no.11, n.d.]), available online: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/coldoffthepresses/maximoff/maximoff.html (accessed November 24, 2009). See also John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1981), 63.

previously been members of the UORW in North America. Nick Health in a historical sketch, wrote that Fanya Baron, for instance:

> was active in the anarchist movement in Chicago, and with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). She was involved in the hunger demonstrations of 1915 there, alongside Lucy Parsons and Aron [Baron]. On January 17th 1915 she led the Russian Revolutionary Chorus at a meeting addressed by Lucy Parsons and others at Hull House, established by Jane Addams to help the poor.[168]

The American IWW also displayed an interest in the nature of the Makhnovist movement, as evidenced by the translation and publication in 1922 of Augustine Souchy's work *The Workers and Peasants of Russia and the Ukraine, how do they live?.* This work is devoted to a broad survey of Russian and Ukrainian anarchist and socialist groups and includes a sympathetic account of the Makhnovist movement. Also the preface, written by George Williams, an IWW delegate to the first Congress of the Red Labour Union International in Moscow, explicitly singled out the Makhnovist movement as an important historical question in determining the true nature of the trajectory of the Russian Revolution. Williams interest in Makhno was sparked by the debates he personally witnessed at the Red Labour Union International congress concerning the freeing of anarchist prisoners, as insisted by French and Spanish syndicalist delegates, and the accusations by Nikolai Bukharin (on behalf of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party) that these prisoners were Makhnovist bandits and should not be released.[169]

To conclude, this chapter traced the conceptual elements which constitute the central features of the revolutionary ideology of the Chicago Idea: the critique of capitalism, the social forms considered most appropriate to overcome capitalist exploitation, and the anti-parliamentary, non-hierarchical methods and principles which were held to be consistent with these emancipatory aims. This evolving formulation preserved in the Chicago Idea a revolutionary outlook inspired by the Paris Commune which looked towards instances of workers' self-activity as the harbinger of a free society and

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[168] Nick Heath, 'Baron, Fanya nee Anisimovna aka Fanny Baron 188?-1921', available online: http://libcom.org/history/baron-fanya-nee-anisimovna-aka-fanny-baron-188-1921 (accessed November 24, 2009).

[169] Augustine Souchy, *The Workers and Peasants of Russian and the Ukraine, How do they live?* (Chicago: Educational Bureau of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1922), 4-6; 107-137.

maintained a thoroughgoing distrust of state power. The labour radicalisms which carried and further advanced these notions in the twentieth-century, through direct engagement in social struggles, reveal a key thread weaving revolutionary anarchisms and Marxisms together, and will be examined in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 3

# LESSONS FROM DEFEAT: ANARCHIST AND COUNCIL COMMUNISM IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD, 1918–1939

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Contents



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## Introduction

In the previous chapter, the ideological composition of the Chicago Idea was examined as a largely neglected instance of a synthesis between the nascent anarchist and Marxist movements of the late nineteenth-century in the United States, as well as a conceptual lens through which to view the intellectual heritage of the IWW and the international diffusion of the ideas of the 'Wobblies'. The radical sections of Chicago's labour movement, openly drawing inspiration from both the ideas of Marx and European anarchist-communists – informed by the working-class insurrection of the 1871 Paris Commune and radical mass strike and eight-hour movements in the United States – asserted that the labour union would be the prefigurative organ of revolutionary change as its main idea. This marked a significant shift away from previously held notions of electoral activity as an effective strategy for social change amongst Marxists who embraced a Lassallean conception of a cooperative, socialist state, as well as a rejection of the brand of American individualist anarchism which accepted a market economy and small-scale private ownership. In terms of the international dimension of the Chicago Idea, the theory and practice of revolutionary labour unionism was further developed by French revolutionary syndicalists nearly a decade after the Haymarket Affair, but importantly, also found expression in the revolutionary industrial unionism of the American IWW in the early twentieth-century. While informed by European syndicalist methods and tactics, the IWW theory of 'revolutionary industrial unionism' was formulated primarily as a response to developments in advanced industrial capitalism in North America – particularly 'deskilling' and 'Taylorist' work rationalisation methods as well as the vertical integration of the production process, ownership, and management control – and as an alternative to what was regarded as the ineffectual, divisive, and collaborationist nature of unions organised on a craft or trade basis.[1] The IWW, as the inheritor of the 'Haymarket Synthesis' legacy, continued to draw inspiration from the Marxist critique of capitalism and advanced the communist objective of the abolition of the

[1] For a more detailed discussion of the IWW response to Taylorism see Mike Davis, “The Stopwatch and the Wooden Shoe: Scientific Management and the Industrial Workers of the World”, *Radical America* Vol. 9 no. 1, (January-February 1975), available online: http://libcom.org/history/stopwatch-wooden-shoe-scientific-management-industrial-workers-world (accessed January 24, 2010).

wage system, with the common ownership of the means of production as its ultimate aim. As a direct action-oriented labour organisation, the IWW maintained a libertarian, prefigurative conception of the function of industrial unions, and of revolutionary activity independent of political parties and the electoral process. Furthermore the IWW, as a direct link to the tradition of the Chicago Idea, remained a continual, common reference point through the first three decades of the twentieth-century, and beyond, for both revolutionary Marxists positioned outside of the 'orthodox Marxism' of the social democratic 'Second', Communist 'Third', and Trotskyist 'Fourth' Internationals, as well as those anarchist currents most concerned with working-class self-organisation.

This chapter will focus on anarchist-Marxist convergences in Europe during the interwar period, or between the years 1918 and 1939. Emphasis will be placed on the commonalities between two political trends which developed in the interwar period. First, a pro-organisational, revolutionary anarchism – exemplified by the *Makhnovschina*, or Makhnovist movement, and its later incarnation as 'Platformism', and *La Agrupación de Los Amigos de Durruti* (The Friends of Durruti Group), an influential anarcho-syndicalist affinity group. Second, and the anti-parliamentary, revolutionary Marxism of the Dutch-German council communist tendency. The revisions that the 'Platformists' and Friends of Durruti made to anarchist political theory – primarily centred around appropriate forms of working-class political organisation in pre and post-revolutionary periods – distinguished them from their individualist, 'Synthesist', or reformist contemporaries. Meanwhile, the council communists were equally distanced from what came to be the dominant interpretations of Marxist theory immediately following the Great War: social democracy and Bolshevism.

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate how these political currents developed similar outlooks and, in doing so, transcended the standard lines of demarcation between 'traditional anarchism' and 'orthodox Marxism', as these terms were understood by these groups in this historical period. 'Traditional anarchism' here is used to denote a set of organisational strategies adopted by some anarchist theorists and groups up to the outbreak of the First World War and the Bolshevik revolution, and continued by 'Synthesist' anarchists afterwards (more on this below). The pre-First World War

'traditionalist' anarchist attitude in France – important, as will be discussed later, since debates between 'Platformists' and 'Synthesists' took place in that country – may be summed up thusly:

> organization is alright for those making a political revolution, but not for anarchists, since it reproduces the authoritarian structures intended to be destroyed; individuals must be free to organize as they wish, according to their affinities, and for clearly defined actions only, the organization disappearing when the purpose is fulfilled; organization stifles individual initiative; unity of views leads to stagnation.[2]

Also revealing are the observations of Russian anarchist theorist Alexei Borovoi who, in the forward to his 1918 *Anarchism*, noted a growing gap in this epoch between a traditionalist "old anarchism" which paid "scant heed to organisation and the discipline of organisation" and a "new" or pejoratively labelled "revisionist" anarchism that placed "emphasis on revolutionary creativity, on the awakening of the mass consciousness that calls for organisation 'at the grassroots' whilst moderating the spontaneous power of the masses through organised class activity." Borovoi continued that while at this stage (1918) these two strands had not totally differentiated themselves from each other and maintained a key underlying theoretical commonality, namely, harmonising the relationship between the individual and society. However, in his estimation 'traditional' anarchism held firmly to a set of dogmas "binding upon everybody and countenances no fundamental criticism" that obstructed the task of implementing an anarchist polity while "the 'new' anarchism refuses to countenance dogma as part of anarchist principles."[3] The 'revisions' to 'traditional' anarchist praxis in this period were the result of sustained participation in revolutionary actions in Russia and the Ukraine and were no less a feature of the Friends of Durruti group who chided their anarchist contemporaries in Spain for a series of theoretical and organisational weaknesses argued to have resulted in governmental collaboration, compromise, and the defeat of the revolutionary movement.

'Orthodox Marxism,' as described in chapter 1, is used here to denote those versions of Marxist

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[2] David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917-1945* (Edinburgh, Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 27.

[3] Alexei Borovoi (1918), *Anarchism* available online: http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/sf7nd3 (accessed June 17, 2012). Interestingly, Borovoi himself underwent an ideological transformation, shifting from an embrace of individualist anarchism to an anarchist-communist position which included participation in an underground 'Platformist' group in Soviet Russia. See Anatoly Dubovik (2008), *Alexei Borovoi (from individualism to the Platform)*, available online: http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/228105 (accessed June 17, 2012).

theory and practice – associated with the so-called 'Second International' up to the 1914 and Bolshevism after 1917 – that elaborated a set of theoretical and organisational perspectives, particularly Marxism as 'scientific socialism' and an understanding of the party (in both its reformist-electoral and revolutionary connotations) as the genuine bearer of class consciousness and as the leadership of the working class. Plekhanov and Kautsky were two of the dominant figures associated with codification of 'orthodox Marxism' in the form of social democracy, and whose influence was transmitted through the works of Lenin to derivative versions of 'Leninist' Marxist orthodoxy (Stalinism, Maoism, Trotskyism, and others).

In addition to the 'ineliminable' conceptual components of anarchism and Marxism as discussed in Chapter 2 – the communist critique of capitalism and the libertarian critique of hierarchy and authoritarianism – the three groups under consideration in this chapter also maintained, or developed, anti-parliamentary perspectives, and share two further important elements within this historical context. First, they emerged during heightened periods of mass revolutionary activity (the Russian Revolution 1917-1921, the German Revolution 1918-1923, and the Spanish Revolution 1936-1939). These revolutionary periods represent not only significant historical episodes, but ones in which the groups in question played a direct role. That is, they existed (if only briefly) as mass movements or as radical Left opposition groupings within mass movements. Second, the experiences, and ultimately defeats, within these revolutionary periods contributed to their ideological evolution: an uncompromising rejection of reformism; an internationalist, class struggle outlook; a critique of Bolshevism; and a view to forming and implementing a coherent programme and perspective. These conclusions were drawn from a rigorous self-critique, sought to address problems or weaknesses associated with conceptions of revolutionary organisation within the dominant anarchist or Marxist traditions, and continued to develop after this revolutionary epoch. That is, these currents handed down political traditions which were subsequently developed and built upon by theorists and activists.

It should be noted that an examination of convergent perspectives of the groups noted above in this chapter does not exhaust the variety of anarchist-Marxist convergences during the interwar

period. To be sure, notions of class struggle inspired by the works of Marx were a notable feature of revolutionary and anarchist-syndicalist labour organisations. Anarchist and syndicalist activists and ideas informed the activity of nascent Communist Parties, and Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, for instance, defended syndicalist notions of workplace militancy during the *Biennio Rosso* ('the two red years', 1919-1920) in Italy; and multiple individual theorists openly borrowed from both traditions.[4]

The point of departure for the analysis presented in this chapter is within sphere of convergence identified by council communist Anton Pannekoek, noted in the previous chapter. Pannekoek came to the conclusion that the divisions between pre-First World War anarchism and Marxist social democracy were transcended by the council form of working-class democracy, a form which had emerged spontaneously through revolutionary class struggle. For Pannekoek, the workers' councils had effectively synthesized anarchist notions of liberty and spontaneity with Marxist conceptions of class struggle and working-class organisation. Indeed, the council form, or variations of the council form as moments of proletarian self-activity – 'free soviets', syndicates, factory committees, collectives and so on – featured prominently as both a practical organisational method and an important conceptual element in the works of the groups considered in this chapter.

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[4] Two of the most interesting examples include the theories of Ervin Szabó (1877- 1918) and Jan Wacław Machajski (1866 –1926).

Szabó, a celebrated Hungarian librarian and the cousin of political theorist Karl Polyani, began his political career in the Hungarian Social Democratic Party where he was representative of its revolutionary left-wing. When he broke with the party in 1909, Szabó came to consider syndicalism to be the genuine expression of Marxism, openly calling for a synthesis of the ideas of Marx and Bakunin while working closely with anarchists and left-wing Marxists in labour and anti-war agitation. See Ervin Szabó, *Marx and Bakunin* (Barikád Kollektíva/Barricade Collective, pamphlet, n.d.) 1-28 and Martyn Everett, *War and Revolution: The Hungarian Anarchist Movement in World War I and the Budapest Commune (1919)* (London, Berkeley: Kate Sharpley Library, 2006) 7-16.

Machajski, a Polish revolutionary, developed a theory (which became known as 'Makhaevism') concerning the role of the intelligentsia as a new oppressive class opposed to the interests of the working class, drawing inspiration from Marx's class analysis and further developing Bakunin's warnings of a new 'red bureaucracy'. Machajski was responsible for creating a political group – Workers' Conspiracy – with a small following in Siberia, Odessa, St. Petersburg, and Kraków between 1902 and 1911. As Machajski's ideas faded into obscurity, following the 1917 October Revolution, he accepted an editorial post for a Soviet government journal which he edited until his death in 1926. See Marshall Shatz, *Jan Wacław Machajski: a radical critic of the Russian intelligentsia and socialism* (Pittsburgh, PA : University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989); "Makhaevism: Intelligentsia Socialism and the Socialization of Intelligence" in Anthony D'Agostino, *Marxism and the Russian Anarchists* (San Francisco: Germinal Press, 1977), 110-155; and Paul Avrich, "What is 'Makhaevism'?", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 17:1, 1965, 66 – 75.

To these ends, the major political considerations at the beginning of the interwar period will be introduced, specifically in reference to the responses to the First World War on the revolutionary Left and the significance of the Russian Revolution; a period of profound crisis in the international revolutionary milieu. This will lead to a discussion of the Makhnovist movement and 'Platformism', and the Dutch-German council communist movement. In part two, the Spanish Civil War and Revolution will be discussed through the optic of the American councilists and the Friends of Durruti Group. As will be demonstrated, ideological convergences between these groups came to be manifest primarily through a set of common commitments to fostering popular forms of self-organisation and the creation of explicitly anti-parliamentary organs of *political* working-class power, directly tied to these social forms emanating 'from below'. Like the ideology of the 'Chicago Idea' and the IWW, self-organised institutions were regarded as prefiguring the desired emancipatory aims of a post-capitalist society, replacing the functions of the state and the capitalist economy with new egalitarian arrangements.

# PART ONE: ANARCHIST AND COUNCIL COMMUNISM: ANTI-BOLSHEVISM AND REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

## 1. FROM COMPROMISE TO REVOLUTIONARY UPSURGE: THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

Two profound historical events both shaped the contours of debate within the political Left at the outset of the interwar period and the severe crisis into which the bulk of the Marxist social democratic and anarchist and syndicalist movements plunged: the First World War and the Russian Revolution. If the Left in Europe – or in any case those factions which fostered revolutionary commitments – had from the late nineteenth-century onwards been gradually crystallising into the opposing currents of social democracy and variants of revolutionary syndicalism, the Great War provided a tremendous jolt that would significantly redraw the parametres of Left radicalism. With the Bolshevik seizure of state power in October 1917, and the upsurge of working-class militancy that immediately followed the war, a new revolutionary challenger appeared on the horizon in the form of the Bolshevik party-state, which not only sought to become the international leadership for the revolutionary Left but also became the political force to which all Left formations would define themselves for or against.

Thorpe writes that "The outbreak of world war in 1914 elicited an emotionally charged crisis in the collective consciousness of the radical left. Its effects would be felt for years."[5] Aside from the obvious human suffering and the catastrophic affects of mechanised modern warfare, the Great War caused major divisions within the mass organisations of the Left along the lines of whether, or not, to support national war efforts. This crisis was felt most severely within the social democratic parties of the 'Second International', but also rippled across the anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist spectrum, if not in equal measure then certainly to a very significant extent. Thorpe writes that:

> The Second International had long reiterated the need for united working class action to prevent war; a minority of its members expected such action in August 1914. The failure of the International to act wholly discredited it in their eyes. That nearly every socialist party in belligerent nations openly supported the war reflected the patriotic enthusiasm that swept through the ranks of the workers and animated most of their leaders as well. Only after a prolonged war of unparalleled devastation, the radicalization of the labouring class

[5] Wayne Thorpe, *"The Workers Themselves": Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913-1923*, Amsterdam: IISG, 1989), 87.

> that accompanied it, and a series of workers' revolutions in Europe, would it become clear that the action of the socialist parties in 1914 had inflicted irreparable damage upon the Second International.[6]

The minority anti-war left-wing faction of the 'Second International', grouped around Lenin, adopted a 'revolutionary defeatist' position. Arguing that the world war represented a conflict of opposing imperialist-capitalist nations, supporting war efforts meant identifying with the bourgeois class interests and taking sides in competing elements in the international ruling class. Against the 'social patriotism' of the socialist and workers' parties which had supported war mobilisations in their respective countries, the Left factions that became known as the 'Zimmerwald Left' (after the Zimmerwald Peace Conference in Switzerland in September 1915) maintained that the defeat of their own governments would prove to be a positive step towards socialism if national rivalries could be transformed into an international class struggle.[7]

On the revolutionary syndicalist and anarchist Left, the most significant 'betrayal' to anti-militarist and internationalist perspectives came from the French *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT) entry into the *Union sacrée*. With the outbreak of the war, the CGT had pledged to support the French national war effort by ensuring 'labour peace' during the conflict. The impact of this reversal of the standard anti-authoritarian, internationalist, and anti-militarist positions towards patriotic governmental collaboration by the CGT can only be truly appreciated if considering the prestige which this organisation had amongst revolutionary syndicalists in other countries. The CGT was “the only syndicalist association that could claim to be the largest union organization in its country” and further:

> By priority of their movement, even more by the early and forceful elaboration of doctrine within it and the national importance of their organization, the French syndicalists were perceived as the elder brothers of those elsewhere, at least in Europe, and the CGT served, less as a model than as an example, to inspire militants outside of France.[8]

The pro-war attitude officially adopted by the CGT was compounded by similar positions expressed by prominent individuals within the anarchist movement. Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin, “his

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6 Wayne Thorpe, *The Workers Themselves*, Ibid.
7 Darrow Schecter, *The History of the Left From Marx to the Present: Theoretical Perspectives* (New York,London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007) 117.
8 Wayne Thorpe, *The Workers Themselves*, 239.

prestige among anarchists unmatched in 1914,"[9] French anarchist Jean Grave, widely regarded as the 'pope' of the French anarchist movement for his traditionalist ideological orthodoxy, and others openly defended the Entente powers against the Central Powers in the world war. In the 'Manifesto of the Sixteen', authors Kropotkin and Grave argued that "German militarism presented the greatest threat to human freedom and had to be defeated at any cost; all had to be subordinated to the defense of France, the land of revolution and progressive thought."[10] Kropotkin's position effectively "triggered a controversy that led to an unprecedented breach in anarchist ranks."[11] As Berry writes, these positions on the war later had an impact on how those anarchists, who supported the war effort, came to view the Russian Revolution. "Whilst most anarchists had applauded Russia's withdrawal from the war effort, the first thing Kropotkin did on his arrival in Russia was to campaign for the Kerensky government to carry on fighting."[12] The French pro-war anarchist publication, *les Temps Nouveaux*, demonstrated "a quite astonishing anti-Bolshevik feeling" and read "more like government propaganda than an anarchist newspaper."[13]

"The fact that the CGT and many leading anarchists supported their nations," writes Levy, "in 1914 when war broke out should be not come as a great surprise. Simultaneous general strikes seemed an impossible dream for the libertarians or for that matter the socialists of the Second International."[14] However, despite this, these pro-war positions did not go unchallenged in revolutionary syndicalist and anarchist circles. Other prominent international anarchists such as Emma Goldman, Rudolf Rocker, and Errico Malatesta denounced the defense of Entente Powers as expressed in the 'Manifesto of the Sixteen'. Levy notes that "1916-1917 witnessed the emergence of a radical network that seemed to presage a new anti-war International, which transcended the politically sectarian and national divisions present in the pre-war world. Anarchists, syndicalists and socialists found new unity in opposing the

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9 Wayne Thorpe, *The Workers Themselves*, 87.
10 Wayne Thorpe, *The Workers Themselves*, 87.
11 Wayne Thorpe, *The Workers Themselves*, 87.
12 David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement,* 111.
13 David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement,* Ibid.
14 Carl Levy, "Anarchism, Internationalism and Nationalism in Europe, 1860-1939'", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 50:3, 2004, 340.

bloody stalemate."[15]

As war in Europe raged on, and the hitherto unprecedented slaughter of millions continued, anti-war sentiment began to dramatically increase in belligerent nations. Nowhere was this more evident than in Russia, when popular unrest forced the Tsar to abdicate in February 1917, to be replaced by a provisional government of 'moderate' socialists. The February revolution, and later, the Bolshevik seizure of state power in October 1917, profoundly altered the left-wing political landscape. For social democrats (particularly those associated with the Zimmerwald Left), the Bolsheviks, emerging from the revolutionary left-wing of the social democratic movement, had not only successfully been able to withdrawal from what they regarded as an imperialist conflict, but they had seemingly fulfilled the promise of a seizure of state power by the working class in the form of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.

Anarchists and syndicalists also enthusiastically celebrated news of the Russian Revolution. However, opinions on the nature of the new Bolshevik regime varied between enthusiastic support and a more cautious approach; previous anti and pro-war positions colouring these positions to a significant extent as it became clear that a Bolshevik victory would mean the Russian withdrawal from the 'Great War.' For many anarchists, the Bolsheviks had been correct in orchestrating a revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois provisional government and were to be commended for their consistent anti-war stance. Levy remarks that "In the first few years of the Bolshevik regime many anarchists and syndicalists saw 'sovietism' as a kind of Russian internationalist direct action."[16] Thorpe summarizes some of the early anarchist and syndicalist attitudes to the Bolsheviks:

> By the war's end the syndicalists came to see the Bolsheviks as kindred souls. Like most syndicalist organizations (the CGT was a major exception), the Bolsheviks opposed the war, and like the libertarians, they urged that the conflict between nations be converted into a civil, class war. After August 1914, moreover, the Bolsheviks suddenly adopted a number of long-held syndicalist views; they too condemned the social democrats of the West as hopelessly reformist; they too repudiated the Second International as collaborationist; they too urged the creation of a new and revolutionary international [...] Most importantly, late in 1917 the Bolsheviks had installed themselves at the head of the

[15] Carl Levy, "Anarchism, Internationalism and Nationalism in Europe, 1860-1939", Ibid.
[16] Carl Levy, "Anarchism, Internationalism and Nationalism in Europe, 1860-1939", 341.

first successful workers' revolution.[17]

In a series of articles including *The Dual Power*[18] and the *April Theses*, Lenin outlined the social forms which he envisaged as constituting the social reorganisation the Russian economy and polity, the most important being the soviets (workers' councils), which would form the basis of a 'commune-state' similar to that of the 1871 Paris Commune. On Lenin's *The Dual Power*, Bookchin remarked:

> Taken at face value, this program could easily be regarded as representing a form of libertarian socialism. The new polity would be based on the 'direct rule of the people', whose 'representatives' were the people's 'direct agents' [...] Other aspects of the theses were no less libertarian. Instead of calling for a system that would promote capitalist development in Russia, Lenin now favored institutions that might well inhibit it. Moreover, he demanded a people in arms and the elimination of the army – both libertarian socialist demands.[19]

Historian Paul Avrich gave a similar assessment, stating that the *April Theses*:

> included an array of iconoclastic propositions that anarchist thinkers had long cherished. Lenin called for the transformation of the 'predatory imperialist' war into a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist order. He renounced the idea of a Russian parliament in favor of a regime of soviets modelled after the Paris Commune [...] Although Lenin's preoccupation with the seizure of political power gave pause to some anarchists, more than a few found his views sufficiently harmonious with their own to serve as a basis for cooperation.[20]

Further, Lenin's *State and Revolution* had openly declared that this new working-class state would merely be transitional – withering away to be replaced by genuine organs of direct democracy in the form of the soviets.[21]

Politically, the results of this revolutionary episode are broadly generalisable throughout the Left. Social democratic parties split between their left-wings, who held anti-war positions and supported the Bolsheviks, and their centrist or reformist sections. The former created Moscow-backed Communist Parties while the latter maintained reformist social democratic positions. On the anarchist and syndicalist Left, initially enthusiastic about the revolution, scores of syndicalists and anarchist militants

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17 Wayne Thorpe, *The Workers Themselves*, 241.
18 See V.I. Lenin, *The Dual Power* (1917), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/09.htm (accessed April 20, 2012).
19 Murray Bookchin, *Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era, Vol. 3* (New York, London: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, 2004), 199.
20 Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 128.
21 Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 129.

rallied to the cause of the Russian Revolution. The prestige of the Bolshevik revolution had also drawn rank-and-file syndicalists into newly formed Communist Parties and affiliated unions. However, anti-Bolshevik sentiment began to emerge within sections of the anarchist and Marxist revolutionary Left in response to the increasingly dictatorial and hierarchical consolidation of power by the party-state and its influence on the international working-class movement. It is with this opposition to Bolshevism that we now turn to an examination of the Makhnovist movement.

## 2. Makhnovism and the Organisational Platform

The aim of this section is to examine the ideological evolution of the 'Platformist' current of anarchist-communism from its origins in the *Makhnovschina*, or Makhnovist movement, in the Ukraine during the Russian Revolution and Civil War (1918-1921), to its elaboration in the 'Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)', a document produced by the 'Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad' in French exile in 1926. The Platform represents not only an important and influential revision to 'traditional' anarchist political theory, but also a self-critique of the performance of anarchism in the Russian Revolution. As such, the Platform can not be understood in isolation from the experience of Makhnovism and revolutionary anarchism in Russia and the Ukraine.

The Makhnovist movement, was a significant military-political force in the Southeastern Ukraine during the years of the Russian Revolution and Civil War, 1918-1921. Under the leadership of their namesake, peasant anarchist-communist Nestor Makhno, the Makhnovist Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine (RIAU) may have numbered upwards of 80 000 partisans (most estimates vary between 20 000 and 40 000 at any given moment)[22] in the years of their revolutionary activity. Although a highly mobile, primarily cavalry formation, often advancing or retreating across the great distances of the Ukrainian steppes, the Makhnovist main operational base, area of influence and support

> covered the provinces of Ekaterinoslav and the Northern Tavrida as well as the eastern province of Kherson and the southern portions of those of Poltava and Kharkov – which is

[22] Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918-1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 111-112.

> to say a rectangle measuring 300 kilometers by 250 – and inhabited at the time by about seven-and-a-half-million people.[23]

The market town of Hulyai Pole, Makhno's birthplace, served as the central hub of the Makhnovist movement.[24] It was in Hulyai Pole and surrounding environs, or what the Soviet authorities dubbed 'Makhnograd', that the Makhnovist movement achieved its greatest – albeit short-lived – success in radically transforming social, political, and economic life. However, as Holota notes:

> Disadvantageous conditions arising from continual warfare, and facing an enemy with significant numerical superiority, prevented not only the reconciliation with the urban working-class, but also the establishment of the Makhnovist programme of social reform: self-management in federated peasant free soviets, networked agrarian communes throughout the region, and direct exchange of products between peasants and workers.[25]

Indeed, enormous social dislocations in the Ukraine resulting from war and revolution contributed to a complex and unstable political landscape, and a set of conditions which resulted in the absence of a central ruling state authority in large areas of the country. During these years the Ukraine served as a major battleground between several competing forces which sought to direct the political and economic life of the country and to fill this political vacuum.[26] Aside from the Makhnovists, this included the occupying military of the Central Powers, nominally under the leadership of Ukrainian aristocrat Hetman Pavlo Petrovich Skoropadskyi, active in the Ukraine between the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the armistice ending the First World War;[27] Ukrainian nationalists, with Simon Petlura as

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[23] Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack: The Struggle for Free Soviets in the Ukraine, 1917-1921* (Edinburgh, Oakland, West Virginia: AK Press, 2004), 2.

[24] Malet writes that Hulyai Pole "[c]ould best be described as a market town, a centre for agriculture rather than industry, but too large, with a population between twenty and thirty thousand at the turn of the century, to be called a village [...] It was the centre for a volost (roughly a parish) with two churches, a synagogue, three schools, a hospital, two agricultural machine factories, two flour mills, and many artisan workshops." Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War* (London: The London School of Economics and Political Science, 1985), xix.

[25] Wolodomyr Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921 et l'évolution de l'anarchisme européen à travers le débat sur la plate-forme 1926-1934* (The Ukrainian Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921 and the evolution of European anarchism through the debate on the platform 1926-1934), (Strasboug: Université des sciences humaines, 1975, unpublished PhD dissertation), 183.

[26] For a detailed discussion of the Makhnovists and other regional forces see Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War,* 138-156.

[27] The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a peace agreement signed on March 3, 1918 between the Bolshevik government and the Central Powers which signaled Russia's exit from the Great War. As a condition for withdraw, the Bolshevik government in effect ceded large swathes of territory to the Central Powers, including the Ukraine. Pavlo Petrovich Skoropadskyi was installed through Austro-German military support in a coup

the leading figure, who struggled for an independent Ukrainian nation state; the White pro-monarchist or pan-Russian counterrevolutionary Volunteer Army, led by Generals Anton Denikin and Pyotr Wrangel, who used the Ukraine to launch an offensive against the Bolshevik government; the Bolshevik Red Guards, and later, Red Army; and various regional guerrilla detachments with sometimes shifting political loyalties.[28]

These conditions compelled the Makhnovist movement to focus primarily on military affairs as a matter of survival. Palij describes the Makhnovist movement as "a military one, not political in nature. Fighting took up most of its time; that preoccupation and the tumultuous conditions caused by the civil war in the region were most unfavorable for domestic policies."[29] Makhnovist military prowess, especially in waging guerilla warfare against both 'Whites' and 'Reds'[30] in the civil war, has become the stuff of legend, as has the figure of Nestor Makhno, often depicted as a kind of folk hero – a latter-day Stenka Razin or Robin Hood. The figure of Nestor Makhno has most recently been the subject of a peculiar cinematic rehabilitation in a joint Russian-Ukrainian 12 part mini-series – 'The Nine Lives of Nestor Makhno' – as well as being depicted on a commemorative Ukrainian postage stamp.

As has been amply demonstrated in many in depth scholarly accounts and studies of the Makhnovist movement, their achievements in the field of military activity include several successful campaigns against the White counterrevolutionary armies of Generals Wrangel and Denikin. In particular, the famous 'Battle of Peregonovka' in September 1919, when Makhnovist forces (allied, at the time, with the Bolshevik Red Army) handed a major and irreversible defeat to the White armies, is widely cited by both sympathizers and critics of the Makhnovists as being a decisive turning point in the Russian Civil War.[31] "Paradoxically," wrote Palij, "although Makhno's struggle against the

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d'etat as a loyal head of state of the short-lived Ukrainian National Republic. The armistice ended the military occupation of the Ukraine, and with it, Skoropadskyi's regime and military backing.

[28] This included, among others, the 'Green' armies of A.S. Antonov and the warlord Hryhoriyiv.

[29] Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918-1921*, 150.

[30] Malet writes: "As an ideological anarchist of long standing, Makhno had a deep distrust of all authority and political parties, summed up in the slogan 'Beat the Whites until they're Red, beat the Reds until they're black.'" Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War,* p.83.

[31] See Max Nomad, "The Warrior: Nestor Makhno, the Bandit Who Saved Moscow" in *Apostles of Revolution*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1939), available online:

Bolsheviks may well have prolonged the Russian Civil War, by his vital role in the defeat of the forces of Denikin and Wrangel he contributed to the triumph of bolshevism."[32] Most accounts of the Makhnovists highlight the use of mobility, surprise tactics, and the innovation of the *Tachanka* – a horse drawn cart fixed with a Maxim machine-gun – as evidence of the movement's high aptitude in waging irregular, guerilla warfare.

> The army was made up of infantry, cavalry, artillery, machine-gun units, and special branches, including an intelligence service. Because the success of partisan warfare depends upon mobility, the army, at first composed largely of infantry, gradually was mounted in light carts and armed with machine guns during 1918-19, and during the years 1920-21 became primarily a cavalry formation. The artillery was comparatively small because it was less applicable to partisan warfare.[33]

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Makhnovist movement has also been the target of criticism from political opponents: the most serious accusation, that of Makhnovist anti-Semitism and participation in anti-Jewish pogroms, has been proven time and again to be without any factual basis.[34] It is also well-known that the Soviet state carried out extensive anti-Makhnovist propaganda well after their consolidation of power in the Ukraine, demonizing Makhno and his supporters as *kulaks* (wealthy land-owning peasants), bandits and outlaws, or impractical dreamers.[35] In a similar

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http://www.nestormakhno.info/english/nomad.htm (accessed April 9, 2009). While Nomad repeats the discredited accusations of anti-Semitism and banditry within the Makhnovist movement, he also notes that the 'Battle of Peregonovka' "was, perhaps, the turning point of the Russian civil war. It may truly be said - incredible though it may appear - that on that night the semi-educated ex-labourer, the Anarchist outlaw, decided the fate of Russia." In German Communist (later Trotskyist) Eric Wollenberg's participant account *The Red Army*, Part II 'The Birth of the Red Army" (1937), Wollenberg writes that "Makhno's guerillas played a decisive part in the defeat of Denikin" but adds that "it was not long before Makhno turned against the Red Army." available online: http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/red-army/1937/wollenberg-red-army/ch02.htm (accessed January 4, 2010). Voline writes: "It is necessary to emphasise [...] that the honour of having annihilated the Denikinist counter-revolution in the autumn of 1919, belongs entirely to the Makhnovist Insurrectionary Army. If the insurgents had not won the decisive victory of Peregonovka, and had not continued to sap the bases in Denikin's rear, destroying his supply service for artillery, food and ammunition, the Whites would probably have entered Moscow in December 1919 at the latest." Voline, *The Unknown Revolution,1917-1921* (Montreal, New York: Black Rose Press, 1990), 625; See also Paul Avrich (ed.), *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1973), 24.

[32] Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918-1921*, 252.

[33] Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918-1921*, 109.

[34] See for example Alexandre Skirda, "Apropos the Charges of Banditry and Anti-Semitism" in *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 336-341 and "Anti-Semitism" in Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918-1921*,Palij 'Anti-Semitism', 168-174.

[35] See for example the play *Makhno's Band*, performed by the Leningrad State Circus, Spring 1930: James Von Geldern and Richard Stites (eds.), *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: tales, poems, songs, movies, plays, and folklore, 1917-1953* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 139-41. For a summary of the official

vein, the Makhnovist movement has routinely been dismissed by some historians as an expression of 'primitive revolt' or a brutal ataman-warlord leadership held together and disciplined by a 'culture of violence'.[36]

As a corrective to deliberate distortions, the efforts of the Makhnovist movement to foster self-organised autonomous communes and workers' councils (free soviets) have been extensively documented by both participants and historians.[37] This considerable literature demonstrates both the popular support for, as well as the constructive dimension of, anarchist-communist ideas and

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Soviet accounts of the *Makhnovschina* see Frank Sysyn, "Nestor Makhno and the Ukrainian Revolution" in Taras Hunchak (ed.), *The Ukraine, 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge: Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, 1977) note 13, available online: http://www.nestormakhno.info/english/sysyn.htm#13 (accessed January 27, 2010) and Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 342-357.

[36] See Felix Schnell, "'Tear Them Apart...And Be Done With It': The Ataman-Leadership of Nestor Makhno as a Culture of Violence", *Ab Imperio* 3 (2008), 195-221.

[37] The most important participant accounts of the Makhnovist movement include Piotr Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, 1918-1921* (London: Freedom Press, 2005); Nestor Makhno's memoirs, published in Russian in three volumes (the first volume was the only one published before his death in 1934, and the only volume translated into English) Nestor Makhno, *The Russian Revolution in the Ukraine*, (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2007) and Nestor Makhno, *Under the Blows of Counterrevolution*, (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2009); and Voline, *The Unknown Revolution, 1917-1921.* Arshinov and Voline, in particular, emphasised that their accounts of the Makhnovist movement remained incomplete. Arshinov wrote that the difficult conditions in revolutionary Ukraine impeded his efforts to write a definitive history of the movement and collect important documentation, thus, his work was "only a beginning and should be continued and further elaborated." Piotr Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, 1918-1921,* 33-4. Voline, who relied heavily on Arshinov's accounts, similarly left the task of a definitive history to "future historians who have all the required sources at their disposal." Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 542. Scholarly historical treatments of the Makhnovist movement were not forthcoming until decades later, from the late 1960s onwards. The most important of these include Paul Avrich's pioneering studies of anarchism in the Russian Revolution, which pay considerable attention to the Makhnovist movement, for instance Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967); Victor Peters, *Nestor Makhno: The Life of an Anarchist*, (Winnipeg: Echo Books, 1970); Wolodomyr Holota's unpublished 1975 PhD dissertation *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921 et l'évolution de l'anarchisme européen à travers le débat sur la plate-forme 1926-1934* (The Ukrainian Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921 and the evolution of European anarchism through the debate on the platform 1926-1934), (Strasboug: Université des sciences humaines); Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918-1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976); and Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1982). In addition to these, anarchist historian Alexandre Skirda has provided several sympathetic accounts of the Makhnovist movement, drawing on rare documentation and interviews, and an edited collection of Makhno's writings. See Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno*: *Anarchy's Cossack: The Struggle for Free Soviets in the Ukraine 1917-1921* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2004); Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968*, (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2002); and Alexandre Skirda (ed.), Nestor Makhno, The Struggle Against the State and Other Essays, (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 1996) available online: http://libcom.org/library/struggle-against-state-other-essays-makhno (accessed October 20, 2009).

practices, and in particular, Makhnovist alternatives to statist agrarian reform in the Ukraine.[38]

While the Makhnovist insurgency in the Ukraine has received considerable attention, the political ideas that the some of the movement's leading figures formulated in exile in France have remained neglected. As Bookchin notes, Makhno was “elevated to high status in the anarchist pantheon” after his death “although his assertion of the need for a well-organized libertarian movement was virtually ignored.”[39] This is in reference to the '*Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)*', or simply the 'Platform', published in Paris on June 20, 1926, collectively authored by Nestor Makhno, Piotr Arshinov, Ida Mett, Valevsky (the pseudonym of Polish anarchist Isaak Gurfinkiel), and a certain Linsky. Regrouped in Paris as the 'Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad' around the journal *Dielo Truda* (The Cause of Labour), this group of exiled revolutionaries set for themselves the task of addressing the most pressing political question of the time: why had the anarchist movement failed to achieve its social revolutionary objectives in the Russian Revolution? Their conclusions were summed up in the Platform and later articles in the ensuing debate around this document. In one article written by the 'Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad' after the publication of the Platform, external causes, or more precisely Bolshevik repression, were regarded as but one of the main factors alongside serious internal or organisational problems, which were said to have contributed to the defeat of the Ukrainian and Russian anarchist movements.[40] The authors maintained that the anarchist movement suffered from a “chronic general disorganization” arising from “a mistaken interpretation of the principle of

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[38] The Ukraine has traditionally been one of the largest grain producing regions in the world. It is for this reason that the Ukraine was sought after by the Central Powers during the First World War. The 'land question' was also a central issue in the Russian Revolution, given the majority agrarian composition of the population. For a summary of Central Rada (Ukrainian nationalist) and Bolshevik legislation on agrarian reform see Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921*, 55-123. For an account of the consequences of state farming and grain requisitions, see Kazuo Nakai, “Soviet Agricultural Policies in the Ukraine and the 1921-22 Famine”, Harvard *Ukrainian Studies*, 6:1, (March 1982), 43-61.

[39] Murray Bookchin, *Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era, Vol. 3*, 318.

[40] In the “Reply to Anarchism's Confusionists” in Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy*, 224-5, Arshinov writes: “We have fallen into the habit of ascribing the anarchist movement's failure in Russia 1917-1919 to the Bolshevik Party's statist repression. Which is a serious error. Bolshevik repression hampered the anarchist movement's spread during the revolution, but it was only one obstacle. Rather, it was the anarchist movement's own internal ineffectuality which was one of the chief causes of that failure, an ineffectuality emanating from the vagueness and indecisiveness that characterized its main policy statements on organization and tactics.”

individuality in anarchism: that principle too often mistaken for the absence of all accountability."[41] This, they argued, had eroded the socialist core of anarchist praxis, leaving the movement in Russia and the Ukraine weak, divided, and lacking a coherent organisational and strategic orientation. The authors of the Platform argued that, as a consequence, these weaknesses had "induced many of anarchism's active militants to defect to the ranks of the Bolsheviks."[42]

Arshinov, in his *History of the Makhnovist Movement* (first published in Germany in 1923) was highly critical of the disorganised nature of the Russian anarchist movement. Arshinov bitterly remarked that "The majority of Russian anarchists who had passed through the theoretical school of anarchism remained in their isolated circles, which were of no use to anyone," and continued that the Russian anarchists "slept through a mass movement of paramount importance."[43] Makhno had also continually lamented the fact that Russian and Ukrainian anarchists were unable to make the strategic and tactical shift from uncoordinated small group, propaganda or educational activity, to building and sustaining large-scale libertarian institutions capable of making an effective intervention in the revolutionary process. In the first volume of his memoirs, Makhno recalled the problems posed in the early period of the revolution in 1917:

> The Russian Revolution has, from the beginning, posed a clear choice to the Russian and Ukrainian anarchist groups, a choice which imperiously demands a decision on our part. Either we go to the masses and dissolve ourselves in them, creating from them revolutionary cadres, and make the Revolution; or we renounce our slogan about the necessity of social transformation, the necessity of carrying through to the end the workers' struggle with the powers of Capital and the State.
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> To remain as before, restricted to isolated group activities, limited to publishing pamphlets, journals, and newspapers and holding meetings – was impossible. At this time of decisive events, the anarchists risked finding themselves completely isolated, or dragging along behind them.[44]

To redress the theoretical and organisational weaknesses, which the authors of the Platform had identified as severe obstacles to realising genuine social revolution, the Group of Russian Anarchists

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41 "The Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, The Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft), June 20, 1926" in Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy*, 192 (hereafter *The Platform*).
42 *The Platform*, 193.
43 Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement*, 236.
44 Nestor Makhno, *The Russian Revolution in the Ukraine*, 61.

Abroad called for the reorganisation of the anarchist movement. This reorganisation was to be carried out on the basis of a revolutionary class politics and a tightly organised structure uniting militants into the 'General Union of Anarchists' – a kind of anti-parliamentary 'anarchist' or 'libertarian communist party' – guided by a common set of ideological, tactical, and organisational principles. This vision of revolutionary anarchist organisation was pitted against the 'Synthesis' (sometimes called 'United Anarchism')[45] which was a kind of 'big tent' anarchism seeking to unite different anarchist tendencies – individualist, syndicalist, and communist – into a single federation. The formulation of the Synthesis as an alternative organisational model for anarchists was prompted by the publication of, and debates surrounding, the Platform. These views were advanced most famously by former Makhnovist militant Voline as well as French anarchist Sébastien Faure.[46] The Synthesis was based on acceptance of three key ideas:

> 1. Definitive acceptance of the syndicalist principle, which points the way to the real methodology of social revolution.
> 2. Definitive acceptance of the (libertarian) communist principle, which lays the organizational basis for the new society in the making.
> 3. Definitive acceptance of the individualist principle, the utter emancipation and happiness of the individual being the real goal of the social revolution and the new society.[47]

Voline claimed that it was in fact on these synthetic principles that the anarchist 'Nabat' federation (more on this below) in the Ukraine were based – a claim strongly contested by the 'Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad.'[48] In terms of the reasons for the failure of anarchism in the Russian Revolution,

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[45] See "The Party vs. The Partisan: The United Anarchism of Volin," in *Anthony D'Agostino, Marxism and the Russian Anarchists (San Francisco: Germinal Press, 1977), 195-220.*

[46] Berry describes the synthesis as "a sentimental appeal to a mutual goodwill that never really existed between the different tendencies, and the hostility between the factions persisted." David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement*, 174. As Holota also points out, divisions between 'Platformists' and 'synthesis's' on matters concerning revolutionary organisation were also presaged in France and within the international anarchist milieu in the early twentieth-century in debates between revolutionary syndicalists and anti-parliamentary socialists, on the one hand, and 'traditional anarchists' and individualists on the other. See Wolodomyr Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921*, 352-358.

[47] Voline, "Anarchist Synthesis" in Robert Graham (ed.), *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume 1: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005), 432.

[48] See Voline, *The Unknown Revolution,1917-1921* (Montreal, New York: Black Rose Press, 1990), 286 and A Nabatovian, "The 'Nabat' Organization in the Ukraine, 1919-1920," in Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968*, (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2002), 243-245.

the Synthesists also differed from the perspectives of the Platformists. For Voline, the Bolsheviks had duped their way into power, and once they had gained a strong foothold, sought to eliminate all competing forces – the anarchists being powerless to stop this power grab, defend the social revolution, or spread libertarian propaganda among the masses given their small numbers and the fact that their best forces were engaged in combat against reactionary 'White' armies.[49] As D'Agostino noted, the division between 'Synthesists' and 'Platformists' after the Russian Revolution reflected a "broader antagonism in anarchist-communism," deeply torn between appropriate organisational forms and disciplined methods, on the one hand, and an emphasis on spontaneous action on the other.[50]

The Platformist revisions to 'traditional anarchist' theory generated considerable controversy within the anarchist circles of the day, particularly in the French anarchist movement, where much of the debate was carried out.[51] So great was the hostility to the Platform amongst some of its anarchist detractors that it came to be referred to as 'Arshinov's Platform' in order to distance the legacy of Makhno from this document,[52] although the Platform was a collaborative effort and Makhno himself remained faithful to its ideas until his death in Paris in 1934. The Platform was also repeatedly accused of attempting to 'Bolshevise' anarchism. It is perhaps for these reasons that discussion of the Platform has not figured prominently in anarchist histories, or for that matter, much of the otherwise well-documented literature on the Makhnovist movement. Palij and Malet, in their scholarly treatments of the Makhnovist movement focus on the years 1917-1921, and only mention the Platform in

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[49] Voline, *The Unknown Revolution,* 247-265.

[50] *Anthony D'Agostino, Marxism and the Russian Anarchists, 196.*

[51] See Wolodomyr Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921,* 387-406.

[52] Arshinov was an easy target for criticism. A co-author of the platform, and an anarchist worker-intellectual closely involved with the insurgent movement in the Ukraine, in 1933 Arshinov joined the Communist Party and returned to the Soviet Union from his exile in France. For critics of the platform, Arshinov's move confirmed suspicions of Bolshevik-Leninist influence in the political orientation of the platform and the embrace of Stalinism as its logical outcome. For a discussion of this perspective on Arshinov and the platform see "From Makhno to Stalin: The Odyssey of P.A. Arshinov" in *Anthony D'Agostino, Marxism and the Russian Anarchists (San Francisco: Germinal Press, 1977), 221-248.* In 1937 Arshinov was executed in Moscow on charges of "rebuild[ing] anarchism in Soviet Russia". Skirda speculates that Arshinov was indeed involved with the anarchist underground in the Soviet Union. See Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy*, 140-2. An analysis of Arshinov's 'political conversion', along with an historical reconstruction of his activities in the Soviet Union after 1933 – through an examination of now declassified Soviet-era archives in Russia – would be a valuable endeavor and might help shed light on this controversy and help clarify the reasons for Arshinov's decision to return.

passing.[53] Of the other major treatments of the Makhnovist movement noted above, Holota's little-known study is the only scholarly account which explicitly links the experience of the Makhnovist movement and anarchism in the Ukraine to Platformism.[54] Holota's work is also notable for the connections that he drew, but did not fully develop, between the conceptions of revolutionary organisation in the Platform, and similar ideas developed in the revolutionary Marxist (council communist) milieu and within Spanish anarchosyndicalism in the interwar period,[55] which will be discussed later.

The Platform can not be understood in isolation from the Makhnovist movement and events in revolutionary Ukraine 1918-1921, as the basis of the Platformist critique of 'traditional anarchism', Bolshevism, as well as its vision of self-managed socialism embodied in workers' and peasants' councils were drawn directly from these experiences. It goes well beyond the scope of this study to give more than a brief sketch of Makhnovism, a topic which has already been explored at great length. Before returning to a discussion of the Platform, an emphasis will be placed on two major themes that impacted the ideas developed by the 'Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad': Makhnovism and anarchism in the Russian Revolution and the Makhnovist conception of 'free soviets' and libertarian social organisation.

## 2.1 Makhnovism, Anarchism, and the Russian Revolution

As Gombin observes in his 1978 *Radical Tradition*, chronologically speaking, in the years following the First World War and the Bolshevik October Revolution, the Makhnovist movement was the first serious

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[53] Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno,* 244 and Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, 163-4 and 190-1.

[54] Skirda's *Facing the Enemy* and to a lesser extent the previously cited *Nestor Makhno*: *Anarchy's Cossack*, also pay sympathetic attention to the platform, but are notable for strongly defined anti-marxist views, which serve to separate Skirda's positive assessments of Makhnovism and the platform from those of Wolodymyr Holota, Daniel Guérin, and George Fontenis, who regarded councilist and left-wing Marxist ideas as expressions of revolutionary thought similar to the platform. See Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy*, 259-265. Skirda rejects Guérin's evaluation of the Makhnovist movement on the grounds that he attempts to "[reconcile] the irreconcilable; his Lenino-Trotskyist sympathies, his neophyte zeal for peddling the curious amalgam dubbed 'libertarian marxism,' and the anarchism of the Makhnovists." Skirda also rejects Holota's conclusions on the Makhnovist movement on similar grounds. See Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 352.

[55] See Wolodomyr Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921,* 451-463 and 500-521.

force on the radical Left to confront the ideology of Bolshevism and the authority of the Bolshevik party-state.[56] The Makhnovist movement predates other critical left-wing currents which emerged during the course of the revolution and civil war in Imperial Russia in opposition to the Bolsheviks. The most important of these being the internal, quasi-syndicalist Workers' Opposition faction of the Russian Communist Party, formed in 1920, centred around Alexandra Kollontai;[57] the Kronstadt naval mutiny which sought to restore council democracy in the Soviet Union in 1921;[58] and the peasant uprisings between 1920-1921, chiefly the Tambov rebellion,[59] connected to the Left Social Revolutionary Party, formed in opposition to forced state grain requisitions.

To this might be added the contributions of the Russian anarchists. Much of the popular sentiment and organisational forms of the Russian revolution could certainly be considered to have broadly expressed a libertarian disposition, or a “syndicalist-narodnik” outlook, as Bookchin described it.[60] It was arguably precisely this popular libertarian sentiment that Lenin appealed to in order to gain mass support for the Bolshevik party and programme among Russian workers and peasants. Recall Lenin's more 'libertarian' writings in *State and Revolution* and the *April Theses* in the early period of the revolution. G.P. Maximoff, perhaps the leading Russian syndicalist theorist during this period, editor of paper *Golos Truda* and political opponent of the Bolshevik regime wrote that:

> The slogans formulated by the Bolsheviks (Communists) voiced, in a precise and intelligible manner, the demands of the masses in revolt, coinciding with the slogans of the Anarchists: 'Down with the war,' 'Immediate peace without annexations or indemnities,

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[56] Richard Gombin, *The Radical Tradition: A Study in Modern Revolutionary Thought* (London: Methuen, 1978), 32.

[57] Formed in 1919-1920, the Workers' Opposition was an intra-party opposition group opposed to the increasing bureaucratisation of the party and industry, calling for trade union administration and control of the economy. Centred around Bolshevik militants Alexandra Kollontai and Alexander Shliapnikov, the Workers' Opposition was dissolved in March 1921 following the Tenth Party Congress which banned party factions. Although to the left of Bolshevik leadership on the issues of workers' control of industry, the Workers' Opposition still sought to create change through the framework of the party-state, so unlike the Makhnovists and Kronstadt mutineers, they were not social revolutionaries. See Ian Hebbes et al., *The Russian Communist Left, 1918-30: A Contribution to the History of the Revolutionary Movement*, (International Communist Current, 2005); Murray Bookchin, *The Third Revolution: Volume 3*, 305-11.

[58] See Efim Yartchuk, *Kronstadt in the Russian Revolution* (London: KSL,1994); Paul Avrich, Kronstadt, 1921 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970); and Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

[59] See Murray Bookchin, *The Third Revolution: Volume 3*, 297-302 and 327-330.

[60] Murray Bookchin, *The Third Revolution: Volume 3*, 204.

> over the heads of the governments and capitalists,' 'Abolition of the army,' 'Arming of the workers,' 'Immediate seizure of land by the peasants,' 'Seizure of factories by the workers,' 'A Federation of Soviets,' etc. [...] Wasn't it natural for the Anarchists to be taken in by these slogans, considering that they lacked a strong organisation to carry them out independently? Consequently, they continued taking part in the joint struggle.[61]

Thus *the direct impact* of anarchist and syndicalist ideas and movements, as an organised force, on the course of the revolution in Russia was minimal, especially after 1918. Holota writes:

> It is undeniable that the anarchists played an important role in the revolutions of February and October 1917. They outflanked the Bolsheviks on their left through their actions and slogans, and their working-class audience was large enough to seriously worry Lenin. But it is as individuals that the anarchists acted, and not as an organised Russian anarchist movement proper. It is for this reason the repression of anarchism in Russia was much easier for the Bolshevik Party, which it undertook in April 1918. (Translation mine)[62]

Anarchist historian Paul Avrich made a similar observation, noting that:

> Ever since its inception at the turn of the century, the Russian anarchist movement – if, indeed, so disorganized a phenomenon can properly be called a "movement" – was plagued by rancorous internal disputes over doctrine and tactics [...] They seemed fated to remain in an atomized condition, a congeries of disparate individuals and groups – syndicalists and terrorists, pacifists and militants, idealists and adventurers.[63]

The Moscow Federation of Anarchist Groups, "the largest collection of the country's anarchist groups," was suppressed early on in 1918 after the Bolshevik-Left Social Revolutionary bloc had secured state power.[64] Of the Moscow Federation, Bookchin writes that their daily paper *Anarkhia* "reflected a wide spectrum of contradictory anarchist and pseudo-anarchist views – individualist, communist, more doubtfully syndicalist, and various composites thereof – who argued among themselves incessantly."[65] The syndicalists, writes Bookchin, "returned from exile too late to exercise

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[61] G.P. Maximoff, *Syndicalists in the Russian Revolution*, (London: Direct Action Pamphlet, no.11, n.d.]), available online: http://libcom.org/library/syndicalists-in-russian-revolution-maximov (accessed August 24, 2009). For other accounts of early anarchist support for the Bolshevik Revolution see Murray Bookchin, The Third Revolution: Volume 3, 199; Kenyon Zimmer "Premature Anti-Communists?: American Anarchism, the Russian Revolution, and Left-Wing Libertarian Anti-Communism, 1917-1939" in *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Volume 6, Number 2 (Summer 2009) 45-71; David Berry "Sovietism as Council Anarchism" in *A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917 to 1945*, 55-83; Ignacio de Llorens, *The CNT and the Russian Revolution*, (London, Berkeley: Kate Sharpley Library: 2007); Paul Avrich "The Anarchists and the Bolshevik Regime" in *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 171-203.

[62] Wolodomyr Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921*, 501.

[63] Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 171.

[64] Murray Bookchin, *The Third Revolution: Volume 3*, 303.

[65] Murray Bookchin, *The Third Revolution: Volume 3*, Ibid.

a major influence on the Revolution. Committed to organization, workers' control of the economy, and a modicrum of centralization, they were forced to remain on the sidelines while the Bolsheviks pillaged their better ideas."[66]

The disorganisation and internal divisions within Russian anarchist movements, combined with the momentum behind the Bolshevik opposition to the war, the provisional government, and the prospects of counterrevolution, perhaps help to explain why many anarchists cooperated with the Bolsheviks during the October Revolution, and why some continued to do so well after as well. Avrich wrote:

> When the first shots of the Russian Civil War were fired, the anarchists, in common with the other left-wing opposition parties, were faced with a serious dilemma. Which side were they to support? As staunch libertarians, they held no brief for the dictatorial policies of Lenin's government, but the prospect of a White victory seemed even worse. Active opposition to the Soviet regime might tip the balance in favour of the counterrevolutionaries. On the other hand, support for the Bolsheviks might serve to entrench them too deeply to be ousted from power once the danger of reaction had passed. It was a quandary with no simple solutions. After much soul-searching and debate, the anarchists adopted a variety of positions, ranging from active resistance to the Bolsheviks through passive neutrality to eager collaboration. A majority, however, cast their lot with the beleaguered Soviet regime. By August 1919, at the climax of the Civil War, Lenin was so impressed with the zeal and courage of the 'Soviet anarchists', as their anti-Bolshevik comrades contemptuously dubbed them, that he counted them among 'the most dedicated supporters of Soviet power.'[67]

Victor Serge and former IWW organiser Vladimir "Bill" Shatov are the best known of the 'Soviet anarchists' who maintained positions of responsibility in the Soviet government.[68]

Anarchist-communist ideas and practices, although limited in scope and duration given the intense pressures of combat conditions, found their main exponents not in Russia, but in the Ukraine in the Makhnovist and allied movements. The Makhnovists were in essence an organised expression of the autonomous movement of the Ukrainian peasantry, and articulated and defended popular conceptions of political and economic liberty, and independence from central governing institutions. That long-

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[66] Murray Bookchin, *The Third Revolution: Volume 3*, 305.

[67] Paul Avrich, "Russian Anarchists and the Civil War", *Russian Review*, 27:3, (July 1968), 296-306, available online: http://libcom.org/library/russian-anarchists-civil-war-paul-avrich (accessed December 8, 2009).

[68] Other prominent 'Soviet anarchists' included Konstantin Akashev, a commander in the Soviet air force; Ilya Geytsman, a commissioner of foreign affairs in Siberia and later the Director of the Central Military Archives in Moscow; Nestor Kalandarishvili, a Soviet military leader in the Far East; and Josef Dybets, leader of a Bolshevik revolutionary committee in Berdyansk, Ukraine. See Nick Health, "Anarchists Who Turned Bolsheviks", available online: http://libcom.org/history/anarchists-who-turned-bolsheviks-nick-heath (accessed May 5, 2010) and Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 91-2.

standing, pre-capitalist indigenous traditions of peasant self-government and communal land ownership contributed to the appeal of anarchist-communism in the Ukraine has featured prominently in several studies of the Makhnovists.[69] Voline further attributes to the appeal of anarchism in this region to three main factors: first, the relative weakness of the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine in the early period of the revolution given that; second, the effects of the October Revolution took root in the Ukraine much later; and finally, the relative autonomy of the Ukrainian soviets from any rigid political control.[70]

Voline further claims that the Makhnovist movement "would have existed without Makhno,"[71] as the movement which he led emerged from below as a creation of the poorest strata of the insurgent peasantry themselves. Indeed, it is certain that the Makhnovist movement was sustained by popular support from the peasantry and that the movement could not have survived openly, much less clandestinely, without the active and willing collaboration, intelligence and logistical support of the peasantry.[72] It were these conditions that allowed the Makhnovists to build a popular mass movement in Southeastern Ukraine. Soon after the repression of the anarchist movement in Russia (particularly in Moscow), the Makhnovists were joined by large numbers of Ukrainian and Russian anarchists who, at a conference in Kursk in November 1918, established the *Konfederatsiya Anarkhistov Ukrainy Nabat*, the Nabat (Alarm or Tocsin) Anarchist Confederation of the Ukraine.[73]

Following the armistice ending the Great War, and the reorganisation of Red Army detachments in the Ukraine, the Makhnovist movement was confronted with the question of how to orient themselves to the Bolsheviks; the same questions that their comrades in Russia had faced. Given the immediate

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[69] Palij for instance writes "The Cossack tradition of social and political freedom survived in the memory of the people in the region of the Makhno movement more than in other parts of the country and helped to shape their thinking. For the peasants the questions of land ownership and human rights were a predominant concern and no regime had solved them satisfactorily." Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*, 56. See also Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, xx and Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 8-16.

[70] Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 545-6.

[71] Voline, "Preface" to Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement,* 26.

[72] Palij writes "His [Makhno's] effective struggle against various enemies would not have been possible without substantial support from the local peasants." Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*, 45.

[73] Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*, 63-4.

threat posed to both the Makhnovists and the Bolsheviks by the White counterrevolutionary armies, two separate military alliances between the Bolsheviks and Makhnovists were agreed upon. The first of these alliances lasted through the first half of 1919, and the second for a brief period in October and November 1920.[74] These periods of military cohabitation were, however, highly unstable due to mutual distrust and widely divergent ideological perspectives, and punctuated by prolonged periods of open combat between Makhnovist and Bolshevik forces.

## 2.2 The Makhnovist Conception of Free Soviets and Libertarian Organisation in Southeastern Ukraine

Perhaps the single biggest consideration dividing the Bolsheviks and the Makhnovists were differing conceptions of the role and function of the soviets, or workers' and peasants' councils, in the revolutionary process. Soviets, as is well known, were established during the 1905 revolution in Russia as strike committees which gradually moved beyond economic demands alone, assuming broader political and military functions. While the precise origins of the first soviets are a matter of debate, it is generally accepted that they emerged spontaneously as 'unofficial' strike committees (in a country with weak, traditional trade union organisations) largely independent of any particular political affiliation.[75] With their reemergence in 1917, in Russia, these 'dual power' organs of workers' democracy became the basis for the Bolshevik vision of revolutionary change and governmental power in the months leading up to the October Revolution.

The Makhnovist conception of soviets, as directly democratic workers' and peasants' councils, was counterposed to Bolshevik notions of soviet power. Holota writes that “Through the Bolshevik optic, the soviets were the organs of future state power, those of the revolutionary dictatorship, and the instruments of propaganda and insurrection.”[76] For the Bolsheviks, soviets were agencies subordinate

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[74] For the text of the “Preliminary Political and Military Agreement Between the Soviet Government of the Ukraine and the Ukrainian Insurrectionary Army (Makhnovist)” see Peter Arshinov, *The History of the Makhnovist Movement*, 177-179.

[75] Voline claims to have been at a meeting of the very first soviet organised in St. Petersburg, and gives an account of this in his 'Unknown Revolution'. See “The Birth of the 'Soviets'” in Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 89-101.

[76] Wolodomyr Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921*, 247.

to party-state directives through the principle of democratic centralism. If soviets represented mass organisations of the working class and peasantry, the Communist Party was to be the centralised leadership of this power. The Makhnovists, on the other hand, maintained that the transformative potential of the soviets was completely compromised by any attempt to direct them politically from 'above'. As Malet points out, “The soviets were to be the local organs of worker and peasant self-administration: they were to federate on a local, then regional, then national level. As power was to remain supreme locally, this federation would be horizontal rather than vertical.”[77] This conception of soviets corresponded approximately to popular ideas of economic organisation in the Ukraine. As Voline writes:

> In the Ukraine, the Soviets were in a much more real sense meetings of workers' and peasants' delegates. Not being dominated by a political party [...] these Soviets had no means for subordinating the masses. Hence, the workers in the factories, and the peasants in the villages felt themselves to be a genuine force. In their revolutionary struggles, they were not accustomed to yield the initiative to anyone, or to have by their side a constant and inflexible tutor like the Communist Party in Great Russia. Because of this, a much greater freedom of spirit, of thought and action took root. It inevitably manifested itself in the mass revolutionary movements.[78]

Russian syndicalists like Maximoff, it should be added, held similar ideas concerning various organs of working-class self-organisation. Maximoff had provocatively asserted at the First All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions, held in Petrograd in January 1918, that the syndicalists in Russia were in fact “better Marxists” than the Bolsheviks for their consistent avowal of the principle of the self-emancipation of the working class – this, in the context of defending the autonomy of the factory committees, as spontaneous creations of the revolutionary process, from being absorbed into party directed trade union structures.[79]

Free soviets in the Ukraine were to represent the self-organised administrative organs of the workers and peasants, completely independent from the domination or control of the state or political parties. As the *Draft Document of the Makhnovist Insurgent Army*, published October 20, 1919, stated

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[77] Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, 107.
[78] Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 546.
[79] See Maurice Brinton, “The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control”, 1970 in David Goodway (ed.), *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (Edinburgh, Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 330.

"These soviets are only the executive arms of the assemblies from which they emanate."[80] As Arshinov also clearly described the notion of 'free soviets':

> The primary and concrete form of this self-direction consists of free working councils of peasants' and workers' organisations. 'Free' means that they would be absolutely independent of all forms of central power, taking part in the general economic system on the basis of equality. 'Working' means that these councils would be based on the principle of work, and giving no access to political organisations.[81]

Given that the primary social base of support for the Makhnovists was among the peasantry, this sharp division between Bolshevik and Makhnovist conceptions of soviets can be seen most clearly in the context of agrarian reform in the Ukraine. Bolshevik agricultural policy was directed at the expropriation of all lands formerly possessed by large landowners, and the transformation of this land and other productive assets into collectivised state farms.[82] Although this agricultural policy would shift in 1921, with the application of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), and again under Stalin in 1928 back to forced collectivization (adopting Trotsky's proposals), a common thread in the Bolshevik outlook was the view that the peasantry – in contrast to the very narrowly defined industrial proletariat – was not a revolutionary class. As Skirda writes:

> the Bolsheviks regarded as proletarians only industrial workers, the only ones truly serviceable for a social revolution; peasants were essentially conservatives, their only ambition being to become small-holders and to work their plots of land themselves and that, argued Lenin and his fellows, was the open door to petit-bourgeois capitalist production. The peasants were going to be genuinely revolutionaries only if they had no land and worked as wage-earners in large-scale production, be in capitalist or state-owned.[83]

According to a 'stagist' conception of revolutionary change, the feudal or semi-feudal conditions in the countryside would have to pass through a period of capitalist development before entering the socialist stage. The trajectory of capitalist development in the countryside was viewed by the Bolsheviks as already polarising the peasantry into a rural bourgeoisie (the *kulaks*, or wealthy

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[80] See "Draft Declaration of the (Makhnovist) revolutionary insurgent army of the Ukraine adopted on October 20, 1919 at a session of the Military Revolutionary Soviet" in Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 372.
[81] Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement*, 87-8.
[82] See Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*,154-156.
[83] Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 83.

peasants) and a rural proletariat, or the poorest stratum of subsistence farmers who often worked as wage labourers on *kulak* farms. The subsequent mechanical application of the nationalisation of agricultural land in the Ukraine, regarded as a modernising process, often meant forced grain requisitions by Bolshevik authorities and other coercive measures which alienated the peasantry.

> All stock was to be taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture, and to point out that between one third and one half of this land was reserved for poor peasants was largely irrelevant, since the peasantry had expected, and in some cases already controlled, all of it. To them, the government was taking away their land, and not seizing it from the landlords, then keeping some and handing the rest over to its rightful owners.[84]

State ownership of land, from the perspective of the peasantry, did not fundamentally differ from the expropriation of their product by the landed aristocracy or other private interests. The Makhnovist alternative – the communisation of agriculture in which neither private capitalists nor the state 'owned' the land or managed the production of goods – was presented as a system of federated and self-managed agricultural production. An early peasant and workers' congress, convened by the Makhnovists, adopted the following resolution:

> The land question should be decided on a Ukraine-wide scale at an all-Ukrainian congress of peasants on the following bases: in the interests of socialism and the struggle against the bourgeoisie, all land should be transferred to the hands of the toiling peasants. According to the principle that “the land belongs to nobody” and can be used only by those who care about it, who cultivate it, the land should be transferred to the toiling peasantry of Ukraine for their use without pay according to the norm of equal distribution.[85]

In contrast to Bolshevik agrarian policy, the Makhnovist alternative was popular among the peasantry, especially the poorest stratum of the rural proletariat. “The more oppressive the Bolshevik policy,” writes Palij, “the more the peasants supported Makhno.”[86] Ironically, perhaps, Makhnovist agrarian policy in fact had more commonality with the views of Marx – especially in some of his later writings on the transformative potential of the *obschina* in creating conditions favourable to communism[87] – than the Bolsheviks. Rather than decreeing the nationalisation of the land from

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[84] Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*,134.
[85] Quoted in Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*,155.
[86] Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*,157.
[87] In the 1882 Preface to the Russian Edition of the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels write:

'above', the Makhnovists placed their hopes in the forms of self-organisation created from 'below' by the peasants themselves, and fostered an open dialogue with those directly involved in agricultural production to guide the course of libertarian reconstruction.

In practice, the earliest efforts in creating 'free soviets' date from February and March 1918. Makhno along with the revolutionary elements around Hulyai Pole began expropriating large estates, livestock, and tools from large landowners and setting up large agrarian communes. The attempted overthrow of the provisional government by General Kornilov provided the pretext for disarming, then expropriating, local landowners.[88] In his memoirs Makhno writes that four communes existed around Hulyai Pole during this period, with between 100 to 300 members in each one, and that "In all the communes there were peasant anarchists, but the majority of their members were not anarchists. However the internal life of the commune was a model of anarchist solidarity."[89] These communes, however, were dismantled by occupying Austro-German forces following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, but were reestablished soon after. In the region of Makhnovist influence, "For upwards of six months between November 1918 and June 1919 and despite the state of war they lived without any political authorities and organized free soviets and libertarian communes for their work and their everyday affairs,"[90] with another brief period of stability and revival of 'free soviets' from October to November 1920.[91] Interestingly, the largest Makhnovist commune was named after the then recently martyred Polish-German Marxist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, which Avrich considers to be "a reflection of

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"Now the question is: can the Russian obschina, though greatly undermined, yet a form of the primeval common ownership of the land, pass directly to the higher form of communist common ownership? Or on the contrary, must it first pass through the same process of dissolution as constitutes the historical evolution of the West?

"The only answer to that possible today is this: If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of the land may serve as the starting point for a communist development."

Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972), 5-6.

88 Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, 5.
89 Nestor Makhno, *The Russian Revolution in the Ukraine*, 185.
90 Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 86.
91 Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*,108.

Makhno's undoctrinaire approach to revolutionary theory and practice."[92]

Two major elements were involved in attempts to foster autonomous self-organised political and economic structures in the Ukraine: the Revolutionary Insurgent Army and the Nabat Anarchist Confederation. The Nabat Anarchist Confederation, as noted above, was comprised of Russian and Ukrainian anarchists who were drawn to the Ukraine – "the perennial haven of fugitives from the persecutions of the central government" – after the Soviet government began the repression of anarchist movements and organisations in Russia in 1918.[93] In these efforts at realising an anarchist-communist economy and polity in the Ukraine, the Nabat Anarchist Confederation in the Ukraine might be considered as the political-cultural articulators of Makhnovist ideology, with the Revolutionary Insurgent Army as the military expression of Makhnovism. Civilian social and political administration was carried out through the Military Revolutionary Soviet, an elected body of the Makhnovist movement coordinated closely with the Nabat Confederation. In the spring of 1919, the Nabat secretariat joined the Military Revolutionary Soviet heading the cultural section of the insurgent army and conducting political propaganda.[94] Cultural and educational work was given high priority in the movement, as witnessed by the attempt to establish libertarian schools modeled after the theories of Spanish anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer, the commitment to anarchist political propaganda in the partisan units and local population, and through the publication of several insurgent newspapers. The Military Revolutionary Soviet was conceptualised as an "intermediate body designed to coordinate the local soviets in time of peace and be the civilian and military power in time of war, yet be subordinate to representative congress."[95]

Three such congresses were organised, in Velyka Mykhailivka January 23 1919, Hulyai Pole February 12 and April 10, and October 27 to November 2 in Olexandrivske.[96] The formula for the last

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92 Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 120.
93 Paul Avrich, "Russian Anarchists and the Civil War", *Russian Review*, 27:3, (July 1968), 296-306, available online: http://libcom.org/library/russian-anarchists-civil-war-paul-avrich (accessed December 8, 2009).
94 Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*, 65.
95 Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*,100.
96 Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*,108.

of these congresses, in which 270 delegates participated, was based on one peasant or worker delegate per 3000 members and one delegate per unit for insurgent and Red Army armies.[97] Assuming, conservatively, that only half of these delegates were peasants, this would mean that the membership of the local soviets represented at this congress numbered 405 000 people. This gives some indication as to the size of autonomous Makhnovist territory, the rapid proliferation and active participation in the councils during this period. A fourth congress was also scheduled, but was unable to convene due to the fact that it was declared illegal and outlawed by the Bolshevik government.

Indeed, the activity of the Makhnovists in organising and coordinating 'free soviets' came to be regarded by Bolshevik authorities as an unwanted political competitor in the Ukraine. Later, the defense of the soviets as directly democratic organs of the workers' and peasants' themselves was a demand taken up by the Kronstadt mutineers as well in the 1921 Kronstadt naval mutiny – similarly framing their revolt as a 'third revolution' which would restore the popular power of the working class which had been usurped by the Bolshevik party-dictatorship. Ultimately, with the defeat of counterrevolutionary forces in the Ukraine in 1921, in which the Makhnovist movement played a direct role, the RIAU had outlived its role in the civil war and revolution for the Bolsheviks. Interestingly, Lenin and Trotsky briefly considered the idea of allowing the existence of an autonomous, anarchist-communist region in the Ukraine. Malet speculates that this was abandoned because of the strategic, agricultural, and transport value of the area, and furthermore, this policy would have made the region a “magnet for all dissidents and refugees from Bolshevik-held territory.”[98]

## 2.3 The Platform, the General Union of Anarchists, and its Critics

By the summer of 1921 the Makhnovist Insurgent Army was effectively dislodged from their area of mass support by the Bolshevik Red Army. While it is true that a clandestine anarchist resistance continued in the Ukraine from 1921 to the 1930s,[99] the mass anarchist insurgent movement had

[97] Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*,109.
[98] Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, 66.
[99] See for example, Anatoly V. Dubovik and D.I. Rublyov, *After Makhno: Hidden Histories of Anarchism in the*

effectively come to an end when an entourage – which included an injured Makhno, 83 insurgents, and members of his general staff – crossed the border from the Ukraine into Romania. Thus began 'Makhno's odyssey', a period in which Makhno and his followers were imprisoned or under police surveillance in Romania and Poland between August 1921 and March 1925. These governments, while refusing to extradite Makhno to the Soviet Union, also denied him political asylum for fear of a decline of diplomatic relations with the Bolshevik government.[100]

In 1925 Makhno illegally entered Germany from Poland, where he was supported by German anarchists, and was soon granted refuge in Paris. In French exile, Makhno was reunited with several of his former comrades and supporters, and along with Peter Arshinov and Ida Mett, became the leading figures in the 'Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad', launching a Russian-language theoretical review, *Dielo Truda* (Workers' Cause).[101]

The point of departure for the *Dielo Truda* group was to address the failure of anarchists in the Russian revolution to realise a genuine anarchist society. The frustration, repeatedly expressed by Makhno in his memoirs about the disorganisation in anarchist ranks during the Russian Revolution, mirrored by similar assessments by Arshinov, fuelled the effort to draft a document and a set of recommendations for coherent anarchist strategy, tactics, and organisation. For all its positive elements, and the relevance of the anarchist social theory as outlined by Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta and others, the Russian, and broader international anarchist movement, argued the Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, suffered from “chronic general disorganization.”[102]

In an article published in *Dielo Truda* four months before the publication of the Platform, 'The Problem of Organization and the Notion of the Synthesis', the editorial collective of the journal laid out their intentions to present “a clear formulation” of their thoughts on organisational matters in order “to

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*Ukraine*, (London/Berkeley: Kate Sharpley Library, 2009)

[100] Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*, 241-243.

[101] The journal appeared bi-monthly in France from 1925 to 1939, until it was transferred to Chicago due to pressures from the French government, where it merged with an anarcho-syndicalist publication edited by G.P. Maximoff, becoming *Dielo Trouda-Probuzhdenie.* See Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy*, 274.

[102] *The Platform*, 192.

set them all out in some more or less rounded organizational platform which will serve as the basis for uniting a fair number of militants and groups into one and the same organization."[103] This article both set out the intentions of the 'Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad' and positions the class struggle perspectives of the group set firmly against the anarchist 'Synthesis' and any identification with individualist anarchism. The views of the group were clearly counterposed to the notion of a 'United Anarchism' – which envisaged an umbrella federation composed of communist, syndicalist, and individualist strands – not only the grounds that it represented an arbitrary division of the anarchist tradition into three strands (on what grounds, for example, would Tolstoyan Christian anarchism be excluded?) but also as a combination of contradictory elements.

The major conceptual element to be jettisoned by the 'Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad' was individualism. Genuine individual freedom, as Holota noted, was only conceivable in a communist society where material well-being and production geared to satisfy human needs would negate the structural inequalities and exploitative nature of capitalism, and establish the material preconditions for individual fulfilment.[104] Individualist anarchism as such, however, was considered as incompatible with communist perspectives:

> Certain individualist theoreticians champion the right to private ownership in personal relations and in economic relations alike. But wheresoever the principles of private property and personal fortunes exist, a struggle of economic interests inevitably comes into being, a statist structure created by the economically more powerful.[105]

In other words, individuality, as expressed through the private sphere of market relations, not only maintained exploitation and class antagonisms, but also created the foundations of the state as an institution to protect capitalist class interests. Syndicalism, although criticised as neglecting the organised political dimension outside of the economic sphere was, as the Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad were also to discuss later, was simply regarded as "one of the forms of the proletarian

[103] The Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, "The Problem of Organization and the Notion of Synthesis" (March 1926) in Alexandre Skirda, Facing the Enemy, 188.
[104] Wolodomyr Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921*, 472.
[105] The Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, "The Problem of Organization and the Notion of Synthesis" (March 1926) in Alexandre Skirda, Facing the Enemy, 190.

revolutionary movement, as one of the fighting methods espoused by the working class in fighting for its emancipation."[106]

The Platform might be considered as the starting point of an inter-movement dialogue and the first, and most important, basic document of the 'Platformist' current of anarchism. The document was conceived as an "outline", "skeleton", or "first step"[107] in the task of reorienting the anarchist movement around a common programme and organisational strategy, rather than a complete and exhaustive statement in and of itself.

Divided into three sections, the Platform begins with the "General Part," which outlines a basic interpretation of the principles of anarchist-communism, including anti-statism and an opposition to parliamentary democracy. A libertarian communist economic and political system is defined as an arrangement in which equality and social solidarity, firmly connected with the common ownership of the means of production and the distributive principle "from each according to ability, to each according to needs," establishes the material foundations and prerequisite for the flourishing of individual liberty.[108] This view of an harmonious relationship between social equality and individual liberty itself is not novel, as it is merely a restatement of one of the cornerstones of anarchist social theory as expressed succinctly by Bakunin in his oft quoted passage "Liberty without socialism is privilege, injustice; socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality."[109] Nor is the view of the major obstacle to the realisation of this libertarian communist society as outlined in the Platform, the bourgeois state. The familiar critique of the state is premised on the view that formal representative democratic institutions leave "the principle of capitalist private property untouched," and as a consequence, utilise state power as an organ of class rule: "The state is at one and the same time the organized violence of the bourgeoisie against the toilers and the arrangement of its executive

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[106] The Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, "The Problem of Organization and the Notion of Synthesis" (March 1926) in Alexandre Skirda, Facing the Enemy, 189.
[107] *The Platform*, 194.
[108] *The Platform*, 196-8.
[109] Mikhail Bakunin, "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism" (September 1867), available online: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/various/reasons-of-state.htm (accessed August 8, 2010).

organs."[110] Here, the Platform also reiterates the argument that the seizure of state power can not be used as a strategy for change for two reasons: first, in the case of reformist, parliamentary statist strategies, the real underlying economic power of society remains untouched and, second, in the case of revolutionary statist strategies, the bureaucratic maintenance of state power simply recreates privilege and hierarchy.[111]

In terms of the main considerations in the "General Part", one of the chief distinguishing features emphasized from the outset is the position of 'class struggle' and a class analysis at the centre of their theory:

> The social enslavement and exploitation of the toiling masses form the basis upon which modern society stands and without which that society could not exist. This fact gave rise to a secular class struggle sometimes assuming an open, violent form, sometimes undetectable and slow, but always, essentially, directed towards the transformation of the existing society into a society that would satisfy the toilers' needs, requirements and conception of justice [...] At all times in the history of human societies, that class struggle has been the principal factor determining the shape and structures of those societies.[112]

From the perspective of the Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, the anarchist social revolution was not a humanist endeavour, as their previously noted opposition to any notion of 'individual freedom' under capitalist conditions suggests, but rather a class struggle that pitted the oppressors against the exploited and oppressed. This departure from the liberal, humanist, and individualist tendencies associated with 'traditional anarchism' indicates a strong materialist orientation underlying the Platform's conceptions of revolutionary praxis. Rather than viewing anarchist ideas as philosophical abstractions, with validity independent of concrete manifestations of struggle, anarchist praxis was regarded as an emergent phenomenon: "The inception, unfolding and realization of anarchist ideals have their roots in the life and struggle of the toiling masses and are indissolubly bound up with the fate of the latter."[113] Arshinov considered this emergent feature of anarchist thought with explicit reference to the relationships between ideas, practices, and the self-activity of the

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[110] *The Platform*, 198.
[111] *The Platform,* 199.
[112] *The Platform*, 195.
[113] *The Platform*, 197.

oppressed:

> Anarchism embraces two worlds: the world of philosophy, of ideas, and the world of practice, of activity. The two are intimately linked. The struggling working class stands mainly on the concrete, practical side of anarchism. The essential and fundamental principle of this side is the principle of the revolutionary initiative of workers and their self-liberation. From this naturally flows the further principle of statelessness and self-management of the workers in the new society. But until present, the history of the proletarian struggle does not contain a massive anarchist movement in its pure, strictly principled form. All of the workers' and peasants' movements which have taken place until today have been movements within the limits of the capitalist regime, have been more or less tinged with anarchism. This is perfectly natural and understandable. The working classes do not act within a world of wishes, but in the real world where they are daily subject to the physical and psychological blows of hostile forces.[114]

The "General Part" also details the role of anarchists both in a pre-revolutionary and revolutionary period, introducing the idea of a 'General Union of Anarchists'. The constructive potential of the working class to create self-organised institutions is highlighted, both running counter to Bolshevik conceptions (for example, Lenin's idea of the masses ability to attain only a 'trade union consciousness')[115] and as the central agents that will build the organisational forms replacing the state and capitalist property relations with "a federalist arrangement of toilers' production and consumption organizations, federally connected and self-governing."[116] The soviets and factory committees which emerged through the course of the Russian revolution are cited as examples of the creative potential of working-class self-activity and as the foundations for communist society.[117]

If the reconstructive potential to create self-governing institutions already exists within the working class, the role of anarchists, then is relegated to a more modest role of guiding, rather than leading, mass movements, corresponding to two distinct phases: "the one before the revolution, and the one during the revolution."[118] In the first phase, the objective is to "prepare the workers and peasants for

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[114] Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement*, 233.
[115] Lenin wrote that "The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc." See V.I. Lenin, *What is to be done?* (1902), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/ii.htm (accessed April 20, 2012).
[116] *The Platform*, 200.
[117] *The Platform*, Ibid.
[118] *The Platform*, Ibid.

the social revolution."[119] This means the creation of a specific political organisation uniting the most advanced class elements on a theoretical basis – the General Union of Anarchists – as well as direct participation in mass economic organisations.[120] If the impetus for genuine revolutionary change was to come from 'below', the role of anarchist militants would be to encourage greater participation and struggle, as 'consciousness raising' and transformative activities.

In the next part, the "Constructive Section: The Problem of Day One of the Social Revolution", the role of organised anarchists during the revolutionary phase was fleshed out. Here, the influence of Kropotkin is evident in the striving for a harmonious relationship between, or integration of, urban industry and rural agriculture[121].

> Libertarian communists cannot have any doubts as to the mutuality of relations between toilers in the towns and toilers in the countryside [...] the problem of consumption in the revolution will be feasible only through close revolutionary collaboration between these two categories of toilers.[122]

However, the complexity of modern industrial organisation, and the requirement for coordination on a scale incompatible with strictly local forms of organising required the creation of a 'unified economy' and the import of syndicalist methods, a factor also discussed in 'The Problem of Organization and the Notion of the Synthesis' as well as in the final section of the "General Part" of the Platform. Here, syndicalism is not positioned or contrasted against anarchist-communism, but rather regarded as a method for realising communist objectives, with the caveat that apolitical syndicalism could easily fall into opportunism, as the case of the post-1914 French CGT illustrated. Aside from the 'General Union of Anarchists' operating on a much broader political level, the role of anarchist militants in the syndicalist unions would be to propagate anarchist ideas and combat reformist tendencies. In the revolutionary period, "organizing roles will devolve upon specially created administrative agencies,

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[119] *The Platform*, Ibid.

[120] Makhno regarded the former as being an "active revolutionary vanguard." See Nestor Makhno, "On the 10th Anniversary of the Makhnovist Insurgent Movement in the Ukraine" (Delo Truda N°44-45, January/February 1928, pp. 3-7), available online: http://www.nestormakhno.info/english/10anniv.htm (accessed June 23, 2009).

[121] See for example George Woodcock (ed.), Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1994).

[122] *The Platform*, 207.

purpose-built by the laboring masses: workers' soviets, factory committees or workers' administrations of firms and factories."[123] These organs of workers' self-management would be federated and exist alongside similarly fashioned peasants' organisations. The "Constructive Section" closes with a consideration of how to defend revolutionary gains from counterrevolutionary forces. Again, taking the Russian revolution as an example, the authors write that a prolonged conflict is to be expected. On military organisation they write: "Like any war, civil war could not be waged successfully by the toilers except by application of the two principles fundamental to all military activity: unity of operational planning and unity through single command."[124] Like the Makhnovist Revolutionary Insurgent Army, this military organisation would be subordinate to, and politically directed by, the workers' and peasants' soviets; based on voluntary enlistment; and democratic in non-combat situations.

The final, and most controversial, section of the Platform – the 'Organisational Part' - lays out the "principles of anarchist organisation." The four central organisational principles of the 'General Union of Anarchists' are as follows:

1. ideological unity – a common political programme and set of ideological principles uniting the 'General Union of Anarchists'. "All of the activity of the General Union of Anarchists, broadly, as well as in its details, should be in perfect and constant accord with the ideological principles professed by the Union."

2. tactical unity – a common set of methods and tactics directed a achieving the objectives outlined above, a principle with rids the organisation "of the damaging impact of several mutually antagonistic tactics."

3. collective responsibility – an emphasis on accountability in the sphere of political activity, as opposed to "unaccountable individualism", as "Revolutionary social activity [...] cannot be based on the personal responsibility of individual militants."

4. federalism – a principle "which reconciles the individual's or the organization's independence and initiative with service of the common cause." In the General Union of Anarchists, "while acknowledging every member of the organization's right to independence, to freedom of opinion, initiative and individual liberty, charges each member with specific organizational duties, insisting that these be vigorously performed, and that decisions jointly made by put into effect."[125]

The platform also advocated the formation of an executive committee for the General Union of

[123] *The Platform*, 206.
[124] *The Platform*, 210.
[125] *The Platform*, 211-2.

Anarchists to oversee the:

> implementation of decisions made by the Union, which the latter will have entrusted to it: theoretical and organizational oversight of the activity of isolated organizations, in keeping with the Union's theoretical options and overall tactical line: scrutiny of the general state of the movement: the maintenance of working and organizational ties between all of the organizations ties between all of the organizations of the Union, as well as with outside organizations.[126]

While it is true that the Platform was rejected, in whole or in part, by most of the leading figures in the anarchist movement, the document nonetheless proved to be quite influential among activists. This was particularly true of the French anarchist movement. Platformists formed the majority of the *Union Anarchiste* (UA), the main French national anarchist organisation, from 1927 until the early 1930s, and continued as a significant current afterwards.[127] The Federation of Anarchist Communists of Bulgaria (*Federatsia na Anarkho Komunistite ot Balgaria*; FAKB) was another significant anarchist-communist organisation which adopted the Platform.[128] There were even attempts to create anarchist federations along Platformist principles in the Soviet Union within the 'anarcho-Makhnovist' underground. Bucharest served as a major centre of Platformist activity, particularly in smuggling literature across the Soviet-Romanian frontier and maintaining contacts in the Ukraine.[129]

The debate around the platform, however, as Berry notes:

> was distorted by personal enmities (particularly between Voline and Makhno); by misunderstandings (some genuine, some apparently deliberate, some based on bad translations from the Russian words to do with leadership, guidance and so on); and by the long-standing, sometimes profound, hostility between anarchist communists and those nearer to the individualists.[130]

The main critics of the Platform were grouped around Voline, and opposed what they considered to be an attempt to 'Bolshevise anarchism' through the import of organisational strategies foreign to the

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[126] *The Platform*, 213.
[127] For a discussion of the influence of the Platformist position in the UA between the years 1927-1936, see David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement*, 173-6.
[128] See Michael Schmidt, *The Anarchist-Communist Mass Line: Bulgarian Anarchism Armed*, available online: http://www.anarkismo.net/article/9678 (accessed August 17, 2010).
[129] Anatoly V. Dubovik, "The Anarchist Underground in the Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s: Outlines of History" in *After Makhno: Hidden Histories of Anarchism in the Ukraine* (London, Berkeley: Kate Sharpley Library, 2009).
[130] David Berry, *History of the French Anarchist Movement*, 173.

body of anarchist doctrine.[131] Chief among these was what proponents of the 'Synthesis' regarded as a shift towards 'centralisation' and an authoritarian leadership through the creation of an 'anarchist party'. D'Agostino, in summarizing some of the main 'Synthesist' objections to the Platform, writes that Voline and the authors of the “Reply to the Platform”

> found in Arshinov's [sic] call for an ideological clearinghouse the ambition to set up a party line and attributed it to his founding of all anarchist thought on the idea of class struggle, from which the party concept and its authoritarianism sprang. Voline *et al.* charged that the requirement of ideological orthodoxy would fundamentally alter the relationship of the militants to the masses, making the former “guides,” rather than “collaborators and aides.” If there were intellectual guidance there would soon be privileges and eventually a whole new authoritarian mode of operation.[132]

Other anarchist critics of the Platform were less alarmed by the creation of an 'anarchist party' and did not associate this form of political organisation with authoritarianism or strategies to capture state power. Conversely, the merits of any efforts to unite militants under a common programme must be judged according to their content and principles. Maximoff, by no means an advocate of the Platform,[133] wrote:

> There is nothing anti-Anarchist in a "Party" organisation as such. Both Bakunin and Kropotkin spoke frequently of the need for organising an Anarchist Party, and to this day the organisation of the Scandinavian Anarchists is known as a Party. Party does not necessarily mean power, or the ambition to run the State. The issue is not in the name, but in its content, in the organisational structure of the Party, in the principles on which it is founded.[134]

In relation to the concrete functioning of the proposed 'General Union of Anarchists', the concept of an executive committee came under scrutiny, raising further questions as to whether or not majority decisions would be binding on Union members. If so, would the executive committee have coercive functions and be empowered to impose the will of the majority on dissenting minorities? In the

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[131] See “Reply to the Platform (Synthesist)” by 'Several Russian Anarchists' (April 1927) (Sobol, Schwartz, Steimer, Volin, Lia, Roman, Ervantian, Fleshin), available online: http://www.nestormakhno.info/english/volrep.htm (accessed February, 27 2010).

[132] Anthony D'Agostino*, Marxism and the Russian Anarchists, 239.*

[133] Maximoff's, in fact, was a critic of both the platform and the synthesis (see note below), presenting a federated system of factory committees based on anarchist and syndicalist principles and rooted in the urban working class as an alternative. Maximoff's political project in later years was to reconcile Kropotkin's anarchist-communism with syndicalism, or the utilization of syndicalist tactics towards libertarian communist ends. See G.P. Maximoff, *My Social Credo* (Sydney: Monty Miller Press, 1983).

[134] G.P. Maximoff, *Constructive Anarchism: The Debate on the Platform* (1930), available online: http://libcom.org/library/constructive-anarchism-debate-platform-g-p-maksimov (accessed July 8, 2010).

'Supplement to the Organisational Platform (Questions and Answers)', the Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad state that the executive committee would be an elected body responsible for carrying out administrative functions, much like the secretariats of syndicalist unions.[135] In the case of majorities versus minorities, three possible scenarios are laid out: first, a resolution of differences through debate, discussion, and compromise; second, in cases of divergent viewpoints, a coexistence of two positions and tactics if they are considered by the membership to be feasible; and finally, major differences of opinion leading to a split into separate organisations. In all three cases, outcomes would not be decided by the executive committee, but by representative congresses and conferences of the organisation's membership.[136]

In making these revisions to anarchist social theory, the Platform did indeed come to resemble elements of revolutionary Marxism, but not the Marxism of the Bolshevik Party, which its detractors accused it of. Rather, as Holota suggests, the council communist conception of the 'party' – as will be examined in the next section – closely resembled Platformist conceptions of revolutionary organisation and an anti-state communism, and was also devised as an organised, anti-statist alternative to Bolshevism with its basis in workers' councils.[137] The Platform had asserted the requirement of an anarchist political organisation in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary periods as a necessary element to unite militants, conduct propaganda, and to make organised interventions in social struggles. Undoubtedly this interpretation of libertarian communist praxis – through its organisational strategies, abandonment of liberal or individualist ideas, and the positioning of class struggle at the core of its politics – distanced the ideas of the Platform from the 'Synthesist' or 'traditional anarchism' it sought to critique. Holota in fact regarded the Platform as charting a course between the two poles, or 'excesses' as he put it, of pure centralism and federalism; in effect, between Marx and Bakunin.[138]

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[135] Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, “Supplement to the Organizational Platform (Questions and Answers), November 2, 1926” in Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy*, 217.
[136] Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, “Supplement to the Organizational Platform (Questions and Answers), November 2, 1926” in Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy*, 218.
[137] Wolodomyr Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921*, 513-14.
[138] Wolodomyr Holota, *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921*, 516-7.

On a more theoretical level, the "intermediary class", mentioned in passing in the Platform,[139] was more fully developed by Arshinov at a later stage – a conception that was formulated, in part, by theorists drawing from Marxist and anarchist sources. Arshinov came to the conclusion that the Bolshevik Party was a political organisation expressing the aims and interests of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia. In this view, Arshinov came to conclusions similar to those of Machajski (noted above) – a figure remembered for his heterodox merger of anarchist and Marxist ideas, and one that Makhno had also had contact with[140] – as well as those of the council communists. In 1927, "On the occasion of Machajski's death, Arshinov devoted four pages of [*Dielo Truda*] to a detailed description of the Makhaevist class analysis of Socialism."[141] Arshinov, in comparing the anarchist and Makhaevist movements basis in class struggle wrote: "The chief virtue of this movement (Makhaevschina) was [...] that it jealously guarded the purity of this principle and mercilessly unmasked all who would conceal the slightest hypocrisy in their relations with the workers."[142]

### 3. Dutch-German Council Communism

As was illustrated in the preceding section, the Makhnovists in exile developed an anarchist-communist political theory in the *Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)* with a two pronged focus: an anarchist critique of the Bolshevik state and a communist critique of 'traditional anarchism'. The Bolshevik model of economic and political organisation was regarded as incompatible with the federalist and directly democratic forms of organisation in general, and the experience of the forms of agricultural self-organisation and 'free soviets' advanced by Makhnovists in the Ukrainian countryside in particular. Class struggle as a central category of analysis, an emphasis on the transformative potential of workers' and peasants' councils, and the need for a well-organised libertarian movement also distinguished Platformist political theory from individualist or reformist

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[139] *The Platform*, 206.

[140] This was during Makhno's visit to Moscow in the spring of 1918, during a period when the Ukraine was still under Austro-Hungarian occupation. Makhno described Machajski as the "founder of an idiosyncratic theory about the form of class struggle between the toilers and capital." Nestor Makhno, *Under the Blows of Counterrevolution, April-June 1918* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2009), 148-149.

[141] Anthony D'Agostino*, Marxism and the Russian Anarchists, 226-227.*

[142] Anthony D'Agostino*, Marxism and the Russian Anarchists, 226.*

variants of anarchism, which either minimised the importance of class struggle or advanced vaguely humanist notions of society and social change. In concluding, it was mentioned that Wolodymyr Holota, in his analysis of Makhnovism and Platformism, had drawn parallels between the Platformist conception of revolutionary organisation – specifically the 'General Union of Anarchists' – and council communist conceptions of the revolutionary party.

Council communism has long been regarded as a current within the much broader Marxist tradition that resembles, or closely approximates, the analysis, and tactics of 'socialist anarchism', or what many contemporary activists and theorists have commonly referred to as 'class struggle' anarchism.[143] Similar points include: a revolutionary class politics; an emphasis on direct action and forms self-organisation as the prefigurative organs of revolutionary change; a deep distrust of centralised and bureaucratic political and economic structures; a rigorous critique of reformism and Bolshevism; and a view of the experience of the Soviet Union as a form of state capitalism.[144] These all lend credence to suggestions of a convergence of perspectives between councilism and class struggle anarchisms. Moreover, much like the broadly defined anarchist tradition, council communism became submerged during the Second World War – and overshadowed by the increasing polarisation of international politics into Western capitalist and Soviet spheres of influence[145] – only to resurface with the international upsurge of antisystemic student and worker movements of the sixties and seventies (more on this in the next chapter). Some individuals, like Daniel Guérin and Noam Chomsky, reconsidered the historical disagreements between anarchism and Marxism and made the councilist tradition a major reference point, including both 'left-wing Marxism' and 'socialist anarchism' as

[143] See for example Benjamin Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms*, (Edinburgh, Oakland: AK Press and Dark Star, 2006), 12-16 and Wayne Price, The Abolition of the State: Anarchist and Marxist Perspectives (Bloomington/Milton Keynes: Authorhouse, 2007), 3-5.

[144] Anarchists were among the first to denounce the economic and political arrangement in the Soviet Union as a form of state capitalism. Council communists made similar arguments in the early 1920s, and continued to develop the theory of state capitalism and critiques of the Soviet Union through the 1930s. This conception of state capitalism was taken up in the post-Second World War period, and will be examined in the next chapter.

[145] Steve Wright notes that "if anything, the climate of the Cold War would be even more inhospitable for those who saw the rival blocs as simply different forms of capitalist imperialism." See Steve Wright , "Radical traditions: council communism", in *Reconstruction* # 4 (1995) available online: http://libcom.org/library/radical-traditions-council-communism-steve-wright (accessed August 4, 2009)

elements in a 'libertarian socialist' tradition in which the council form constituted a key organising principle.[146]

But what of the council communists themselves? How did councilists conceive of, and relate to, anarchist movements within this historical context, what factors contributed to the arrangement of conceptual elements in council communism, and to what extent did councilist ideas replicate anarchist – or in Holota's view – Platformist conceptions of revolutionary organisation? To these ends, a contextualised account of the development and ideology of the Dutch-German council communist current will be provided as well as a sketch of the American Group of Council Communists, one of the main councilist organisations in the post-1924 period. In Part 2 of this chapter, the writings of the American Group of Council Communists will be examined in relation to the Spanish Civil War and Revolution.

### 3.1 Not a Party in the Traditional Sense: Workers' Councils and the German Communist Workers Party

The Dutch-German communist left, or council communist tendency, represents one of the most significant and original revolutionary Marxist tendencies of the interwar period. The best known council communist theorists include Anton Pannekoek, Paul Mattick, Herman Gorter, and Otto Rühle, while arguably the most famous and controversial councilist activist – Marinus van der Lubbe – was responsible for setting the fire that destroyed the Reichstag building in February 1933 as an act of protest against the rising power of Hitler and the German National Socialists.

In the early 1920s, council communism had a mass audience and considerable influence within the Dutch and German working-class movement. Its numerical strength, however, declined along with the intense post-First World War revolutionary wave. This political tradition emerged from, yet sharply broke with, the main expression of the pre-war 'orthodox' Marxist tradition, social democracy, and later distinguished itself as a critical Marxist current opposed to the theory and practice of Bolshevism. As such, the Dutch-German radical left movement became one particular expression of 'left-wing

[146] See Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism and Marxism* (Orkney: Cienfuegos Press, 1980) 1-30; Noam Chomsky, Government in the Future (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), 23-39.

communism' (as a left opposition current within the Comintern) centred in workers' movement in the Netherlands and Germany – although groups closely associated with this current were active, or later formed, in a number other countries[147] – and later distinguished itself as a distinct, anti-parliamentary Marxist and anti-Bolshevik current. Two further left communist currents, the Italian or 'Bordigist' current and the Russian left communist tradition, while similar in some respects to councilism, had somewhat different political trajectories and as such will not be dealt with in any detail here.[148]

The centrepiece of council communist theory is the notion that workers' councils constitute the main unit of revolutionary working-class struggle and the basis on which directly democratic post-capitalist social and economic organisations should be constructed. From this premise, the council communists developed a critique of bureaucracy and mediated forms of political action as running directly counter to the emancipatory aims of the forms of self-organisation created by the working class. As Rachleff wrote in his 1976 study of councilist history and political theory:

> The councilists [...] rejected the party structure because it recapitulated the capitalist division between mental and manual labor, between order-givers and order-takers. With their emphasis on the importance of the connection between the means and ends of the class struggle, they recognized that socialism – workers' self-management of production and society – cannot be achieved through a form of organization that hindered self-emancipation. Rather than stimulating the capabilities of workers, parties function to stifle them.[149]

Council communists also rejected the trade union form, for similar reasons, arguing that conventional unions had been wholly integrated into the functioning of advanced capitalism as an instrument of social control and collaborationist capital-labour mediation. By acting *above* or *on behalf* of the workers, the councilists reasoned that both trade union and party officials stifled the creative potential and usurped the agency of the working class. In doing so, the bureaucratic layers of

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[147] See for example Steven Wright, “Left Communism in Australia: J.A. Dawson and the Southern Advocate for Workers' Councils”, *Thesis Eleven* I (1980), 43-77 and Mark Shipway, *Anti-Parliamentary Communism: The Movement for Workers' Councils in Britain, 1917-45* (Basingstoke, Hants.: Macmillan, 1988).

[148] For discussions of the 'Bordigist' and Russian Left Communist currents see International Communist Current, The Italian Communist Left 1926-45: A contribution to the history of the revolutionary movement (London: International Communist Current, 1992) and Ian Hebbes et al., *The Russian Communist Left, 1918-30: A Contribution to the History of the Revolutionary Movement*, (International Communist Current, 2005).

[149] Peter Rachleff, *Marxism and Council Communism: The Foundation for Revolutionary Theory for Modern Society* (Brooklyn: Revisionist Press, 1976), 207.

politicians and representatives became separated from their working-class constituents, developing and defending their own privileges and class interests as the managers, rather than gravediggers, of capital.

These ideas were not considered as abstract theoretical positions. Rather, councilist ideas were developed and elaborated on the basis of new, emergent social forms developed directly through the revolutionary process, as observed in mass workers' struggles; particularly in the emergence of the soviets in Russia in 1905 and again in 1917, as well as the appearance of workers' councils in Germany, Hungary, and Italy in the uprisings, factory occupations, and insurrections that swept central and southern Europe in the years immediately following the First World War.[150] In Germany and the Netherlands, these conceptions first emerged from within a radical left minority in the German Social Democratic Party,[151] and the Dutch 'Tribunist' group, both of whom collaborated extensively.[152] Perhaps the most important proponent of this radical Left faction was Rosa Luxemburg. Luxemburg's famous pamphlet, *Reform or Revolution* first published in 1900, attacked 'revisionist' or 'reformist' currents within the party which, she argued, by favouring gradualist electoral methods seeking to evolve towards socialism, abandoned class struggle as a tactic and central category for analysis, thereby betraying the revolutionary content of Marxism.[153] Luxemburg's 1906 pamphlet, *The Mass Strike* based on the mass workers' struggles in Russia in 1905, elaborated on the 'dialectic of spontaneity and organisation' arguing that revolutionary class consciousness and new social forms

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[150] See Peter Rachleff, *Marxism and Council Communism,* 106; Paul Mattick (1969), “Introduction” in *New essays: a quarterly dedicated to the study of modern society* (hereafter New Essays) (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Reprint Corporation, 1969), v; Anton Pannekoek, *Workers' Councils* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2003), 76-77.

[151] For a summary of the left, right, and centrist currents in German pre-war Social Democracy, represented by Luxemburg, Eduard Bernstein, and Karl Kautsky respectively see Richard Gombin, *The Radical Tradition: a study in modern revolutionary thought* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1978), 93-4.

[152] Bourrinet writes that “There is not on the one hand a German Left and on the other a Dutch Left, but truly a German-Dutch Communist Left, with Gorter as its leading political figure.” Phillipe Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left: a contribution to the history of the revolutionary movement* (London: Porcupine Press, 2001), 9.

[153] Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution* (New York: Gordon Press, 1974). Council communists regarded this as a central text, and in general, Luxemburg as a key figure in the development of the councilist current. See Karl Korsch, “The Passing of Marxian Orthodoxy”, *New Essays* 3:11/12, (December 1937), 7-11; Paul Mattick, “Luxemburg vs. Lenin”, *New Essays* 2:8, (July 1936), 17-35.

were created directly through the process of struggle, rather than 'taught' or 'propagated'.[154]

The Left radicals (*Linksradikalen*), at this stage, increasingly came into conflict with more moderate elements in the party, opposing not only the reformism or 'opportunism' of its leadership, but also the authoritarianism of the party apparatus. Broué, in his study of the German Revolution, writes that "The German left radicals had been in conflict for years with the authoritarian organisation of their own party. They concluded that centralisation was the main obstacle to the radicalisation of the masses and to the development of revolutionary activity."[155] Frequently denounced as an "anarchist deviation", Gombin notes that at this stage "Left-wing radicalism, while violently opposed to anarchism, had a number of points in common with it, notably its mistrust of party apparatus and its faith in the autonomous practices of the masses."[156] Indeed, the early relationships between the Dutch-German Left and anarchist and syndicalist movements were somewhat ambivalent.[157] While collaborating with anarchist and syndicalist organisations – for example, in joint strike committees – the Left radicals still harboured sectarian notions of anarchism as 'petit-bourgeois' and individualistic.

Previous intraparty divisions came to a head during the crisis on the political Left provoked by the First World War and the overall reconfiguration of the international working-class movement following the Russian Revolution in 1917. Those who had maintained anti-war positions and had enthusiastically welcomed the revolutionary events in Russia formed the Communist Party of Germany (KPD; *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*). Similar to many Western European communists, the majority of this new party held anti-parliamentary and anti-trade union positions. Perhaps initially taking Lenin's early 1917 revolutionary writings at face value, like his 1917 *April Theses* or *State and Revolution* (in fact, Pannekoek's positions against Kautsky are praised by Lenin in this work), workers and intellectuals in the Dutch-German communist movement argued that the

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[154] Rosa Luxemburg, *The mass strike, the political party, and the trade unions and The Julius pamphlet* (London: Harper and Row, 1971)
[155] Pierre Broué, *The German Revolution 1917-1923* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006), 39.
[156] Richard Gombin, *The Radical Tradition*, 93.
[157] See Clarinet's account of the influence of revolutionary anarchist Dome la Niewenhuis on the Dutch radical left, Phillipe Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left*, 21-26.

methods and tactics of the Russian communists had revealed the emancipatory potential of the Soviets or workers' councils, which now represented the basis for social revolution. “All power to the soviets,” as the new revolutionary slogan, appeared to mark a fundamental break with previous left-wing formations and a new way forward. The revolutionary mood was further propelled by massive waves of strikes and protests throughout Germany, between November 1918 (which forced Kaiser Wilhelm II to abdicate) and August 1919 (the founding of the Weimar Republic), and the appearance of workers' councils among soldiers, miners, and factory workers. Perhaps the best known manifestation of these councils was the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic, in which anarchists like Gustav Landauer and Erich Mühsam were leading figures.

In 1920, after a series of bureaucratic manoeuvres within the KPD, a small section of the party led by Paul Levi was successful in capturing important positions in the central committee, and through this influence, expelled left-wing branches of the party. The strategic aim of these political battles within the KPD to exclude the radical left centred around efforts to appeal to workers in the Social Democratic and Independent Social Democratic Parties in order to build a mass party.[158] Other divisive issues stemmed from the insistence of the newly formed Communist International (Comintern) for all affiliated parties to participate in electoral campaigns in their national parliaments as well to work *within* the trade unions in order to radicalise them.[159] For the 'ultra-lefts', as the councilists were pejoratively labelled by Lenin and pro-Bolshevik communists, the function of the trade unions and political parties had already been called into question from their performance before, during and after the war. Lenin's famous 1920 polemic, *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, was explicitly aimed at destroying the influence of the anti-parliamentarian and anti-trade unionist sections of the communist movement in Western Europe.[160]

The expelled sections of the KPD regrouped to form the Germany Communist Workers Party

[158] Pierre Broué, *The German Revolution 1917*-1923, 393-491.
[159] See the 'Conditions of Admission into the Communist International' in *Minutes of the Second Congress of the Communist International* (1920), available online: http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch07.htm (accessed September 24, 2009).
[160] Paul Mattick, *New Essays*, vi.

(KAPD; *Kommunistische Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands*) in April 1920, and participated as an observer group and left opposition formation within the Communist International until the Third Congress in 1921. The adoption of the New Economic Policy in the USSR, as well as the Bolshevik suppression of internal party dissent (Workers' Opposition), and external popular protest (the Kronstadt naval mutiny), further alienated the councilists, no less than the increasing control and influence wielded by the Bolsheviks on the revolutionary sections of the international working-class movement. Following the KAPD exit from the Comintern, councilists engaged in a much more detailed critique of Bolshevism and the Soviet Union.[161] Perhaps the two definitive councilist statements against Bolshevik conceptions of communism include Herman Gorter's 1920 *Open Letter to Comrade Lenin*162 and Helmut Wagner's (pen name of Rudolph Sprenger) *Theses on Bolshevism.*[163] Both writings express the view that conditions in Western Europe precluded the adoption of parliamentary and trade unionist methods for revolutionary ends. Wagner's analysis, which became the standard councilist view, further argued that during the October Revolution the Bolshevik Party had carried out a bourgeois revolution in a predominantly agrarian society (rather than a proletarian revolution) against the remnants of Russian feudal absolutism and a weak liberal capitalist class, and installed the revolutionary intelligentsia as masters of a dictatorial party-state.

In the programme of the KAPD, they explicitly state that their organisation is “not party in the traditional sense.” That is, they did not participate in the electoral process and did not seek to capture state power. Rather, the political organisation was given a more modest role, namely, uniting and coordinating the efforts of the most politically advanced segments of the working-class under a communist programme. The factory organisations or “workers' unions” (*Unionen*) were considered as

[161] See for example “What was the USSR? Towards a Theory of the Deformation of Value under State Capitalism Part III: Left Communism and the Russian Revolution”, in *Aufheben* 8 (Autumn 1999), available online: http://libcom.org/library/what-was-ussr-aufheben-left-communism-part-3 (accessed August 5, 2009).

[162] See Herman Gorter, “Open letter to comrade Lenin, A reply to 'left-wing' communism, an infantile disorder,” (1920), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/gorter/1920/open-letter/index.htm (accessed June 23, 2009).

[163] Helmut Wagner, “Theses on Bolshevism”, *New Essays*, 1:3 (December 1934), 1-18.

constituting “the foundation of the communist society to come.”[164] Parallel to the KAPD (peaking in 1920 with some 40 000 members) was the 200 000 strong General Workers' Union of Germany (AAUD; *Allgemeine Arbeiter Union Deutschlands*), a network of revolutionary factory organisations modelled on the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Of all early twentieth-century radical labour organisations, the revolutionary industrial unionism of the IWW had the most significant and lasting impact on councilist industrial strategy.[165]

Differences amongst the councilists on tactical and organisational questions emerged in the early 1920s.[166] A split from the AAUD, led by Otto Rühle, led to the creation of the AAUE (General Workers' Union of Germany – Unitary Organisation; *Allgemeine Arbeiter-Union – Einheitsorganisation*), as a political-economic “unitary organisation”. Militants of the AAUE denied the necessity of a revolutionary political organisation separate from workers' economic organisations.[167] This underlayed one of the central debates within the councilist movement: namely, questions regarding the utility of a revolutionary party. Three different positions emerged. Rühle, in forming the “unity organisation”, argued that efforts should be directly solely at creating class struggle organisations in the workplace as a synthesis of economic and political organisation, and that attempts to form political organisations should be abandoned. This position was laid out most clearly in Rühle's pamphlet 'The Revolution is

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[164] “Programme of the Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD)” (1920), available online: http://libcom.org/library/programme-communist-workers-party-germany-kapd-1920 (accessed July 6, 2009).

[165] See Peter Rachleff, *Marxism and Council Communism,*172. Anton Pannekoek had maintained a long-standing appreciation of the IWW. As early as 1912, Pannekoek had regarded the principles of the IWW as “perfectly correct”: Phillipe Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left*, 78. See also Anton Pannekoek, *Workers Councils'*, 65-6; John Gerber writes that “Familiarity with the IWW came from the Hamburg left radical Fritz Wolffheim, who had edited an IWW publication in the United States, and from the activities of American IWW sailors in the ports of Bremen and Hamburg.” John Gerber, “From Left Radicalism to Council Communism: Anton Pannekoek and German Revolutionary Marxism”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 23 (1988), 169-189, available online: http://reocities.com/cordobakaf/ (accessed August 15, 2010); Broué also notes the influence of the IWW on Wolffheim and the KAPD/AAUD, Pierre Broué, *The German Revolution 1917*-1923, 66.

[166] For a more detailed discussion of these divisions see Marcel van der Linden, “On Council Communism” (2004), available online: http://www.kurasje.org/arkiv/15800f.htm (accessed July 5, 2009); Mark Shipway, “Council Communism”, in Maximilien Rubel and John Crump (eds.), *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1987), 104-126; and Richard Gombin, *The Radical Tradition*, 104-14.

[167] See Otto Rühle, “From the Bourgeois to the Proletarian Revolution” (1924) available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/ruhle/1924/revolution.htm (accessed August 16, 2009)

Not a Party Affair'[168] (written while he was still a member of the KAPD), and in several respects, resembled that of revolutionary or anarchist syndicalism.[169] Herman Gorter argued for a revolutionary party and defended the role of the KAPD as a necessary political organisation for militants, carrying out propaganda work and linking members in a common organisation under a common platform. Pannekoek and Mattick in some ways oscillated between the two positions: with the former settling on a somewhat 'spontaneist' perspective which asserted that any outside intervention in working-class struggles would ultimately be harmful,[170] and the latter considering these differences (in retrospect) to be of little practical significance.[171]

Despite these differences, it should be clear that the conceptions of a Leninist-type "vanguard" party of professional revolutionaries or the construction of an electoral political machine were strategies wholly rejected by council communists. The councilist notion of a "party", as "a group which share[s] a general common perspective and [seeks] to clarify and publicize the issues of class struggle,"[172] in this sense, did not fundamentally differ from similar class struggle anarchist conceptions of a revolutionary, anti-parliamentary political organisation, such as the Platformist

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[168] Otto Rühle, "The Revolution is Not a Party Affair" (1920), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/ruhle/1920/ruhle02.htm (accessed August 15, 2010).

[169] Bock writes that "The contacts between the AAUE and the FAUD [a German syndicalist union] were never wholly severed; AAUE representatives, for example, participated regularly as guests at the congresses of the FAUD." Hans Manfred Bock, "Anarchosyndicalism in the German Labour Movement" in Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds.), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990)**,** 66. Thorpe speculates that the "policy of admitting only one affiliate from each country also prevented the councilist AAUE from joining [the syndicalist International Workingmen's Association (IWMA)], as the FAUD was the German IWMA section." Wayne Thorpe, "Syndicalist Internationalism before World War II" in Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds.), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective*, 250.

[170] Marcel van der Linden, "On Council Communism" (2004), available online: http://www.kurasje.org/arkiv/15800f.htm (accessed July 5, 2009)

[171] Mattick wrote that "History bypassed both groups; they argued in a vacuum. Neither the Communist Workers Party nor the anti-party section of the General Labor Union overcame their status of being 'ultra-left' sects. Their internal problems became quite artificial for, as regards activities, there was actually no difference between them." Paul Mattick "Anti-Bolshevist Communism in Germany", *Telos* 26 (Winter 1975-1976), available online: http://libcom.org/library/anti-bolshevist-communism-germany-paul-mattick (accessed August 8, 2009). See also Mattick's correspondence with members and supporters of the British Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation on the question of revolutionary parties, "Party and Class" in *Class War on the Home Front* (1986), available online: http://libcom.org/library/apcf-class-war-home-front-4 (accessed August 26, 2009).

[172] Peter Rachleff, *Marxism and Council Communism,* 208.

General Union of Anarchists.[173] Indeed, in the radical political atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, historian Hans Manfred Bock considered the German council communists to be, along with the *Föderation der Kommunistischen Anarchisten* (FKAD; Federation of Communist Anarchists of Germany) and the *Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands* (FAUD; Free Workers' Union of Germany), a part of a common, "relatively widespread antiauthoritarian movement."

> On the levels of personnel, ideology and organization, there were open borders and fluid crossings and interactions between the three components of the antiauthoritarian camp, made up of the anarchist, the anarchosyndicalist and the unionist tendencies. Their common denominators were antiauthoritarianism, antiparliamentarism, antimilitarism, and their rejection of political parties; their conflicts arose mainly over organizational competition and personal rivalry between the leaders.[174]

## 3.2 Post–1924 Council Communism in the United States

As the revolutionary wave in Germany waned, so too did the numerical strength of the council communist movement. By 1924 the combined membership of councilist organisations in Germany had dwindled to some 2700 active militants.[175] Those who remained committed to advancing social revolutionary perspectives focused primarily on developing theory and carrying on propaganda and educational work. One such group was the American 'United Workers Party', later renamed the 'Group of Council Communists', formed in 1934 through the initiative of Paul Mattick. Mattick, a former KAPD and AAUD worker-intellectual, emigrated to the United States in 1924, first moving to Benton Harbor, Michigan, later settling in Chicago, Illinois in 1927. Bonacchi writes that German radical émigrés like Mattick:

> saw the U.S. as the strongest capitalist country with the most radical labor tradition (the IWW) [...] as providing the ideal conditions for the rapid development of that class

[173] It bears mention that the questions surrounding the role of a specific revolutionary political organisation has remained a recurring, often divisive, and arguably unresolved issue for many groups on the anti-statist revolutionary left. This discussion is intimately bound up with questions of socially determined consciousness (and the relationships between active minorities and the masses), agency, the extent to which intervention in social struggles (without recreating oppressive structures) or the construction effective radical alternatives in non-revolutionary periods is possible, or indeed, how revolutionary periods themselves come about (spurred by objective, economic/political crisis conditions, subjective factors, or a combination of the two). While mass revolutionary action might be regarded as the main catalyst and determining factor in these discussions, few are content to passively observe and merely comment on events in the meantime.

[174] Hans Manfred Bock, "Anarchosyndicalism in the German Labour Movement", 63-4.

[175] Marcel van der Linden"On Council Communism" (2004) available online: http://www.kurasje.org/arkiv/15800f.htm (accessed July 5, 2009).

> autonomy which in Europe had been handicapped by capitalism's structural backwardness and by the labor movement's tradition of reformism.[176]

Indeed, Mattick attributed the formation of autonomous councils of the unemployed in the United States during the Great Depression as creating the conditions for the emergence of a council communist movement in that country.[177] Prior to the formation of an explicitly councilist organisation, radical organising and propaganda related to unemployment issues was conducted through the IWW. Mattick was an active member, and drafted a German-language revolutionary programme for the union in 1933 based on the theories of Henryk Grossman – '*Die Todeskrise des kapitalistischen Systems und die Aufgaben des Proletariats*' (The death crisis of the capitalist system and the tasks of the proletariat)[178] – which does not appear to have made the impact that Mattick anticipated. Significantly, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in 1931 Mattick attempted to revive the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* newspaper in Chicago – the German-language radical labour publication most famously associated with the Haymarket Martyrs and the 'Chicago Idea'.

As the movement of unemployed workers began to decline, Mattick left the IWW[179] and regrouped with other council communists, Wobblies, former members of the left-wing faction of the American Proletarian Party, and unemployed workers in 1934 to create the United Workers Party.[180] This group, with members based in Chicago, Buffalo, Washington D.C., and New York,[181] functioned primarily as a "propaganda organization advocating the self-rule of the working class."[182] The party's manifesto - *World-wide Fascism or World Revolution?* - outlines the role of the party, similar to that of the KAPD:

> The communist revolutionary party is an instrument of revolution and as such it must serve

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[176] Gabriella M. Bonacchi, "The Council Communists Between the New Deal and Fascism" (1976), available online: http://libcom.org/library/council-communism-new-deal-fascism (accessed August 15, 2010).
[177] Paul Mattick, *New Essays*, vi.
[178] Paul Mattick, "Die Todeskrise des kapitalistischen Systems und die Aufgaben des Proletariats" (1933), available online: http://www.workerseducation.org/crutch/pamphlets/todeskriese.html (accessed July 20, 2009)
[179] Mattick still maintained correspondence and good relations with IWW members. One example is a very cordial letter from 'Industrial Worker' editor Fred Thompson to Paul Mattick, Dec. 6, 1946, Paul Mattick Papers, (Amsterdam: International Institute for Social History), significantly, penned over a decade after Mattick left the union.
[180] Paul Mattick, *New Essays*, xi.
[181] *New Essays*, 1:1, (October 1934), 9.
[182] Paul Mattick, *New Essays*, I.

> that purpose. It has no interests separate from the working-class, but is only an expression of the fact that minorities become consciously revolutionary earlier than the broad masses. It uses this advantage only in the interests of the working-class. It does not look for power for itself or for any bureaucracy, but works to strengthen the power of the workers councils, Soviets. It is not interested to hold positions, but to place the power in the hands of workers committees, exercised by the workers themselves. It does not seek to lead the workers, but tells the workers to use their own initiative. It is a propaganda organization for Communism, and shows by example how to fight in action.[183]

In October 1934, the United Workers Party began publishing *International Council Correspondence*. Mattick, who edited the journal, characterised it as a "forum for discussion, unhampered by any specific dogmatic point of view, and open to new ideas that had some relevance to the council movement."[184] Soon after, in 1936, the United Workers Party changed its name to the Group of Council Communists. They explained that "In view of the fact that the U.W.P. was not a 'party' in the traditional sense, the retention of the word has led to alot of needless misunderstandings."[185] In 1938 the journal changed its title to *Living Marxism*, and in 1942 the title was changed to '*New Essays*'. The name changes did not reflect any fundamental change in the journal's political orientation. A membership decline prompted the first title change to *Living Marxism* as the journal "did not promote the growth of the organization but was practically no more than a vehicle for the elucidation of the ideas of council communism."[186] Mattick wrote that the overall decline of radicalism with the outbreak of the Second World War "made the name *Living Marxism* seem rather pretentious, as well as a hindrance in the search for a wider circulation,"[187] and the journal appeared as *New Essays* until it ceased publication in 1943. Aside from Mattick, Karl Korsch, a Marxist intellectual who emigrated to the United States in 1936, was perhaps the most prominent regular contributor to the journal. The writings of key figures in the European council movement, like Anton Pannekoek and Otto Rühle, appeared regularly as did translations from their Dutch sister publication

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[183] United Workers Party of America, "World-wide Fascism or World Revolution? Manifesto and Program of the United Workers Party of America", (1934) available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/mattick-paul/1934/fascism-revolution.htm (accessed July 20, 2009).
[184] Paul Mattick, *New Essays*, vii.
[185] *New Essays*, 2:2, (January 1936), 9.
[186] Paul Mattick, *New Essays*, vii.
[187] Paul Mattick, *New Essays*, Ibid.

*Rätekorrespondenz.*[188] Some of the main issues covered in the journal included the rise of fascism, coverage of left and labour movement activity, considerations of communist politics and economics, and the development of theoretical frameworks for understanding economic crisis and the American 'New Deal' response. In keeping with their non-sectarian policy and openness to new ideas in the international working-class movement, the journal also published contributions by other figures on the radical Left, notably an article by Max Nomad (formerly a follower of Polish dissident Marxist *Jan Wacław Machajski*) and Daniel Guérin's article 'Fascist Corporatism' (a translation from the French revolutionary syndicalist journal *La Révolution prolétarienne*).[189]

[188] Formed in 1926, the Dutch Group of International Communists (GIK) was the other leading councilist organisation in the post-1924 period.

[189] See Max Nomad, "The Masters of Tomorrow" in *International Council Correspondence* 2:9&10 (September 1936), 16-42 and Daniel *Guérin, "Fascist Corporatism" in International Council Correspondence* 3:2 (February 1937), 14-26.

# PART TWO: PERSPECTIVES ON THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND REVOLUTION: THE AMERICAN GROUP OF COUNCIL COMMUNISTS AND THE FRIENDS OF DURRUTI

## 1. Councilism, Anarchism, and the Spanish Civil War and Revolution, 1936–1939

The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939 was a pivotal episode in the international working-class movement, and the last of the major proletarian revolutions of the interwar period. The anti-fascist struggle provided the backdrop against which ideological tensions were dramatically played out, and one in which the aims and objectives of every major political grouping involved were subject to revision in response to the war and geopolitical considerations: some anarchists participated in government, Stalinists actively defended liberal democracy and private property, and sections of the liberal bourgeoisie made common cause with self-styled Socialists. This episode propelled anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist ideas directly into a leading role in a mass-based workers' revolution, and in doing so, raised several important questions pertaining to anarchist praxis: particularly, is it possible to exercise a non-dictatorial, non-statist political power? As Fontenis wrote, "the problem of political power was never clearly posed" as these "were taboo subjects in the libertarian organisations and the idea of power of the masses as opposed to the state power, a vital, fundamental question, was still surrounded by an embarrassed silence."[190]

The history of the Spanish Civil War – the 'dress rehearsal' for the Second World War – is well-known and has been extensively documented, and as such, there is no need to reproduce an account of General Francisco Franco's right-wing coup d'etat, the heroic but ill-fated resistance to pre-World War II fascism in that country by the Left and the international and domestic forces loyal to the Republican government, or the shameful betrayal of the Spanish people by the liberal democracies through the policy of non-intervention.[191] A much more neglected element, however, and one which

[190] Georges Fontenis, *The Revolutionary Message of the 'Friends of Durruti'* (1983), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/FODtrans/p4_bor_rep.html (accessed September 15, 2010).

[191] Perhaps the standard and authoritative historical work is Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Penguin, 1991). For critical perspectives see Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); George Orwell, *Homage to*

forms a crucial point of reference in this section, is the far-reaching social revolution instigated in large areas of Spain. This revolutionary movement – composed of a variety of organs of popular power formed primarily by labour unions in the power vacuum in places where the military rebellion had been quashed – assumed the powers formerly possessed by the state removing, to a significant extent, the 'means of coercion' available to the state in police and military functions, and the management of the economy by industrialists and large landowners. Catalonia in general, and Barcelona in particular, had been the main stronghold of the anarchosyndicalist CNT (*Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*; National Confederation of Labour) and FAI (*Federación Anarquista Ibérica*; Iberian Anarchist Federation). "Proletarian Barcelona," writes Graham, "was synonymous with the direct action practices of the anti-parliamentary CNT which constituted the dominant form of labour organisation in the city."[192] Burnett Bolloten, a United Press journalist and eyewitness to the antifascist and revolutionary struggle in Spain wrote:

> Following the defeat of the military insurrection, the workers of the CNT and FAI seized post offices and telephone exchanges, formed police squads and militia units in Barcelona and in other towns and villages of Catalonia, and through their factory, transport, and food committees established their dominion over most of the economic life of the region. In Barcelona, their red and black flag, flying over the former headquarters of the employers' association, the *Fomento Nacional del Trabajo* – renamed Casa CNT-FAI – bore testimony to their power and to the triumph of the Revolution.[193]

However, despite the presence of this movement and its impact on the political and socio-economic environment in Spain, the Spanish Civil War came to be defined, both during the war as well as in the *dominant* historiography, as a conflict between the forces of liberal democracy, on the one hand, and fascism, on the other. This, of course, is not to deny the existence of significant, critical literature on the revolutionary movement in Spain, but only to point out (as have many others) that the *official* histories of this conflict have distorted, neglected, or otherwise constructed narratives that exclude serious discussions of the Spanish *Revolution.* In his 1969 essay "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship"

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*Catalonia* (London: Penguin Classics, 1989).

[192] Helen Graham, "'Against the State': A Genealogy of the Barcelona May Days (1937)", *European History Quarterly* 1999, 29:485, 489.

[193] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 388.

– a critical review of historian Gabriel Jackson's *The Spanish Republic and Civil War: 1931-1939*[194] – Chomsky remarks that "the Spanish Civil War is not only one of the critical events of modern history but one of the most intensively studied as well," however, he notes the "surprising gaps" in the liberal and Communist literature on the topic. In the examination of Jackson's work, Chomsky discusses what he describes as the "deep bias against social revolution and a commitment to the values and social order of liberal bourgeois democracy" which he claims serves to "misrepresent crucial events and to overlook major historical currents."[195] In June 1999, *The Fight For History* manifesto was issued with over fifty signatories, including historians such as Abel Paz, Chris Ealham, and Reiner Tosstorf. The manifesto criticised the historical "amnesia" in Spain following dictator Francisco Franco's death;[196] called into question the "revisionist historians of the Spanish Civil War who deny or ignore the eruption in 1936 or a sweeping revolutionary workers' movement"; and denounced what it referred to as the "Official History," which it claimed presented "the civil war as a dichotomy between fascism and antifascism."[197] The neglect of the revolutionary movement in Spain, its contributions, and achievements has been somewhat rectified in recent years with the re-publication and wider availability of some key texts.[198]

The historical invisibility of the mass revolutionary movement in Spain may be attributed, in part, to the active efforts to not only dismantle but also to conceal its very existence to outside observers. Burnett Bolloten, originally a Communist Party sympathiser, is the most thorough chronicler of these concerted efforts by the Popular Front government to conceal the Spanish Revolution. Bolloten quickly became disillusioned with Stalinist influence and policy in Spain – an influence which increased

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[194] Gabriel Jackson, *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War: 1931-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

[195] Although Chomsky acknowledges Noam Chomsky, "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship" in Barry Pateman (ed.), *Chomsky on Anarchism* (Edinburgh, Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 40-100

[196] A reference to the 1977 Amnesty Law in Spain, decreed two years after the death of dictator Francisco Franco, that prevented any investigations or prosecutions of Francoist era crimes or human rights abuses.

[197] *The Fight For History: A Manifesto (1999), available online:* http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/wm38sh *(accessed April 21, 2012).*

[198] Perhaps none more important than José Peirats' three volume history of the CNT in the Spanish revolution, which, at time of writing has seen only the first volume re-published by PM Press, although Christie Books, a smaller British publishing house re-published all three volumes in the early 2000s. See José Peirats, *The CNT in the Spanish revolution, Volume 1* (Oakland: PM Press, 2011).

dramatically with the material support of the Republican government by the USSR – writing two major works uncovering the social revolution in Spain.[199] On the Popular Front strategy, a policy formulated by the Russian Communist Party, Bolloten writes that the Soviet Union and allied parties were devoted more to defending the foreign policy interests of the USSR than they were to assisting a working-class revolution in Spain. This was a political decision which had consequences on how the coalition of social forces in the Popular Front would respond to revolutionary demands:

> Because of her fear of involvement in a war with Italy and Germany, Russia limited her aid to bolstering the resistance of the anti-Franco forces until such time as Britain and France, faced by the threat to their interests in the Mediterranean of an Italo-German overlordship of Spain, might be induced to abandon the policy of nonintervention. Russia, moreover, was careful not to throw her influence on the side of the left wing of the Revolution or to identify herself with it. To have done otherwise would have revived throughout the world, among the very classes whose support the Comintern was seeking, fears and antipathies it was striving most anxiously to avoid [...] it was for these reasons that, from the very inception of the war, the Comintern had sought to minimize and even conceal from the outside world the profound revolution that had taken place in Spain by defining the struggle against General Franco as one for the defense of the bourgeois democratic Republic.[200]

Despite the strength of the anarchist movement in Spain, and the near total collapse of the state and its police and military apparatus in the wake of the failed Nationalist uprising, in Barcelona the CNT-FAI had given tacit approval to the regional Catalan government through a collaborative defense arrangement – the Central Antifascist Militia Committee – which included representatives from the CNT, other revolutionary parties and unions, as well as the Catalan government. Graham writes that this was a major concession from the CNT to the Catalan government, considering the severely weakened condition of the government.

> The CNT agreed to the formation of a Central Antifascist Militia Committee (21 July 1936) whose legitimacy was thus implicitly determined by Generalitat approval. In the circumstances, this was a staggering concession of the CNT's part. Through it the Catalan government was able repeatedly to assert its legal existence. Nor should we consider this a question of mere form or rhetoric: it constituted the first material stage in the battle to re-establish the Generalitat as the instrument through which liberal constitutional and economic order could be reimposed.[201]

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[199] See Burnett Bolloten, *The Grand Camouflage: The Communist Conspiracy in the Spanish Civil War* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1961) and Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution.*
[200] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 110.
[201] Helen Graham, "'Against the State': A Genealogy of the Barcelona May Days (1937)", 497.

Anarchist participation in the Popular Front was not limited to Catalonia. On November 4, 1936 the CNT officially entered the central Spanish government with four ministerial portfolios: Juan Garcia Oliver, minister of justice; Juan Lopez, minister of commerce; Federica Montseny, minister of health and public assistance; and Juan Piero, minister of industry.[202] Bolloten stated that while the anarchosyndicalist leadership hoped that this collaboration would help to defend gains made by the working-class and peasantry while contributing to a unified antifascist war effort:

> the Communist leaders [...] their eyes turned toward the Western democracies, hoped that this participation, by enhancing the government's authority among the rank and file CNT and FAI, would facilitate the reconstruction of the shattered machinery of state, and would enable them, under cover of a democratic superstructure, to gather into their hands all the elements of state power appropriated by the revolutionary committees at the outbreak of the Civil War.[203]

This reorganisation of state power included three central elements: a reformation of the security forces which had “crumbled under the impact of the military rebellion and the social revolution”; the nationalisation of industry, in order to bring under government authority the hundreds of collectivised factories and agricultural collectives; and the dissolution of the workers' militias into a regular army under the political and military direction of the Republican state.[204]

The reimposition of state power by the Republican government was played out most dramatically and decisively during the 'May Days' of 1937 in Barcelona; an episode which provoked serious questions on the appropriate role of anarchist political organisation and its relation to political power (more on this below). The dilemma faced by the anarchists and anarchosyndicalists was expressed thusly by Helmut Ruediger (vice-secretary of the syndicalist International Workers' Association-*Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores,* IWA-AIT):

> The problem as to whether the CNT should 'go the whole way,' taking into its own hands the reins of power, or should continue to collaborate was raised several times after the militants had decided in favor of collaboration on 19 July [...] But it was during the May days, in particular, during the stormy meetings in Casa CNT-FAI in Barcelona, while the

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[202] For critical accounts of this see “The C.N.T. Joins the Catalan and Central Governments” in Vernon Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Civil War* (London: Freedom Press, 1995), 59-72 and “The Ministerial Collaboration of the CNT” in José Peirats, *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution* (London: Freedom Press,1998), 177-89.
[203] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 212.
[204] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 216.

> deafening noise of rifle and machine-gun fire could be heard on every side, that more than once the question – which finally received a negative response – was raised: 'Should we or should we not take power?' It was in these terms that the representatives of the organization summed up the problem during those bloody days.[205]

But what, exactly, did 'taking power' entail? For Ruediger, the anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist alternative was not based on seizing state power and the installation of a dictatorship. Rather, central to the anarchist vision was the conception that:

> the social revolution should dispense with both the bourgeois state and the new totalitarian superstate, and that social reorganization, like the defense of the Revolution, should be concentrated in the hands of working-class organizations – whether labor unions or new organs of spontaneous creation, such as free councils, etc., which, as an expression of the will of the workers themselves, from below up, should construct the new social community, thus discarding all conventional forms of authoritarian 'power' exercised from above.[206]

That this conception of popular power, rooted in the working-class organisations, was not put into effect during the Barcelona 'May Days' – when the social and political forces of the Republican government came into direct confrontation with the CNT-FAI – later "provoked a whirlwind of discussions, mutual recriminations, and struggles within the Spanish and international libertarian movement."[207]

The main focus of this section will be an account of the revolutionary perspectives on the Spanish Civil War and Revolution, the critique of the Popular Front and the 'ministerialism' of the CNT-FAI leadership, and critical assessments of the role played by the anarchists in the revolution. This will be explored through the sympathetic, but critical, attitude of the American Group of Council Communists towards the Spanish anarchists, and the remarkably similar self-critique of the performance of anarchosyndicalism by the Friends of Durruti Group. The symmetry between the positions adopted by both the Group of Council Communists and the Friends of Durruti in the context of the Spanish revolutionary movement challenge some of the more simplistic interpretations of Marxism and Anarchism (in the singular) in conflict in the context of the Spanish Civil War, and through their critiques, expose a considerable theoretical sphere of convergence on issues related to working-class

[205] Quoted in Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 440.
[206] Quoted in Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, Ibid.
[207] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, Ibid.

political power.

## 1.1 Antifascism, Revolution, and the Reaction

For the American councilists, the revolutionary element and the tensions within the Popular Front were central to any understanding of events in Spain. Although waning in numbers and influence, the two main councilist journals of this period, *Rätezcorrespondenz* in the Netherlands and *International Council Correspondence* in the United States, closely followed and commented on the events in Spain. Significantly, in his 1969 introduction to a reprinted collection of the American council communist journal, Paul Mattick reflected on this period, stating that:

> The anti-Fascist civil war in Spain, which was immediately a proving ground for World War II, found the council Communists quite naturally—despite their Marxist orientation—on the side of the anarcho-syndicalists, even though circumstances compelled the latter to sacrifice their own principles to the protracted struggle against the common Fascist enemy.[208]

Between October 1936 and April 1939, *International Council Correspondence*, and its later incarnations, ran no fewer than eight articles and three book reviews directly related to the conflict in Spain, in addition to a reprinted appeal from the CNT-FAI for international class solidarity.[209] Of the articles, a total of five were written by Paul Mattick, one by Helmut Wagner (a translation from *Rätezcorrespondenz*), and two by Karl Korsch. The extensive coverage of the Spanish conflict within the pages of *International Council Correspondence* is all the more notable given the overall lack of information – from a revolutionary perspective – outside of Spain and in particular, North America, while the "conciliatory approach towards the CNT"[210] positioned the journal as a mediator somewhere between the often uncritical support for Spanish anarcho-syndicalism and the Popular Front by some anarchist groups and the routinely inflexible approach displayed by some left communist groups. Unlike some European councilist organisations, there is no evidence to suggest that the American Group of Council Communists had any physical presence in Spain during the war in the militias or as

[208] Paul Mattick, *New Essays*, vii-ix.
[209] CNT-FAI, "To All the Workers of the World", *New Essays*, 2:11 (October 1936), 41.
[210] Phillipe Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left*, 297.

journalists.[211]

The first full-length article on Spain appeared in October 1936, less than four months after General Franco launched his military rebellion against the Second Spanish Republic. Written by Paul Mattick, entitled "The Civil War in Spain", this essay constituted the full issue of *International Council Correspondence*' running to 40 pages. It begins by outlining the "semi-feudal" social and political conditions in Spain in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of the civil war, with an emphasis on the powerful grip of the church, landowners, and military on the state apparatus and economy, and an assessment of the class composition of the various forces within the anti-fascist front.[212] These semi-feudal conditions, argued Mattick, retarded the development of capitalism in Spanish industry and agriculture as well as the emergence of an effective liberal-democratic reform movement which could impose modern capitalist relations on the feudal interests, working class and peasantry. Despite the emergence, and electoral victory, of the Popular Front coalition of the liberal and parliamentary labour parties in 1936, the weakness of the Spanish liberal bourgeoisie was further exposed. Moderate government policy in land, labour, and education reforms alienated the traditional Spanish ruling elite and did little to ease the social tensions of an increasingly revolutionary peasantry and working class. "The reaction," writes Mattick, "simply realized that any concession which the bourgeois government made to the workers had to be made at the expense of the reactionary elements."[213] In rebelling, the Spanish generals, and the class interests they represented, sought to impose its own order by means of a dictatorship, which in the eyes of the right-wing coup plotters was directed "against a governmental tendency and against a government which by its previous policy seemed liable to become the prisoner of the labor movement."[214]

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[211] Ethel MacDonald and Jane Patrick of the British United Socialist Movement, an organisation which included Guy Aldred and was close to the councilists, worked with the propaganda sections of the CNT-FAI in Barcelona during the war. See "The Civil War in Spain" in *Class War on the Home Front* (1988), available online: http://libcom.org/library/apcf-class-war-home-front (accessed August 28, 2009). The Dutch GIC also had one member who joined the militias fighting on the Aragon front, see Phillipe Bourrinet, *The Dutch and German Communist Left*, 295; 299.

[212] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 1.

[213] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 9.

[214] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 10.

The conflict that ensued, pitting the reaction against anti-fascist forces, was characterised by political fragmentation, but nonetheless polarised competing elements into two camps. Mattick asserted that:

> No doubt the struggle for the power in Spain is between three different tendencies; practically, however, the struggle has as yet been confined to the one between Fascism and Anti-Fascism, even tho there was no lack of endeavors to bring other factors into the reckoning. The reactionary forces taking up for Fascism are confronted by those of a bourgeois-democratic and social-reformist caste, tho at the same time by a movement aiming at socialism, so that each individual group is fighting against two tendencies: Fascism against Democracy and Revolution, this Democracy against Fascism and Revolution, the Revolution against Fascism and bourgeois democracy.[215]

Although divergent trends coexisted within the anti-fascist camp, the immediate threat that the reaction posed compelled these forces to unite in a common front, as a matter of survival. From a class perspective, Mattick notes that:

> The fascist assailant does not and cannot make a distinction as to which of the existing labor organizations is the more radical, which of them is to be treated with greater regard or greater brutality, but he fights against the workers and their class aspirations from an instinctive realization that these latter, and not the policy of the separate organisations, are in the last instance determining. The workers, on their part, are compelled by their instinct of self-preservation, in spite of all organizational and ideological differences, into a unified front against fascism as the direct and nearest enemy. Neither the groups of fascists nor those of the workers are allowed the time or opportunity to go their own special ways, and it is idle to ask whether the Spanish workers under the present conditions should fight against fascism and for bourgeois democracy or not.[216]

Mattick perceptively speculated that "In case the reaction should be struck down, then, as things now stand and unless prevented by the general exhaustion, the struggle of the bourgeois-democratic forces against those which are aiming to set aside the exploitation society must again come into the foreground."[217] In other words, the frictions within the anti-fascist front would, due to irreconcilable class interests and objectives, come into conflict sooner or later. Moreover, frictions "which must become the greater the longer the civil war is drawn out, since in such conditions the real socialization is bound to spread and the social-reformist forces challenged to greater resistance."[218]

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[215] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 14.
[216] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 13.
[217] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 14.
[218] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 15.

With these considerations, Mattick turned to an analysis of the different factions within the anti-fascist front. Spanish social democracy was characterised as the "left wing of the bourgeoisie", politically in concert with the objective of maintaining liberal democracy and a capitalist economy. The small but disproportionately influential Spanish Communist Party maintained a similar outlook: "The Spanish Communist Party [...] has given up every policy of its own, other than that of further attenuating the workers' struggle. Like the Social Democracy it wants nothing more than to defend capitalist democracy against fascism."[219] If the Spanish Socialist Party represented a centre-left position in the Popular Front, the Communist sections were to the right of it on the political spectrum. Only the dissident Marxist POUM (*Partido Obrero Unificación Marxista*; Workers' Party of Marxist Unification), of the Popular Front forces, could be considered to be the carriers of a genuine Leninist or Bolshevik position, advancing a programme of state ownership of the economy similar to that of the Soviet Union.220 In terms of the Spanish anarchists, Mattick sympathetically noted:

> Over against these 'marxist' organizations, which have nothing more in common with Marxism than the name, stands the anarcho-syndicalist movement, which, even though it has not the organizational strength of the popular-front parties, can nevertheless be rated as their worthy adversary, capable of bringing into question the aspirations of the pseudo-marxist state capitalists.[221]

The particular development of anarcho-syndicalist methods in Spain was considered by Mattick to be a product of the disorganisation of the ruling class – divided between liberal-democratic and reactionary elements – and the uneven and regional industrial concentrations in Spain:

> The state of disorganization of the ruling class did not require the central control and direction of the workers' manifestations in such measure as is necessary in the capitalistically developed countries. The localizing of the workers manifestations was rather an inevitable product of the circumstance that only industrial oases existed in the

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[219] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 13.

[220] Of the POUM, Bolloten writes: "A vigorous advocate of Socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, an unrelenting critic of the Popular Front and of Stalin's trials and purges, the POUM was denounced as 'Trotskyist.' Although some of its leaders, including Andres Nin and Juan Andrade, had once been disciples of Leon Trotsky and after the outbreak of the Civil War had favored giving him political asylum in Catalonia, the POUM was not a Trotskyist party, and it frantically attempted to prove that it was not in numerous articles and speeches. Nevertheless, in accordance with the tactic used by Stalin at the Moscow trials of amalgamating all opponents under a single label, the Communists denounced the dissidents of the POUM as Trotskyist agents of Franco, Hitler, and Mussolini." Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 405.

[221] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936),18.

> feudal desert. At any rate, it was the Spanish relations themselves, not the anarchist philosophy, which forms the secret of the development and preservation of the federal-syndicalist fighting methods and organizations. In the course of the further industrializing of Spain, this syndicalist movement likewise will be obliged, regardless of its previous attitude, to take up with more coordinated and centralized forms of organization, if it is not to go under. Or, possibly, the centralistic control and coordination of all political and economic activity will be imposed overnight by a successful revolution; and in these circumstances the federalistic traditions would be of enormous value, since they would form the necessary counter-weight against the dangers of centralism.[222]

Combining centralism and federalism was not understood by Mattick and other councilists as being contradictory. For example, in an earlier article in International Council Correspondence entitled 'Anarchism and Marxism' the author 'WRB' argued that a communist economy would require coordination to satisfy human needs and desires effectively, requiring elements of centralism and federalism. Autarkic, totally self-sufficient units were deemed at best to be unfeasible, and at worst, could develop 'competitive tendencies' if autonomous communes engaged in exchanging surplus products with other communes. Decision-making power in a communist society would have to be as decentralised and federalistic as possible as a corrective to the formation of bureaucracy: thus, a combination of centralised industrial coordination and federal decision-making and control.[223] While the CNT *syndicatos unicos*, or industrial unions, sought to remedy the decentralised craft or trade union structure, Daniel Guérin and others, have also criticised some of the "rather naive and idealistic"[224] conceptions of a localist libertarian communism, expressed by Isaac Puente[225] and dominant in the 1936 Saragossa CNT conference, along the same lines.[226] Guérin, in fact, explicitly rejected Puente's notion of libertarian communism as an "infantile idyll of a jumble of 'free communes', at the heart of the Spanish CNT before 1936 [...] This soft dream left Spanish anarcho-syndicalism extremely ill-prepared for the harsh realities of revolution and civil war on the eve of Franco's

[222] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 21.
[223] WRB, 'Anarchism and Marxism', *New Essays* 1:9 (July 1936), 1-6.
[224] Daniel Guérin, Anarchism: From Theory to Practice (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 121.
[225] Isaac Puente, *Libertarian Communism* (1932), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/liberty/libcom.html (accessed September 18, 2009).
[226] See Vernon Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, 24-7.

putsch."[227]

Overall, Spanish anarcho-syndicalism, was for Mattick, the most solid revolutionary working-class current in Spain and the one most capable of carrying out revolutionary change:

> Anchored in this organization is the conception, however often it may have been violated, that the revolution can be made only from below, thru the spontaneous action and the self-initiative of the workers. Parliamentarism and labour-leader economy is looked upon as labor fakery, and state capitalism is set on the same plane with any other kind of exploitation society. In the course of the present civil war, anarcho-syndicalism has been the most forward-driving revolutionary element, endeavoring to convert the revolutionary phrase into reality.[228]

Mattick maintained that a genuine workers' revolution in Spain would encounter multiple difficulties. Aside of the immediate threat posed by fascism stood the likelihood that the Spanish revolutionary movement would be confronted with Popular Front counterrevolution or foreign intervention. To be successful, Mattick held that the revolutionary movement had to encompass an internationalist outlook and extend the revolutionary class struggle beyond its national boundaries, instigating insurgent movements in neighbouring France and North Africa in particular.[229] This, he reasoned, would naturally provoke imperialist powers to protect their colonial possessions while controlling domestic dissent, in effect transforming the Spanish conflict into an international class war. Mattick's view on this was identical to that of Italian anarchist militant Camillo Berneri (1897-1937).[230] Chomsky summarised Berneri's position:

> He argued that Morocco should be granted independence and that an attempt should be made to stir up rebellion throughout North Africa. Thus a revolutionary struggle should be undertaken against Western capitalism in North Africa and, simultaneously, against the bourgeois regime in Spain, which was gradually dismantling the accomplishments of the July revolution.[231]

In proposing such a strategy, Berneri hoped that Franco's base of military support in North Africa

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[227] Daniel Guérin, "Preface" in George Fontenis, *The Revolutionary Message of the 'Friends of Durruti'* (1983), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/FODtrans/preface.html (accessed October 1, 2010).
[228] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 21.
[229] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 21-2.
[230] Berneri helped to organise the first group of Italian volunteers to fight in the Spanish Civil War, and politically, positioned himself between that of the CNT-FAI and the Friends of Durruti group. Berneri was executed during the 'May Days' in Barcelona in 1937.
[231] Noam Chomsky, "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship" in *American Power and the New Mandarins* (Middlesex/Victoria: Penguin Books, 1969), 91-92.

would be severely weakened and that the response by Western capitalist nations would provoke an international revolutionary class war, as opposed what was an impending clash between bourgeois democracy and fascism.

Mattick also framed his analysis of the Spanish situation in internationalist terms, dismissing any notions of an autonomous Catalonian socialist republic. "A socialist Catalonia," he asserted "is impossible in a capitalist Spain."[232] On this level, Mattick stated that a narrowly political anti-fascist struggle would only bring limited returns, at best ushering in Soviet-style state capitalism, so a broader anticapitalist struggle was required: "The workers' struggle must be directed not exclusively against fascism, but against Capital in all its forms and manifestations."[233]

In the next issue of *International Council Correspondence*, Mattick wrote a shorter follow-up article entitled "What Next in Spain?". Here Mattick underscored his previous assertion that the revolutionary movement in Spain faced major obstacles and hostilities from the imperialist powers:

> The extent of the civil war, the anarchist element in it, allowed for the possibility that in Spain capitalism itself may be wiped out. This would have meant the open intervention of many capitalist powers in Spain and a sudden clash of imperialist interests which probably would have marked the beginning of the world war.[234]

The Russian intervention, claimed Mattick, had put the anarchists at a disadvantage, and severely limited the scope of their activity. "Recognizing that Franco would win, in case help from the outside was denied to the loyalists, the anarchists had to accept the Russian bribe and domination of the anti-fascist front which automatically worked against the anarchists."[235] In this early stage of the war, Mattick reiterates his position that a joint struggle against fascism was unavoidable: "All political organizations had to fight Franco and postpone the settlement of all other questions [...] It would be foolish to blame the revolutionary groups for the one or the other wrong step, as even a correct policy would have meant nothing," and continued that "The circumstances force the policies of the

[232] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 34.
[233] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), 38.
[234] Paul Mattick, "What Next in Spain?", *New Essays* 3:3 (March 1937), 16.
[235] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936), Ibid.

anarchists, not their own decisions."[236]

## 1.2 Karl Korsch and Anarchist Collectivisation

Karl Korsch's major contribution to the councilist perspectives on the war and revolution in Spain was his positive assessment of the anarchist attempts at collectivising the economy, which he outlined in two articles, "Economics and Politics in Revolutionary Spain" and "Collectivization in Spain", both published in 1938 as the prospects of an antifascist victory appeared slim. Both of these articles were originally intended for publication in the Frankfurt School's Institute for Social Research journal in New York but disagreements between Korsch and the Institute, arising from editorial revisions, compelled him to publish them in *Living Marxism*.[237]

In "Economics and Politics in Revolutionary Spain" Korsch argued that the Spanish revolution and its achievements in collectivisation represented a new period of revolutionary class struggle worthy of serious attention, and as such, could not be mechanically evaluated "with some abstract ideal or with results attained under entirely different historical conditions."[238] In particular, Korsch maintained that the Spanish revolution "should not be compared with anything which happened in Russia after October, 1917."[239] In this assertion, Korsch sought to defend the revolutionary movement in Spain against unnamed Leninist critics who "extol the revolutionary consistency of the Bolshevik leadership of 1917, to the detriment of the 'chaotic irresolution' displayed by the dissensions and waverings of the Spanish Syndicalists and Anarchists of 1936-1938."[240] Against these critics, Korsch pointed to the historical record, demonstrating that the "Bolshevik leadership of 1917 was in no way exempt from those human wavering and want of foresight which are inherent in any revolutionary action."[241] More specifically, Korsch cited Lenin's support of the Kerensky government in Russia against General Kornilov's counter-revolutionary rebellion showing "how little the minor followers of Lenin are entitled to

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[236] Paul Mattick, "The Spanish Civil War", *New Essays* 2:11 (October 1936),17.
[237] William David Jones, *The Lost Debate: German Socialist Intellectuals and Totalitarianism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1999), 97.
[238] Karl Korsch, "Economics and Politics in Revolutionary Spain", *New Essays* 4:3 (May 1938), 76.
[239] Karl Korsch, "Economics and Politics in Revolutionary Spain", *New Essays* 4:3 (May 1938), Ibid.
[240] Karl Korsch, "Economics and Politics in Revolutionary Spain", *New Essays* 4:3 (May 1938), 77.
[241] Karl Korsch, "Economics and Politics in Revolutionary Spain", *New Essays* 4:3 (May 1938), 80.

criticise the deficiencies of the syndicalist achievements in revolutionary Catalonia."[242] Politically, Korsch's defense of the Spanish anarchists and syndicalists was aimed at removing the "deep shadow thrown on the constructive work" of Catalonia's revolutionary workers by Stalinists, and exposing the socialist content of collectivization as opposed to statist programmes of nationalisation.[243]

In his follow-up article, "Collectivization in Spain", Korsch argued that the Spanish workers had achieved a greater degree of success in constructing a self-managed economy than European Marxist movements had in the early twentieth-century. Basing his account on a CNT-FAI pamphlet – *Collectivisation: The constructive work of the Spanish Revolution* – Korsch writes that "The syndicalist and anarchist labor movement of Spain" were "better informed and possessed a much more realistic conception of the necessary steps to achieve their economic aims than had been shown, in similar situations, by the so-called 'Marxist' labor movements in other parts of Europe."[244] While anarchist and syndicalist attempts at realizing workers' self-management were said to be restricted by reactionary forces as well as the moderate, Soviet-backed Popular Front government, for Korsch, despite these limitations, the historical importance and lessons of the Spanish revolution ought to be placed alongside the 1871 Paris Commune, the 1918 Hungarian and Bavarian revolutions, and the early revolutionary achievements of the Russian revolution in 1917.[245]

Korsch emphasized that the Catalan workers were able to expropriate vast sections of industry, transportation, and other sectors of the economy after their owners and managers, many of whom had supported the military rebellion, fled after its defeat in Barcelona and other areas. Of special interest was the collectivisation of state assets, like the oil refineries, and public services. This revolt which "resembled a war against an invisible enemy," showed "the relative ease with which under equally fortunate circumstances as had offered themselves here – deep and far reaching changes in production management and wage payment can be accomplished without great formal and

[242] Karl Korsch, "Economics and Politics in Revolutionary Spain", *New Essays* 4:3 (May 1938), Ibid.
[243] Karl Korsch, "Economics and Politics in Revolutionary Spain", *New Essays* 4:3 (May 1938), 81.
[244] Karl Korsch, "Collectivization in Spain", *New Essays* 4:6 (April 1939), 179.
[245] Karl Korsch, "Collectivization in Spain", *New Essays* 4:6 (April 1939), 178.

organizational transformations."[246]

Korsch concluded with an analysis of his main interest, namely, the Spanish syndicalist form of organisation. "These syndicalist formations", he stated, "anti-party and anti-centralistic, were entirely based on the free action of the working masses." This feature of Spanish syndicalism was considered by Korsch to be an asset, as its activity was based on non-bureaucratic methods, "managed from the outset not by professional officialdom, but by the elite of the workers in the respective industries." Further, "The energy of the anti-state attitude of the revolutionary Spanish proletariat, unhampered by self-created organizational or ideological obstacles explains all their surprising successes in the face of overwhelming difficulties."[247]

### 1.3 Problems of Political Organisation: Syndicates or Soviets?

While acknowledging the very difficult circumstances in Spain during the years of the civil war – and importantly, circumstances which compelled the CNT-FAI to participate in the Popular Front government – both Mattick and Korsch also criticised anarchist attitudes towards political organisation, or perhaps more accurately, the anarchist separation of the political from the economic in the revolutionary period. For Korsch, this was the single most important lesson, not only of the Spanish revolution, but of the entire post-First World War revolutionary period:

> The very fact that the CNT and FAI themselves were finally compelled to reverse their traditional policy of non-interference in politics under the pressure of increasingly bitter experiences, demonstrated [...] *the vital connection between the economic and political action in every phase and, most of all, in the immediately revolutionary phase of the proletarian class struggle*. [original emphasis]
>
> This, then is the first and foremost lesson of that concluding phase of the whole revolutionary history of post war Europe which is the Spanish revolution.[248]

In keeping with councilist perspectives on emergent social forms that develop through the revolutionary process, Korsch's critique underscores the position that revolutionary organisations can not be formed prior to a revolutionary period and must develop in accordance with the tasks at hand

[246] Karl Korsch, "Collectivization in Spain", *New Essays* 4:6 (April 1939), 180.
[247] Karl Korsch, "Collectivization in Spain", *New Essays* 4:6 (April 1939), 181.
[248] Karl Korsch, "Economics and Politics in Revolutionary Spain", *New Essays* 4:3 (May 1938), 79.

by placing all power in the workers' councils, rather than maintaining traditional leadership roles and sectional interests. In a review of Santillan's *After the Revolution*, Mattick also gives a clear picture of the function of syndicates, formed in a pre-revolutionary period, and the problems associated with maintaining this organisational form in a revolutionary period:

> It must be borne in mind that syndicates, including the anarchist CNT, are pre-revolutionary organizations which were organized principally to wrest concessions from the capitalist class. In order to do this most efficiently, a staff of organizers, an apparatus, was necessary. This staff became the new bureaucracy, its members the leaders and guides. (Though the CNT did not pay high salaries and changed the personnel rather frequently, it could not eliminate the apparatus as such which, in spite of counter-arguments, permitted the development of a bureaucracy).[249]

The failure of the anarchists to assert a new form of working-class political power meant that state and capitalist power, which had largely, but not entirely, dissolved in vast areas of Spain (particularly Catalonia) in the aftermath of the coup d'etat, was able to reassert itself and regain its former position of dominance. This also meant that, in the absence of an alternative political-economic framework, the CNT-FAI were ultimately forced to compromise their anti-statist principles by entering the government.

### 1.4 The Barcelona May Days, 1937

Ultimately, in May 1937 in Barcelona, the logical end of this compromise between the CNT-FAI and the Popular Front government culminated in the defeat of the workers' movement.[250] This historical moment revealed the tensions within the broad 'Republican' camp in the struggle against fascism, and the divergent strategies in conducting the war and the economy. “No historical episode,” writes Bolloten, “has been so diversely reported or defined.” The Nationalist press described the event as an Anarchist revolt while the foreign Communist press reported the disturbances as the work of fascists or monarchists aided by Trotskyists or “irresponsible elements” amongst the anarchists.[251] For the

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[249] Paul Mattick, *Review of D.A. Santillan 'After the Revolution'*, *New Essays* 3:9&10 (October 1937), 29.
[250] For discussions of the Barcelona May Days see Helen Graham, “'Against the State': A Genealogy of the Barcelona May Days (1937)” in *European History Quarterly*, 1999; 29; 485-542 and Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 414-461. For a first hand account and analysis, see George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 101-131; 216-248.
[251] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 429.

POUM and the anarchists, the May Days were simply a response from the working class to Communist provocations. Bolloten observes that “Few of these accounts were reconcilable, which partially explains why the May events, despite numerous attempts to clarify them, are still [...] shrouded in obscurity. One thing, however, is certain: the political temperature in Barcelona had by May 1937 reached flashpoint.”[252]

Tensions began in early April when the PSUC (*Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya*, Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia, the only Comintern-affiliated organisation in Catalonia) and UGT (*Unión General de Trabajadores*, General Union of Workers, a union politically aligned with the Spanish Socialist Workers Party) announced a 'Victory Plan' for Catalonia, seeking to create a regular army in the region, nationalise war industries and transport, create an internal government security force, and concentrate all arms and munitions into the hands of the government: in effect, reassert state power and authority in Catalonia.[253] The political assassinations of Communist officials Rodriquez Salas and Roldan Cortada and Antonio Martin, the anarchist president of a revolutionary committee in Puigcerda, were quickly followed by the seizure of “frontier posts along the Franco-Spanish border hitherto controlled by revolutionary committees”, dispatched by finance minister Juan Negrin from Valencia, the seat of the central Spanish government.[254] In this politically sensitive atmosphere, May Day celebrations in Barcelona were cancelled for fear that openly displaying political allegiances in the city could trigger violence. Finally, on May 3rd, government forces seized the *telephonica*, or central telephone exchange. “Strategically located in the Plaza de Cataluna, the CNT had taken possession of the building after the defeat of the military insurrection in July and regarded it as a 'key position in the Revolution.'”[255] The telephone exchange had been operated by a joint UGT-CNT committee where “the Anarchosyndicalists were the dominant force, and their red and black flag, which had flown

[252] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 430.
[253] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 422.
[254] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 425-427.
[255] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 430.

from the tower of the building ever since July, attested to their supremacy."[256] The people of the working-class districts of Barcelona, where anarcho-syndicalists were firmly entrenched, were enraged by the seizure of the telephone exchange – a powerful symbol of the revolutionary gains of July 1936 – and strategically located buildings were quickly occupied and barricades erected. Intense street-fighting between armed workers and government forces continued for four days. Only after the CNT-FAI leadership appealed for a cease fire were the barricades dismantled and the workers disarmed. Graham writes that:

> The meaning of the May Days was not, in the end, about 'breaking the CNT' *per se* – its leadership was already a willing part of the liberal Republican alliance. Rather it was about breaking the CNT's organizational solidarities in Barcelona to deprive its constituencies, aided and abetted by various parts of 'outcast Barcelona', of the mechanisms and political means of resisting the state. 'May' was about a process of forcible 'nationalization': in the immediate term about war production, but ultimately about state building through social disciplining and capitalist control of national economic production.[257]

Mattick commented on these developments in two articles. In 'Civil War in Catalonia' he stated that:

> The clash between the Generalidad and the Anarchists is a natural outgrowth of the politics of the 'Peoples Front'. On the one side we have a decentralized organization of politically conscious workers on the other a centralised state apparatus controlled by the Socialist and Communist Parties (P.S.U.C.) subordinated to the Moscow International. The logic of the Peoples Front politics dominated by Russian diplomacy makes the shooting and suppression of revolutionary workers inevitable.[258]

Mattick's second article on the Barcelona May Days, 'Moscow-Fascism: The Barricades Must be Torn Down!', forcefully condemned the Popular Front policy, its implications for the revolutionary workers, and the complicity of the CNT-FAI leaders:

> The workers' revolution must be radical from the very outset, or it will be lost. There was required the complete expropriation of the possessing classes, the elimination of all power other than that of the armed workers, and the struggle against all elements opposing such a course. Not doing this, the May Days of Barcelona, and the elimination of the revolutionary elements in Spain were inevitable. The CNT never approached the question of revolution from the viewpoint of the working class, but has always been concerned first of all with the organization. It was acting for the workers and with the aid of the workers,

[256] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, Ibid.
[257] Helen Graham, "'Against the State': A Genealogy of the Barcelona May Days (1937)", 531.
[258] Paul Mattick, "Civil War in Catalonia", *New Essays* 3:5&6 (June 1937), 41.

but was not interested in the self-initiative and action of the workers independent of organizational interests.[259]

Mattick notes in passing that “The 'Friends of Durruti' split away from the corrupted leaders of the CNT and FAI in order to restore original anarchism, to safeguard the ideal, to maintain the revolutionary tradition,” but did so too late.[260] He concluded that the revolutionary movement would have to reassert itself, declaring that “The barricades, if again erected, should not be torn down.”[261]

## 2. The Friends of Durruti and the Spanish Revolution

The American councilists, while sympathetic to the cause of the Spanish anarchosyndicalists, directed two major criticisms at their performance in a revolutionary situation. First, the anarchist workers failed to create unified economic-political organs of workers' power in areas in which they clearly held a dominant position. In failing to create effective alternative institutions to exercise working-class power, they were forced to compromise their anti-statist principles by collaborating with the government, which came to be regarded by the leadership of the CNT as the only viable option. This collaboration then allowed state power to reemerge and regain control of the economy and security apparatus, culminating in the Barcelona May Days and the ultimate victory of the counterrevolution. Second, and related to the first, was a theoretical weakness, which recognised the dangers of statist bureaucracy but did not extend this understanding to the syndicates, where the CNT-FAI leadership became gradually separated from the self-organised activity of the working class. These attitudes were tempered by an intimate understanding of the very difficult circumstances, and isolation, in which the Spanish anarchist movement found itself.

Within this historical juncture, these critiques rather than creating a further gulf between marxist-councilist and anarchist revolutionary theory, indicate a more considerable sphere of theoretical convergence. This is particularly evident when considering the positions adopted by the 'Friends of

[259] Paul Mattick, “Moscow Fascism in Spain: The Barricades Must be Torn Down!”, *New Essays* 3:7&8 (August 1937), 28.
[260] Paul Mattick, “Moscow Fascism in Spain: The Barricades Must be Torn Down!”, *New Essays* 3:7&8 (August 1937), 26.
[261] Paul Mattick, “Moscow Fascism in Spain: The Barricades Must be Torn Down!”, *New Essays* 3:7&8 (August 1937), 29.

Durruti Group,'[262] referenced by Mattick. The Friends of Durruti have remained little more than a footnote in the history of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution. As Bookchin lamented, the Friends of Durruti "have not been well treated by many historians of anarchosyndicalism."[263] *José Peirats, the acclaimed in-house historian of the CNT-FAI in exile,264 for example, dismissed the Friends of Durruti as "Jacobins" whose declarations and political affinities were tarnished by a "Marxist flavour."265*

The Friends of Durruti Group (*La Agrupación de Los Amigos de Durruti*, hereafter FoD) were an anarchosyndicalist affinity group formally launched on March 17, 1937, which rose to prominence during the 'May Days' of 1937 in Barcelona. The FoD functioned as an internal, radical Left opposition within the main organised expressions of Spanish anarchism, the CNT and FAI, membership in the CNT being an essential requirement for membership.[266] The Group was named after one of the most outstanding anarcho-syndicalist militants, the legendary Buenaventura Durruti, who was killed in the defense of Madrid in 1936,[267] and "in part, an invocation of their common origins as former militians in the Durruti Column."[268] The most prominent intellectual contributor to the Group, and main articulator of its political theory, was journalist Jaime Balius, one of the editors of the Group's journal *El Amigo del Pueblo* (The Friend of the People),[269] which appeared in twelve issues between May 1937 and February 1938. In 1937, the FoD numbered some four to five thousand members. Balius claimed that

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[262] The two most important studies of the Friends of Durruti are Agustin Guillamón's monograph *The Friends of Durruti Group: 1937-1939* (Edinburgh, San Francisco: AK Press, 1996) and the definitive Spanish-language treatment by Miquel Amorós, *La revolución traicionada: La verdadera historia de Balius y los Amigos de Durruti* (The Revolution Betrayed: The True History of Balius and the Friends of Durruti) (Barcelona: VIRUS editorial, 2003). See also George Fontenis, *The Revolutionary Message of the 'Friends of Durruti'* (1983), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/FODtrans/intro.html (accessed July 9, 2010) and Paul Sharkey, *The Friends of Durruti – A Chronology* (1984), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/fod_chron.html (accessed July 9, 2010).

[263] Murray Bookchin, *The third revolution: popular movements in the revolutionary era*, Volume 4 (New York, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), ix.

[264] For a discussion of *Peirats' contributions to the history of the CNT, FAI, and the Spanish Revolution see Chris Ealham, "The 'Herodotus of the CNT: José Peirats and La CNT en la revolución española", Anarchist Studies 17:2 (2009), 80-104.*

[265] *José Peirats, Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution, 215.*

[266] Agustin Guillamón, *The Friends of Durruti Group: 1937-1939*, 37.

[267] For a discussion of the 'deaths' of Durruti, see Abel Paz, *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution* (Edinburgh, Oakland, AK Press, 2007), 637-681.

[268] Agustin Guillamón, *The Friends of Durruti Group: 1937-1939*, 36.

[269] The name of this journal was taken from *L'Ami du peuple*, a newspaper published during the French Revolution by Jean-Paul Marat (1743 – 1793), a journalist and fierce critic of the conservative elements of the revolution.

the second issue of *El Amigo del Pueblo* had a distribution of nearly 15 000 copies.[270] "Besides Balius," wrote historian George Esenwein, "the vice-president, and Felix Martinez, the secretary, other prominent members included Pablo Ruiz, Francisco Carreno, and Eleuterio Roig."[271] Ruiz was a militian in the Durruti Column, and one of the several hundreds who left the Gesla front in Aragon for Barcelona in protest of the government militarisation decrees. Within the CNT rank-and-file, the FoD had a significant following in the Foodstuffs Workers syndicate, one of the most strategically important union formations, as it effectively controlled the production and distribution of food in Barcelona.

The FoD formed primarily to combat what they regarded as the reformist positions of the leadership of the CNT-FAI and the gradual surrender of the revolutionary gains of July 1936 by the working class in Spain. The two of the most important political decisions which the FoD opposed were the CNT-FAI entry into the Republican central and regional Catalan governments and the acceptance of the militarisation of the workers' militias under the political direction of the central government. On the first point, the rejection of CNT-FAI 'ministerialism', the FoD criticised the 'treason' of the CNT leadership in collaborating with elements in the state apparatus who were hostile to the main social revolutionary achievements of the working-class movement: particularly the collectivisation of large segments of industry and agriculture and the workers' patrols in place of government security or police agencies. That this collaboration was conducted as the only viable option, for anti-fascist unity in the war effort, was totally rejected by the FoD. The war and the revolution were inseparable, and to postpone the revolution was to destroy the morale of the working-class base of support which sustained the war effort. On the second point, the reorganisation of the workers' militias into a regular army, it should be emphasized that the FoD were not opposed to a coordinated, well-organised military. In fact, the group outlined the basis for such a formation, which they referred to as a political "confederal army" which they envisaged as being coordinated by a "single collective command," under the direct control

[270] Letter from Jaime Balius to Burnett Bolloten, June 24, 1946.
[271] Quoted in Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 866-67, n.49.

of the working-class organisations.[272] What they objected to was the hierarchy, military formalism, and above all, the state direction of the military under the guise of being a non-political formation.

The FoD, while a small grouping inside the CNT-FAI, might be said to have some influence beyond their small numbers, and certainly, reflected the opinions of the rank and file of those organisations, at least if the spontaneous fighting of the 1937 May Days in Barcelona is taken as a barometre. For the FoD, the Barcelona May Days were a major turning point in the Revolution, signalling the defeat of the revolutionary movement in Spain through the reimposition of state power. In the street fighting in Barcelona between government forces and the armed working-class, the FoD openly defied the appeals of the CNT-FAI leadership for a cease fire, and went one step further, agitating for the creation of a 'revolutionary junta' composed of working-class organisations. This 'junta' or council was envisaged as an organ of working-class political power and would suppress the social forces that were in open conflict with the revolutionary movement. Although the FoD, the left-wing of the POUM, and the tiny Trotskyist Bolshevik-Leninist tendency collaborated extensively during the May Days, no formal alliance was reached, aside from mutual distribution of political pamphlets.[273]

### 2.1 Towards a Fresh Revolution

In the aftermath of the defeat of the May Days, the Jaime Balius presented a critique of the CNT-FAI and outlined a proposed alternative political-economic structure in the pamphlet *Towards a Fresh Revolution*. In this pamphlet, Balius sought to resolve the contradictions of official CNT-FAI policy while advancing a more consistent interpretation of 'libertarian communism'. Balius argued that the CNT lacked a coherent vision and was not prepared to face the tasks of building and defending the revolution.

> What happened was what had to happen. The CNT was utterly devoid of revolutionary theory. We did not have a concrete programme. We had no idea where we were going. We had lyricism aplenty; but when all is said and done, we did not know what to do with our masses of workers or how to give substance to the popular effusion which erupted inside

[272] See excerpts from the FoD articles "The problem of militarisation" and “A Confederal Army” in Georges Fontenis, *The Revolutionary Message of the 'Friends of Durruti'* (1983), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/FODtrans/fod_main2.html (accessed September 15, 2010).
[273] Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: revolution and counterrevolution*, 422.

> our organisations. By not knowing what to do, we handed the revolution on a platter to the bourgeoisie and the marxists who support the farce of yesteryear. What is worse, we allowed the bourgeoisie a breathing space; to return, to re-form and to behave as would a conqueror.[274]

The CNT-FAI, argued Balius, "collaborated with the bourgeoisie in the affairs of state, precisely when the State was crumbling away on all sides [...] It breathed a lungful of oxygen into an anaemic, terror-stricken bourgeoisie." CNT-FAI collaboration with the state, then, not only violated anti-statist principles but allowed the more moderate Popular Front forces time to reassert state power into the political vacuum in Barcelona and other areas. For Balius and the FoD, "One of the most direct reasons why the revolution has been asphyxiated and the CNT displaced, is that it behaved like a minority group, even though it had a majority in the streets."[275]

Precariously positioned between a moderate republican counterrevolution internally, with Popular Front government, and a reactionary counterrevolutionary force, what was the alternative but to collaborate with the lesser of the two evils? Was the imposition of anarchist political power in Catalonia a similarly contradictory choice, in effect an 'anarchist dictatorship'? For Balius and the FoD, the only realistic option was to further the revolution, which they maintained was not only inseparable from the anti-fascist struggle but was the most consistent libertarian path. To further the revolutionary movement in Catalonia, the FoD advocated the formation of a 'revolutionary junta', or council, as "a slight variation in anarchism". In *Towards a Fresh Revolution* Balius asserted that:

> As we see it, the revolution needs organisms to oversee it, and repress, in an organised sense, hostile sectors. As current events have shown such sectors do not accept oblivion unless they are crushed.
>
> There may be anarchist comrades who feel certain ideological misgivings, but the lesson of experience is enough to induce us to stop pussy-footing.
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> Unless we want a repetition of what is happening with the present revolution, we must proceed with the utmost energy against those who are not identified with the working class.[276]

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[274] Jaime Balius, *Towards a Fresh Revolution* (1938), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/fod/towardshistory.html (accessed August 16, 2010).
[275] Jaime Balius, *Towards a Fresh Revolution* (1938), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/fod/towardshistory.html (accessed August 16, 2010).
[276] Jaime Balius, *Towards a Fresh Revolution* (1938) available online:

The proposed council would not be a 'substitutionist body', separate from the working-class, but rather an elected body drawn exclusively from working-class organisations with the tasks of managing the war effort, maintaining public order, international affairs, and revolutionary propaganda. The council would include a recall process and a regular rotation of members to prevent a bureaucratic class from developing, and would be subordinate to the unions in economic affairs. Syndicates would thus be the main organ from which the council would draw its political power and legitimacy, and would have the responsibility of directing the economy on the principles of workers' self-management. As Balius explicitly noted later, the FoD advocated 'all power to the syndicates,' or unions, rather than soviets, as the revolutionary committees of the CNT were regarded as possessing the organisational attributes necessary for carrying out libertarian communist reconstruction.

> We did not support the formation of Soviets; there were no grounds in Spain for calling for such. We stood for 'all power to the trade unions.' In no way were we politically oriented. The junta was simply a way out, a revolutionary formula to save the revolutionary conquests of July 1936. We were unable to exercise great influence because the Stalinists, helped by the CNT and FAI reformists, undertook their counter-revolutionary aggression so rapidly.[277]

A second component, the 'free municipality' or 'commune' was also included in the FoD vision of a revolutionary Catalonia as a counterpart to the syndicates, responsible for the coordination of all non-economic affairs.

For Guillamon, “The great novelty of [*Towards a Fresh Revolution*] resides [...] in the adoption by an anarchists group of concepts which marxism had systematized as the most elementary idiom of the revolutionary theory of the proletariat,”[278] but through the use of different political vocabulary. In other words, Balius and the FoD arrived at ideological positions similar to those maintained by revolutionary marxists. Guillamon emphasizes two crucial points:

> 1. That one must impose a revolutionary program, libertarian communism, which must be defended by force of arms. The CNT, which had a majority on the streets, ought to have

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http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/fod/towardsposition.html (accessed August 16, 2010).

[277] Ronald Fraser (ed.), *Blood of Spain: An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 381 n.1.

[278] Agustin Guillam*ó*n, *The Friends of Durruti Group: 1937-1939*, 77.

> introduced libertarian communism and then should have defended it with force. In other words, which is to say, switching now to the marxist terminology: the dictatorship of the proletariat ought to have been installed.
>
> 2. There is a need for the establishment of a Revolutionary Junta, made up of revolutionaries who have taken part in the proletarian uprising, to exercise power and use violence to repress the non-proletarian factions, in order to preclude the latter's taking power, or embarking upon a counterrevolutionary process to defeat and crush the proletariat. That this Revolutionary Junta, as the Friends of Durruti call it, while others call it the vanguard or the revolutionary party, can shock only those who are shocked by words rather than by the defeat of the proletariat.[279]

As Guillamon also notes, the epithet of 'Marxism' – meaning Stalinist – was repeatedly slung at Balius and the FoD by political opponents in the CNT-FAI, but their revisions to anarchist social theory were derived from their direct participation in the revolution. "The CNT leadership deliberately used and abused the allegation 'marxist,' which was the worst conceivable term of abuse among anarchists and one that was repeatedly used against the Group and more specifically against Balius."[280]

Jaimie Balius also defended himself, and the FoD, against accusations of 'Marxism'. In a short article entitled 'In Self-Defense: I Demand an Explanation', Balius writes:

> Let me ask the comrades who have resorted to this innuendo why they call me a Marxist? Can it possibly be that I am a Marxist because I am a steadfast enemy of the petit bourgeois political parties and of the whole rabble who have lined their own pockets while invoking the revolution and still are, even though torrents of blood are being shed on the fields of battle? Do they call me a Marxist because I am against collaborationism and because I understand our position to be a source of strength only to our enemies? Am I called a Marxist because I have been candid enough to write and bring to public attention what other comrades only dare say around the cafe table? Why hang this label on me? Is it because in May I took the line that the uprising should continue until the *Generalidad* was annihilated utterly? Or could it be on account of my view that blood should not be spilled to no purpose and that whenever sacrifice is asked of the working class, it ought to bring them benefit rather than cost them ground? I require an explanation. If I am deemed a comrade at all, let someone tell me why I have been described as a Marxist.[281]

Fontenis emphasized that the FoD "refused to vilify the 'Marxists' but fought those who were Marxist in name only (and such a distinction was truly heretical in the context of the Spanish anarchist movement)", and suggested that their fundamental contribution to libertarian

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[279] Agustin Guillamón, *The Friends of Durruti Group: 1937-1939*, 95.
[280] Agustin Guillamón, *The Friends of Durruti Group: 1937-1939*, 61.
[281] Jaime Balius, "In Self-Defense: I Demand an Explanation" (1937) available online: http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/44j1ff (accessed August 17, 2010).

communist theory was the resolution of the 'war or revolution' dilemma in the formula of the revolutionary junta.[282] In a similar way, Tom Wetzel, in an article about the FoD and the Spanish Civil War, sums up the positions of Balius on the importance of political organisation as they differed from 'traditional anarchism':

> Traditional anarchism was ambiguous or inconsistent on the question of what replaces the state. There was a lack of clarity about the need for a new type of polity to perform the necessary political functions - making the basic rules, adjudicating accusations of criminal conduct and disputes between people, and defending the basic social arrangement against internal or external attack and enforcing the basic rules. The political functions of society cannot be done away with any more than social production could be. But the political functions can be carried on by a structure of popular self-governance, rooted in the participatory democracy of assemblies in the communities and workplaces.[283]

[282] Georges Fontenis, *The Revolutionary Message of the 'Friends of Durruti'* (1983), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/FODtrans/balance_sheet.html (accessed September 15, 2010).

[283] Tom Wetzel, “Workers Power and the Spanish Revolution,” (2006) available online: http://libcom.org/library/workers-power-and-the-spanish-revolution-tom-wetzel (accessed September 20, 2010).

# PART THREE

## General Conclusions: Workers' Councils and Proletarian Self-Activity

In this chapter, the ideological development of three critical revolutionary currents in the interwar period were contextualised: the Makhnovist movement, and its later political elaboration as 'Platformism'; the Dutch-German council communist tendency; and the Friends of Durruti Group in the Spanish Civil War and Revolution.

Beginning with the Platformist current, it is important to note its elaboration as both a tendency opposed to Bolshevism as well as 'traditional anarchism'. In staking out a political project deeply informed by a class struggle orientation, a reconstructive visions based on workers' councils, and an outlook informed by the necessity of a specific, well-organised political organisation, the Platformists charted out what might be regarded as the starting point of a libertarian communist politics in the interwar period.

That the authors of the Platform handed down a living political tradition is noteworthy, but also of interest in terms of the line of argument developed in this chapter are the affinities between the theory, practice, and legacy of the Makhnovist-Platformists and other revolutionary political currents. This is perhaps most immediately apparent in the affinity between Makhno and the famous Spanish anarcho-syndicalist militant Buenaventura Durruti, who met with Makhno and engaged in lengthy conversations with him in Paris in 1927.[284] At least two former Makhnovists, Boshakov and Soldatenko, fought in the Durruti Column in the Spanish Civil War and Revolution.[285] It is perhaps unsurprising then that, as Berry points out, segments of the French anarchist movement, and beyond, who "wanted the movement to leave the anarchist ghetto and become an integral part of the wider revolutionary labour movement" came to regard both Makhno and Durruti as representative of a constructive, working-class anarchism with "less purist attitude[s] to the thorny question of anarchist organisation."[286] This

[284] See Abel Paz, *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2007), 124-7, 479.
[285] Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 359.
[286] David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement*, 196.

was opposed to individualists and “traditional” anarchists, and exhibited a willingness to cooperate “with other groups whose position on specific points was close to theirs: asserting the anarchist voice from within rather than against or from outside of the broader working-class movement.”[287]

In this sense, this connection between the pro-organisational, class struggle positions formulated by the Platformist current and those of the FoD have long been acknowledged by a number of anarchist groups and federations who have drawn, and continue to draw, inspiration from these perspectives. The revolutions in which the militants of these groups participated bookend the interwar period and also historical moments which presented the most serious practical challenges to anarchist social theory.

But, given that both the Makhnovists and Friends of Durruti rejected the 'Marxist' label, that was often pejoratively applied them by their political opponents (almost exclusively in the Leninist sense), what points of convergence can be said to exist between this 'libertarian communist' current and revolutionary Marxism?

On a superficial level, both the theoretical perspectives developed by the Makhnovists (in French exile) and the FoD were denounced as “Bolshevik anarchists” by their detractors, while the Dutch-German council communist tendency and its ideological predecessors in the pre-war German radical left-wing of social democracy were repeatedly accused of “anarchist deviation.” On a more substantial level, as mentioned above, the revisions that the Makhnovists and FoD made to revolutionary anarchist doctrine are widely considered as together contributing to the formation of a distinct 'libertarian communist' current in anarchism, and moreover, a current which has most consistently shown an openness to revolutionary marxist ideas in the years following the Second World War.

French anarchist activist and historian George Fontenis considered the Makhnovists-Platformists, council communists, and FoD to be, along with other movements for workers' councils in the interwar period, part of a common revolutionary lineage. Fontenis explicitly drew connections between the ideas and practices of the Platformists and councilists writing that:

[287] David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement*, Ibid.

> the contribution of the Friends of Durruti must be likened to that of the Russian anarchists of the platform, the analyses of the Italian activists after the adventure of the workers' councils, the theories of the council communists in the European countries, especially Germany after 1920, and for this last country, the achievements of the entire anarcho-syndicalist and councilist left, the efforts of the Bulgarian anarchists to construct an organisation inspired by the platform, the experiences in France which created the Revolutionary Anarchist Communist Union of 1927, then in 1934 the first Libertarian Communist Federation.[288]

More recently, the Platformist Hungarian *Barikád Kollektíva* (Barricade Collective), have taken a position similar to that of Fontenis, asserting that from the 1920s onwards "anarchism and 'left-wing' communism" were the only true heirs to the post-First World War revolutionary wave. They go on to state that aside from the Platformists, "the German Communist Workers' Party (KAPD) played an important role in clarifying the lessons of the revolutionary wave, and in deepening the break with the capitalist system."[289] Indeed, contemporary neo-platformists, predominantly grouped around the *Anarkismo* initiative, often refer to themselves as libertarian communists. In addition to including the contributions of the Friends of Durruti as a part of their political lineage, another highly regarded libertarian communist text includes Fontenis' *Manifesto of Libertarian Communism.* Fontenis' manifesto is a basic rearticulation of Platformist praxis that also includes an anarchist appropriation of some Marxist categories such as the 'party', 'vanguard', and historical materialism. Another contribution in the post-war years is the *especifismo* current that emerged out of the Uruguayan anarchist movement in the 1950s. This asserted the necessity of a specifically anarchist political organisation to complement mass organisations of the working class.[290]

For its part, the Dutch-German council communist tendency also handed down a political tradition, and with its major resurgence in the antisystemic student and worker movements in the sixties and seventies gained renewed attention in the New Left, not least as a revolutionary Marxist tendency

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[288] George Fontenis, *The Revolutionary Message of the 'Friends of Durruti'* (1983), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/FODtrans/balance_sheet.html (accessed September 15, 2010).

[289] Barikád Kollektíva, "Historical Background to the Organizational Platform" (February 2005), available online: http://anarchistplatform.wordpress.com/2010/06/28/historical-background-to-the-organizational-platform/ (accessed October 12, 2010).

[290] For these, and other major neo-platformist texts, see the 'Anarchist Platform' webiste: http://http://anarchistplatform.wordpress.com (accessed January 25, 2013).

considered as being nearly indistinguishable from currents of anarchism emphasizing 'class struggle' and rejecting individualist tactics, methods, and strategies.

In terms of the significance of these historical revolutionary movements towards anarchist-Marxist convergences, these may be considered to have underscored a common emphasis on working-class self-organisation as both method and non-dogmatic source of inspiration. The Makhnovists-Platformists had placed a class analysis at the very heart of their political project, and jettisoned the individualism and rejection of organisation which they associated with 'traditional' anarchist methods, with a tightly organised political organisation, the General Union of Anarchists. Composed of the most advanced elements of the working class, the Union was envisaged as complementing forms of workers' democracy created through social struggle; much like the relationship between the Military Revolutionary Soviet and the 'free soviets' in the Ukraine. Similarly, the council communists during the peak of their activity and influence had rejected the bureaucratic and elitist party and trade union structures in favour of a political organisation of working-class militants intimately tied with shopfloor, rank-and-file workers' unions modelled on the IWW. For their part, the FoD also saw the need for a working-class political power in the context of the Spanish Revolution. In proposing the formation of a 'revolutionary junta', Balius and the FoD formulated a position that, like councilism, saw the need for a revolutionary structure which would suppress counterrevolution through a power emanating from below in the form of democratic workers' organisations.

It is on this level that we begin to see some of the outlines of a libertarian communist politics in the interwar period, expressed less as a doctrinal system or formal tradition, but rather as a series of common considerations and political commitments forged during heightened revolutionary periods, and further developed upon reflection in defeat. Mattick, in reflecting on Korsch's contributions to revolutionary Marxism, perhaps best sums up this attitude:

> Where independent working class actions were still to be found, revolutionary Marxism was not dead. Not ideological adherence to Marxist doctrine but actions by the working class on its own behalf was the decisive point for the rebirth of a revolutionary movement. [...] Korsch turned to the anarchists without giving up his Marxist conceptions; not to the petty-bourgeois anarchists of *laissez faire* ideology, but to the anarchist workers and poor

> peasants of Spain who had not yet succumbed to the international counter-revolution which now counted among its symbols the name of Marx as well.
>
> Anarchism found its place in Marxist doctrine, if only, as is sometimes claimed, to pacify the anarchist elements who shared in the formation of the First International. The anarchist emphasis on freedom and spontaneity, on self-determination, and, therefore, decentralisation, on action rather than ideology, on solidarity more than on economic interest were precisely the qualities that had been lost to the socialist movement in its rise to political influence and power in the expanding capitalist nations. It did not matter to Korsch whether his anarchistically-biased interpretation of revolutionary Marxism was true to Marx or not. What mattered, under the conditions of twentieth-century capitalism, was to recapture these anarchist attitudes in order to have a labour movement at all.[291]

The workers' councils of the Dutch-German councilists, the 'revolutionary junta' of the FoD, as well as the 'free soviets' and calls for more coherent forms of political organisation by the *Makhnovschina*, reflect a common organisational focus on forms of workers' autonomy and a view to generalising, expanding, and defending these emergent social forms as the basis for an emancipatory politics.

[291] Paul Mattick, “Karl Korsch: His Contribution to Revolutionary Marxism”, in *Anti-Bolshevik Communism* (1978) available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/mattick-paul/1962/korsch.htm (accessed July 20, 2009).

# CHAPTER 4

# FROM TROTSKYISM TO WORKERS' AUTONOMY: THE POST-WAR REEMERGENCE OF THE ANTI-STATE LEFT

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Contents



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## 1. Introduction

The previous chapter examined three currents of revolutionary theory and practice in the interwar period: the Makhnovists-Platformists, the Dutch-German council communists, and the Friends of Durruti group. These currents, it was argued, formulated similar positions on some of the key political questions of that period: the social forms that might replace the state and capital; ideas and debates concerning appropriate forms of revolutionary organisation; and critiques of individualism, reformism, and Leninism. In so doing, they reshaped the contours of revolutionary Left praxis – transcending the boundaries of 'traditional anarchism' and 'orthodox Marxism' during this period – and might be regarded as the most consistent representatives and heirs of the waves of working class militancy in the periods 1917-1923 and 1936-1939.

The aim of this chapter is to chart the ideological evolution of a specific trend within the post-war radical Left from orthodox Trotskyism to an independent political orientation, defined in part by an insistence on the creative capacity of the working-class to transform society, autonomously, and in the absence of a Leninist 'vanguard party', and an analysis of bureaucratic capitalist societies based on the division between 'directors' and 'executants'. The focus will be on three groups which not only

demonstrate a similar ideological trajectory, but also exemplify this tendency. These are the French group *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (Socialism or Barbarism; hereafter SouB), the American Johnson-Forest Tendency (later renamed Correspondence), and Solidarity from Great Britain. In terms of the relationships between these groups, all three collaborated extensively, for example, translating or circulating each others material.[1] Several outstanding theorists, most notably C.L.R. James and Cornelius Castoriadis, emerged from these groups, whose works and the discussion of their contributions to contemporary social, political, economic and cultural theory in themselves constitute an enormous secondary literature. This chapter does not seek to provide a comprehensive account of the myriad topics discussed by James and Castoriadis as theorists, importantly, issues of race, popular culture, and Caribbean social history (James) and the 'social imaginary' and psychoanalysis (Castoriadis). Rather, the aim of this chapter is to contextualise and trace the ideological trajectory of the political organisations to which they belonged, and in so doing, flesh out the conceptual elements which distinguished their political thinking from their Leninist-Trotskyist origins to their libertarian conclusions.

In the shift from Trotskyism, these groups formulated ideas which converge with the councilist and revolutionary anarchist currents discussed in the previous chapter, but expressed in a different epoch and in response to social concerns in the post-war period. All three groups under consideration in this chapter have often, more recently, been labelled as 'libertarian socialist', 'libertarian communist', or 'libertarian Marxist' in the scholarly literature[2], although with the exception of the Solidarity group, they

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[1] See for example David Goodway (ed.), *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (Edinburgh, Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 2-6; 11-12; Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (San Francisco, Edinburgh: AK Press and Anti/Theses, 2000), 63; “Preface to the Second Edition (1956)” in C.L.R. James, *State Capitalism & World Revolution* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 1986), xxix-xxxiv; and C.L.R. James, Grace Lee, and Cornelius Castoriadis, *Facing Reality: The New Society: Where to look for it & How to bring it closer* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 2006), 89-110. In an interview, Castoriadis also recalled personal contacts with American dissident Trotskyists (specifically, Grace Lee Boggs of the Johnson-Forest Tendency) early on, during an international congress of the Fourth International in France. See Cornelius Castoriadis/Agora International Interview Cerisy Colloquium (1990), available online: http://www.agorainternational.org/englishworksb.html (accessed September 13, 2010).

[2] See for example Chamsy Ojeili, “Post-Marxism with Substance: Castoriadis and the Autonomy Project” in *New Political Science* 23:2 (2001), 228-229; Patrick Gun Cuninghame, “Wither autonomism as a global social movement,” Global Challenges. RC47: “Globalization, social movements and experience,” conference paper,

themselves largely avoided this terminology. The first part will provide an outline of the history of Trotskyism and the international Trotskyist movement. This will be followed by a discussion of the attraction to, and critique of, Trotskyism by what would become SouB and Correspondence. Ideas concerning workers' autonomy, debates surrounding revolutionary organisation, and the nature of these ideas in relation to 'libertarian communist' Marxist and anarchist traditions will conclude the treatment of SouB and Correspondence. The closing section will concentration on an examination of the 'libertarian socialist' British Solidarity group, and their collective efforts to chart a course between the bureaucratic tendencies of the established Left and the labyrinth of incongruous views they associated with traditional anarchism.

## 2. Trotskyism: From International Left Opposition to the Fourth International

One of the common perceptions of Trotskyism, as expressed by one of the preeminent contemporary Trotskyist political theorists, is as a "welter of squabbling sects united as much by their complete irrelevance to the realities of political life as by their endless competition for the mantle of orthodoxy inherited from the prophet."[3] Divisions amongst self-described Trotskyists, particularly in the post-war period, have certainly featured prominently in the history of the Trotskyist movement. These have generally centred around two key political questions: first, the appropriate relationship to mass left-wing, labour, or social democratic parties, or whether or not (or to what degree) Trotskyists should practise the tactic of 'entryism' (or the 'French Turn'[4], as it was originally called), and, second, the

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First ISA Forum of Sociology: Sociological Research and Public Debate, Barcelona, Spain, September 5 - 8, 2008 available online: http://www.isarc47.org; Historian E.P. Thompson described the political thought of C.L.R. James as an "instinctive, unarticulated anarchism" and his writings as being "infused with a libertarian tendency." Quoted in Frank Rosengarten, *Urbane revolutionary: C.L.R. James and the struggle for a new society* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 26; see also Steve Wright's discussion of the 'libertarian Marxist' tendency map, Steve Wright, "Mapping Pathways within Italian Autonomist Marxism: A Preliminary Survey" in *Historical Materialism 16* (2008), 116-117.

3 Alex Callinicos, *Trotskyism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 1-2.

4 Alexander defines the 'French Turn' tactic (so called as Trotsky first proposed that the Trotskyist French *Ligue Communiste Internationaliste* adopt this tactic and enter the *Section Française de l'International Ouvrière* in the years 1934-1936) as "the entry of Trotskyists into the ranks of the mass workers' parties, to try to recruit there enough followers to convert their own organizations into 'mass' groups, or if exceptionally lucky, even to seize control of the groups which they entered and to convert them into mass revolutionary parties." Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985: a documented analysis of the movement* (Durham: Duke

'Russian Question', or debates about the nature of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellite states.

Trotskyism, as a current within the broader revolutionary Left, is a variant or theoretical descendant of Leninism or Bolshevism,[5] often viewed by its adherents as *the* genuine expression or legitimate continuation of the legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution. James P. Cannon, an early American supporter and populariser of Trotsky's ideas, and later, an influential figure in the international Trotskyist movement, wrote that "Trotskyism is not a new movement, a new doctrine, but the restoration, the revival, of genuine Marxism as it was expounded and practiced in the Russian revolution and in the early days of the Communist International."[6] Included within the Trotskyist tradition are the basic conceptual features of what are commonly subsumed under the rubric of Leninism[7]: the interpretation of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as a 'transitional' revolutionary state directed by a vanguard party, composed of a cadre of disciplined professional revolutionaries, and guided by the principle of democratic centralism.

It is worth emphasizing here that the Trotskyist movement, in accepting the basic principles and organisational strategies of Bolshevism as outlined, for example, in the 21 conditions for membership in the Comintern (for example, working to reform established trade union structures and participating in parliamentary politics), has traditionally oriented itself against the anti-parliamentary left and 'ultra-leftism' along the same lines as Lenin set out in his *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*.[8] Indeed, the 'left-wing Marxism' of the Dutch-German council communists predates the emergence of

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University Press, 1991), 264.

5 Sometimes the term 'Bolshevik-Leninist' is used by Trotskyists or Trotskyist political parties, as "they have tended to argue that they, and not the Stalinists, are the genuine heirs of Lenin." Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*,14.

6 James Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 1.

7 Some scholars deny the existence of a 'Leninism.' See for example, Ian Birchall, *A Rebel's Guide to Lenin* (London: Bookmarks, 2005). This is a debatable point which turns largely on the question of whether we are discussing the historical Lenin, his life and works, or the politics and theories of his interpreters, and indeed, if there is a relationship between these two.

8 For Leninist-Trotskyist critiques of anti-parliamentarianism and anti-trade unionism in the early American Communist movement see James Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism*, 9-13. In Canon's estimation, 'ultra-leftism' emerges from movements which have become isolated from mass working-class movements, due to repression or other factors, and thus lose the input of working-class people as a 'corrective'.

international Trotskyism as a current to the 'left' of the official Communist Parties. Like the Makhnovists and others in the revolutionary anarchist milieu, the councilist current had settled its account with all forms of Leninism by the early 1920s. Thus, the common tendency to view Trotskyism as the original left-wing Marxist opposition to the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union should be resisted. As Thatcher points out in his comparative analysis of Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky:

> Unlike Luxemburg [...] Trotsky did not trace the origins of 'the revolution betrayed', which for him occurred first under Stalin, to Lenin and Leninism [...] Trotsky never fully grappled with the dangers of substitutionism and Leninist vanguard theory [...] All of Trotsky's post-1924 writings defended his closeness to Lenin. Such concerns only served to undermine Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism, for he could never be truthful about how Stalin and Stalinism emerged from Lenin and Leninism.[9]

Trotsky's chief differences with what would become the entrenched Stalinist bureaucracy are best understood in the context of Trotsky's debates with Stalin and his attempts to form an international revolutionary movement. The central political ideas of the international Trotskyist movement, roughly consistent up to the outbreak of the Second World War, developed out of factional struggles inside the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the mid to late 1920s, and a set of problems specific to Russia conditions, but extended internationally due to the prestige, influence, and reach of the CPSU through the Comintern.

Leon Trotsky (born Lev Davidovich Bronstein) was one of the most important Bolshevik figures of the October Revolution in 1917. Trotsky served as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, negotiating the early stages of what would become the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Central Powers in 1918, and later, as the founder and commander of the Red Army. As a leading Bolshevik, Trotsky ranked behind only Lenin in stature and importance within the party apparatus. Following Lenin's death in 1924, Trotsky was assumed to be successor as the leader of the CPSU. Alexander observed that Trotsky:

> had been all but universally regarded as being second only to Lenin in the early years of the Soviet state. He had organized and led the Red Army which had won the bloody civil war of 1918-1921. He was a brilliant orator and a theorist of genius, both qualities which

[9] Ian D. Thatcher, “Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky compared” in Daryl Glaser and David M. Walker (eds.), *Twentieth-Century Marxism: A Global Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 41.

weighed very heavily in Communist politics of those days.[10]

Evidence of Trotsky's position in the party, around the period of Stalin's consolidation of power, may be gleaned from 'Lenin's Testament', a collection of letters written by Lenin between December 1922 and January 1923 after a series of strokes forced his withdrawal from active participation in political life. In these writings Lenin warns of the dangers of Stalin's increasing power and praises Trotsky's "outstanding ability" as "perhaps the most capable man" in the Central Committee.[11] Trotsky was, however, to be outmanoeuvred politically by the General-Secretary of the CPSU, Joseph Stalin – who had secured this powerful, newly created position in the party and the loyalty of key members – and forced into 'internal exile' by Stalin in the Soviet Union in Alma Ata (in present day Kazakhstan) in 1928, only to be exiled permanently from the Soviet Union in 1929. Trotsky's exile included extended periods living in Turkey, France, Norway, and finally, Mexico where he was assassinated by a Soviet agent in August 1940.

Prior to his exile, Trotsky, leader of a 'Left Opposition' inside the CPSU, became a fierce opponent of the Stalinist policy of 'socialism in one country', or the notion formulated by Stalin and his followers in 1924 that "it was possible for the Soviet Union to build socialism even if the international revolution were postponed indefinitely."[12] The bulk of the revolutionary Left in Russia had traditionally maintained that, given its predominantly agrarian economy, the absence of modern technology, and the inevitable hostility from capitalist nations which a successful revolution would provoke, a revolution in Russia would ultimately be isolated and defeated if contained within its borders. Revolutions in Western Europe, and Germany in particular, were looked upon as necessary elements to guarantee the success of revolution in Russia and in extending proletarian revolution into a worldwide phenomenon. Stalin's conception of building 'socialism in one country' departed considerably from these previously held views, and for Trotsky, represented a notable retreat from the internationalism of the revolutionary

[10] Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, 2.
[11] Vladimir Lenin, "Letter to the Congress, December 25, 1922", cited on http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/dec/testamnt/congress.htm (accessed May 23, 2010).
[12] Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, 3.

Left. Trotsky's early critique of this Stalinist policy is contained in the 1928 *Draft Program of the Communist International: A Criticism of Fundamentals*, a document written by Trotsky in 'internal exile' for the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International.[13] This document, though officially banned, was mistakenly circulated to congress delegates and subsequently smuggled out of the country by those sympathetic to Trotsky's ideas. During a visit to Moscow as part of the American delegation to the Six Congress of the Comintern in 1928 as a member of the American Communist Party, James P. Cannon described how he came across Trotsky's *Draft Program* by chance:

> Through some slip up in the apparatus in Moscow, which was supposed to be bureaucratically airtight, this document of Trotsky came into the translating room of the Comintern. It fell into the hopper, where they had a dozen or more translators and stenographers with nothing else to do. They picked up Trotsky's document, translated it and distributed it to the heads of delegations and the members of the program commission. So, lo and behold, it was laid in my lap, translated into English![14]

Closely connected to Trotsky's critique of 'socialism in one country' was perhaps his main contribution to Leninist political thought – the theory of 'permanent revolution'. The theory of permanent revolution asserted that the pre-revolutionary Russian liberal bourgeoisie was too weak to institute the necessary process of modernisation and democratisation in Russia, as the ascendant bourgeoisie had done in previous European democratic revolutions in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Related to the more strictly 'stagist' conception of revolution, the task of modernisation was deemed necessary to develop a modern industrial capitalist economy as a precondition for the development of socialism. Given this weakness in underdeveloped Russia, it was argued that the Russian proletariat, allied with the peasantry, were the only social forces capable not only of carrying out the bourgeois democratic revolution, but of advancing beyond this stage towards the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, a nationalised and centrally planned economy, and the project of building socialism. As Trotsky wrote, “the theory of the permanent revolution established that in backward countries, the path of democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat

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[13] Leon Trotsky, *The Draft Program of the Communist International: A Criticism of Fundamentals* (1928), available online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1928/3rd/index.htm (accessed May 28, 2010).
[14] James Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 49.

[...] Between democratic revolution and a socialist transformation of society, there was therefore established a permanent state of revolutionary development."[15]

These elements of Trotskyist theory further developed during Trotsky's exile, as Trotsky, along with his international supporters, maintained a formal 'Left Opposition'[16] presence in the Comintern from 1930 to 1933. This grouping explicitly sought to reform this institution from within as a party fraction, rather than as a separate party or independent political current. It was at one of the final gatherings of the International Left Opposition, as a dissenting faction of the Comintern, during its "pre-conference" in Paris in February 1933 that the "Eleven Points" were set down, which are of particular importance as they were to largely "constitute the ideological and programmatic basis of International Trotskyism for the next half century."[17] In addition to advocating the theory of permanent revolution, and the rejection of the Stalinist policy of 'socialism in one country', the Eleven Points elucidated the need for 'transitional' demands, or the strategy of connecting reformist demands with revolutionary ones; called for militants to work *within existing* labour unions; recognised the Soviet Union as a workers' state, despite its bureaucratic degeneration; recast Leninist democratic centralism as 'party democracy'; rejected elements of 'Third Period' Stalinism such as the theory of social fascism and the practice 'dual unionism'; and called for the formation of 'united fronts', or broad coalitions of left-wing parties and unions, specifically to combat the rise of fascism in Germany.[18] With the defeat of the once powerful Social Democratic and Communist Parties in Germany by Hitler's National Socialists, Trotsky and his followers set out to form an independent, international, revolutionary Left movement (having

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[15] Leon Trotsky, "La Era de la Revolucion Permanente", in Isaac Deutscher (ed.), *La Revolucion Permanente* (Mexico: Ediciones Saeta, 1967) 65-66, quoted in Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, 6.

[16] Trotsky argued that after 1924 there existed, within the Communist International, three major currents: first, a left opposition, of which he considered himself a part, defined by principled internationalist and Leninist positions; second, a Right Opposition, led by Nikolai Bukharin, associated with the New Economic Policy and small-scale private, or for profit production, in agriculture; and the centrist faction associated with Joseph Stalin and the Kremlin bureaucracy. In exile, Trotsky regrouped other 'left opposition' formations from France, the United States, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Jewish Opposition group of Paris, and at a meeting held in April 1930 in Paris, founded the 'International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninist)' and elected an International Secretariat (subsequently joined by nine other opposition groups). Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, 253-4.

[17] Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism,* 256.

[18] Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, 257-8.

abandoned all aspirations of reshaping the Comintern from within), which 5 years later became the Fourth International. The Fourth International (World Party of the Socialist Revolution) was formally founded in September 1938 at a congress in Paris, and was to become the main international 'orthodox' Trotskyist organisation, composed of national sections, and conceived as a successor to the degenerated Communist Third International.

### 3. Anti-Stalinism

Perhaps the single most important original source of attraction in Trotskyism for the activists and intellectuals in the groups under consideration in this chapter – aside from the allure of Trotsky's revolutionary past and the perceived continuation of the heritage of the October Revolution in the International Left Opposition – was the movement's anti-Stalinist orientation and reputation. This was true of both disillusioned Communist Party members, who formed the backbone of the early Trotskyist movement, as it was for others whose political sympathies eventually shifted towards anti-statist positions. Post-war Trotskyism, in the words of historian David Goodway, "possessed an impressive capacity for generating some of the most outstanding modern anarchists and libertarian socialists, notable for not only their fresh thinking but also their theoretical rigour."[19]

Some of the major intellectual figures of the groups in question in this chapter – Cornelius Castoriadis, Claude Lefort, C.L.R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya, and Christopher Pallis (whose pseudonym Maurice Brinton) – attributed their initial attraction to Trotskyism due to an 'instinctual anti-Stalinism'.[20] That is, they regarded themselves as communists and revolutionaries in opposition to the capitalism of Western liberal democracies, but did not accept the Soviet Union as a genuine socialist society. They were especially critical of the bureaucratic and totalitarian nature of Stalinism both in the

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[19] David Goodway (ed.), *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (Edinburgh, Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 12.

[20] See for example Cornelius Castoriadis, "General Introduction" in David Ames Curtis (ed. and trans.), *Cornelius Castoriadis: Political and Social Writings, Volume 1, 1946-1955: From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism*, 8. The 1956 Preface to *State Capitalism & World Revolution*, signed by James and Castoriadis, among others, stated that "The only serious theoretical opposition to Stalinism was that provided over the years by Leon Trotsky. But by the end of World War II, it was obvious that Trotsky's theories no longer had any relation to reality." C.L.R. James, *State Capitalism & World Revolution* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 1986), xxix.

Soviet Union and internationally through its direction of the official Communist Parties and affiliated labour organisations. To this list of ex-Trotskyists might be added Daniel Guérin and Murray Bookchin, although neither were formally affiliated with the groups under consideration here. Murray Bookchin, who was a member of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party for a brief period in the 1940s[21] before beginning his serious engagement with anarchist thought, noted that "The Trotskyists were the only group in New York City that seemed to offer a serious challenge to Stalinism, at least as far as I could see."[22] For Guérin, a tour of the United States between 1946-1949, which brought him into contact with activists in the Socialist Workers Party, changed his previously positive appraisal of Trotskyism. Guérin would recall that "It was thanks to the American Trotskyists, despite their undeniable commitment, that I ceased forever believing in the virtues of revolutionary parties built on authoritarian, Leninist lines."[23]

## 4. Dissident Trotskyism and the 'Russian Question' in the United States and France

Although initially attracted to Trotskyism for its anti-Stalinist orientation, by the end of the Second World War serious questions began to emerge about the accuracy and relevance of Trotskyist analysis. These questions were first posed in relation to the Trotskyist attitude towards the Soviet Union, and later, about the very concept of the Leninist form of revolutionary organisation.

The American Socialist Workers Party was among the largest and most influential international Trotskyist parties. As Goldner observed, "During the high phase of the consolidation of the Stalinist counter-revolution in the Soviet Union, the international 'left opposition' around Trotsky had more influence in the United States than in any other advanced capitalist country."[24] In the 1930s,

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[21] See Marcel van der Linden, "The Prehistory of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*: Josef Weber and the Movement for a Democracy of Content (1947-1964)," *Anarchist Studies*, 9:2 (2001), n.22, 142.

[22] Quoted in Damian F. White, *Bookchin: A Critical Appraisal* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 13-14.

[23] Quoted in Dave Berry, "'Un contradicteur permanent': the ideological and political itinerary of Daniel Guérin" in Bourg, J. (ed.), *After the Deluge: New Perspectives on the Intellectual and Cultural History of Postwar France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 127.

[24] Loren Goldner, "Introduction to the Johnson-Forest Tendency and the Background to 'Facing Reality'" (2004) available online: http://home.earthlink.net/~lrgoldner/johnson.html (accessed February 12, 2009). For an overview of the Trotskyist tradition in the United States see Alexander, "American Trotskyism" in Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, 761-952.

Trotskyists in the American Socialist Workers Party were at the forefront of several key workers' struggles, including the famous Minneapolis Teamsters strike in 1934 and in the United Auto Workers industrial union organising drives in Detroit[25]. At this juncture Paul Buhle, the authorised biographer of C.L.R. James[26], noted that since the Communist Parties had absorbed large numbers of young radical activists, and the American anarchist movement was increasingly becoming a "literary and cultural phenomenon, working class absent," while workplace activism and anarchistic social criticisms were being "put forward by Trotskyists, who shared little else [with the anarchists], or seemed to, until it became clear that they were acting as syndicalists in their factory work, something that the followers of James and Dunayevskaya almost made explicit."[27]

In 1940, divisions within American Trotskyism on the 'Russian Question' had manifested itself in a split in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), leading to the creation of the Workers Party under the political leadership of Max Shachtman. Shachtman criticised the traditional Trotskyist insistence on support for the Soviet Union as a workers' state, albeit a degenerated version, and defined the Soviet Union as a 'bureaucratic collectivist' society. In 1941, C.L.R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya broke with the SWP and joined Shachtman in the Workers' Party, and put forward the 'state capitalist' position on the nature of the Soviet Union at a party congress that year.[28] The minority 'state capitalist' position within the Workers' Party was grouped around the Johnson-Forest Tendency after the 'party' names of its two animating personalities, James and Dunayevskaya, or J. Johnson and Freddie Forest respectively.[29] James had previously been one of the most important figures in the British Trotskyist movement, and was present as the British delegate at the founding congress of the Fourth

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[25] For more on this see Barry Eidlin, "'Upon this (foundering) rock': Minneapolis Teamsters and the transformation of US business unionism, 1934–1941" in *Labor History* 50:3 (2009), 249-267 and Victor G. Davinatz, "The Role of the Trotskyists in the United Auto Workers, 1939-1949" in *Left History* 10:2 (Fall 2005), 53-82.

[26] See Paul Buhle, *The Artist as Revolutionary: C.L.R. James* (London: Verso, 1989).

[27] Email correspondence with Paul Buhle, 21-10-2008.

[28] For a comprehensive discussion of left-wing criticisms of the Soviet Union and differing conceptions of state capitalism see Marcel van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union: A Survey of Critical Theories and Debates since 1917* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[29] For a detailed historical sketch of this group, as well as its lesser known members, see "The Internal Life of the Johnson-Forest Tendency" in Frank Rosengarten, *Urbane revolutionary: C.L.R. James and the struggle for a new society* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 62-85.

International in Paris, France in September 1938.[30] Later, that same year, James had relocated to the United States and "had been toured around the country by the Socialist Workers Party, in part in an attempt to recruit blacks to the organization, at a time when they amounted to only a handful."[31] Dunayevskaya, for her part, had been at one time Leon Trotsky's secretary[32] and a major translator and interpreter of the works of Marx and Lenin. One of Dunayevskaya's major contributions was her completion of the first English-language translation of Marx's 1844 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. The Johnson-Forest Tendency also included Martin Glaberman[33] and Grace Lee Boggs[34] as key figures. In terms of the split on the 'Russian Question'

> The issue raised by James within the [Workers Party], although appearing esoteric to an outsider, was of considerable consequence in terms of Marxist theory and politics. If the Soviet Union was characterized by state capitalism, that meant it was just a new version of the capitalism about which Marx, Engels, Lenin, and others had written. However, if Shachtman was right and the Soviet Union was a 'bureaucratic collectivist' economy and society, that meant that it was something new and that Marx's prediction that capitalism could be succeeded only by socialism was wrong – that there was a possibility of something quite different developing.[35]

In 1947, the Johnson-Forest Tendency left the 'Shachtmanite' Workers Party[36] and rejoined the SWP, only to make a final break with that party, and Trotskyism as such, in 1951, creating the Correspondence Publishing Committee.

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30 Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, 270.

31 Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism,* 807.

32 "For a while during Trotsky's residence in Mexico [Dunayevskaya] had been one of his secretaries. She subsequently described her assignments with him as being 'work on behalf of the Russian Bulletin of the Left Opposition,' and 'some research work regarding Stalin.'" Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism,* 933.

33 For an excellent short summary of Glaberman's life and works, see Staughton Lynd's biographical essay in Staughton Lynd (ed.), *Martin Glaberman: Punching Out & Other Writings* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 2002), iii-xv.

34 For a collection of Grace Lee Boggs' more recent writings, and a biographical essay, see the James and Grace Lee Boggs centre website: http://www.boggscenter.org/ (accessed September 13, 2010).

35 Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism,* 808.

36 Max Shachtman would later undergo a curious political transformation through the late 1950s to his death in 1972. Dissolving the Workers Party, and practicing entryism in the American Socialist Party, Shachtman would constitute the right-wing of that party by developing a staunchly anti-communist social democratic position, supporting American military intervention in Vietnam and Cuba, and aligning himself and his supporters with the right-wing of the American labour bureaucracy in the AFL-CIO. Some of his followers, including Hal Draper, broke with Shachtman over these issues early on and are sometimes considered 'left Shachtmanites'. Interestingly, some major figures within American neoconservativism – like former World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz – originally came from the 'right Shachtmanite' milieu, although one should be cautious in positing a 'Trotskyist neocon' formulation. For a discussion of this see William F. King, "Neoconservatives and Trotskyism" in *American Communist History* 3:2 (2004), 247-266.

The most complete articulation of the 'state capitalist' position is contained in a pamphlet produced by the American Johnson-Forest Tendency in 1950 entitled *State Capitalism & World Revolution*, marking their departure from the SWP. This pamphlet was important not only in clarifying their position on the 'Russian Question', but also in its analysis of working-class agency in directly challenging, and propelling, capitalist development (more on this below). In terms of the critique of the orthodox Trotskyist positions, *State Capitalism & World Revolution* unequivocally identified the Soviet Union and Eastern European satellite states as capitalist societies – in which a bureaucratic class controlled production and expropriated surplus-value – and denied orthodox Trotskyist claims that capitalist dynamics in the process of production were absent in economies in which state ownership and central planning were dominant features.

> The rulers of Russia perform the same functions as are performed by Ford, General Motors, the coal operators and their huge bureaucratic staffs. Capital is not Henry Ford; he can die and leave his whole empire to an institution; the plant, the scientific apparatus, the method, the personnel of organization and supervision, the social system which sets these up in opposition to the direct producer will remain [...] capital accumulation in its specifically capitalist manner, this is the analysis of the Russian economy.[37]

That the nature of the Soviet economy was capitalist, they argued, was not to maintain that the Russian economy was identical to that of the Western liberal democratic capitalism, but only that commonalities existed between these two systems in terms of the social relations between the proletariat and management at the point of production.[38]

The divisions within the American Trotskyist movement were largely paralleled in France. Trotskyism in France, as noted above, was significant because in the 1930s it generated major questions and debates for international Trotskyism[39], not least of which was Trotsky's formulation of the entryist tactic. However, by the mid-1940s, a critical radical Left current had coalesced around the Chaulieu-Montal Tendency – named after the aliases of its two leading figures, Pierre Chaulieu

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[37] C.L.R. James, *State Capitalism & World Revolution*, 48.

[38] Staughton Lynd pointed out that Martin Glaberman sometimes spoke of the 'totalitarian state capitalism' of the Soviet Union and the 'welfare state capitalism' of the United States and Western economies. Staughton Lynd (ed.), *Martin Glaberman: Punching Out & Other Writings* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 2002), v.

[39] For an overview of the French Trotskyist movement see “French Trotskyism” in Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism,* 339-404.

(Cornelius Castoriadis) and Claude Montal (Claude Lefort) – within the French section of the Trotskyist Fourth International, the *Parti Communiste Internationaliste* (PCI; Internationalist Communist Party). Castoriadis had originally relocated to France from Greece on a PhD scholarship, and brought with him considerable political experience.

> Before the Second World War, during the dictatorship of Metaxas, [Castoriadis] had joined the Greek Communist youth organization. However, when the Germans occupied the country and the Communist Party wanted to ally itself with the bourgeois resistance, Castoriadis rejected the decision. After a short period of political wanderings, he ended up with a small Trotskyist group led by Spires Stinas. This was a risky choice, because Trotskyists were threatened from two sides in Greece. The occupying power persecuted them whenever possible and in 1943 executed the most important leaders, among them Pantelis Pouliopoulis and Yannis Xypolitos. When the country was 'liberated' in 1944, it was the Communists' turn. During massive 'mopping-up operations' they murdered at least 600 of Trotsky's followers, often after having tortured them. This traumatic experience was a determining factor in Castoriadis' further development. The Trotskyist view on Stalinism, which he had supported only a short time before, seemed less and less correct.[40]

Castoriadis' main collaborator, Claude Lefort, while lacking the former's deep and traumatic political experience with Stalinism, combined a rich intellectual background (Lefort was closely associated with philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty) with a revolutionary intransigence.

> Born in 1924, Lefort was still a philosophy student when he met Castoriadis for the first time. As early as 1943 he had formed an underground group at the Lyc*é*e Henri IV in Paris, although the Trotskyist position on the Soviet Union and Stalinism had never seemed very convincing to him.[41]

Castoriadis and Lefort had collaborated within the PCI since at least August 1946, when they jointly published a criticism of the Trotskyist defense of the Soviet Union as a workers' state entitled *On the Regime and Against the Defence of the USSR.* This relatively short article argued against the orthodox Trotskyist line of critical defense of the Soviet Union as a workers' state given the total abandonment of two fundamental socialist aims in Stalinist Russia: the abolition of wage labour and exploitation towards of the introduction of workers' self-management.[42] In 1948, the Chaulieu-Montal

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[40] Marcel Van der Linden, "Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group 1949-1965" in *Left History* 5:1 (1997), 8.

[41] Marcel Van der Linden, "Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group 1949-1965", 8.

[42] "On the Regime and against the Defense of the USSR" in David Ames Curtis (ed.), *Cornelius Castoriadis: Political and Social Writings, Volume 1, 1946-1955: From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 37-43. Originally published as "Sur le

Tendency broke away from the PCI, and by 1949 had regrouped to form *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and a political review of the same name. The name was borrowed from a statement by Engels and famously rearticulated in 1916 by Rosa Luxemburg, who during the First World War argued that humanity was at a crossroads between socialism or barbarism: “Either the triumph of imperialism and the collapse of all civilization as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration – a great cemetery,” wrote Luxemburg, “Or the victory of socialism, that means the conscious active struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method of war.”[43] During this historical period, the onset of the Cold War, the alternative of socialism or barbarism was posed in the context of the prospects of nuclear warfare and the outbreak of 'World War III', which Castoriadis and Lefort felt were a real possibility.

For Castoriadis and Lefort the basic antagonism in modern capitalism was set between the bureaucracies which directed and controlled social production and the class of 'executants' which created all social wealth, yet was divested of any meaningful control over the process.

> This new conception of bureaucracy and of the Russian regime allowed us to tear the mystificatory veil from “nationalization” and from “planning” and to rediscover – beyond juridical forms of property ownership as well as beyond the methods adopted by the exploiting class for managing the overall economy (whether these methods be realized through the “market” or through a “plan”) - the actual relations of production as the foundation of the division of society into classes [...] This new conception also allowed us to understand the evolution of Western capitalism, where the concentration of capital, the evolution of technique and of the organization of production, the increasing intervention of the State, and finally, the evolution of the great working-class organizations had led to a similar result: the establishment of a bureaucratic stratum in production and in the other spheres of social life.[44]

## 5. Working-Class Autonomy

In rejecting conceptions of vanguardism and Leninist party organisation SouB and Correspondence made a total break from their common origins in international Trotskyism and any identifiable Leninist

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regime contre la defense de l'URSS,” *Bulletin Interieur du PCI.*

[43] Rosa Luxemburg, *The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis of German Social Democracy* (1916) available online http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1915/junius/index.htm (accessed February 11, 2009).

[44] Cornelius Castoriadis, “General Introduction” in David Ames Curtis (ed.), *Cornelius Castoriadis: Political and Social Writings, Volume 1, 1946-1955: From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 9.

orientation. This break from Trotskyism was framed in the debates about the nature of the Soviet Union, but it also had important consequences on questions of how class struggle was to be conceptualised and what would constitute the appropriate forms of revolutionary organisation to further social revolution.

In one of the most important sections of the *State Capitalism & World Revolution* pamphlet, the new phase of state capitalist development was described by James and the 'Johnsonites' as being rooted in the rationalisation of production after the First World War, as evident in the United States as the most advanced industrial economy. Taylorist time and motion studies and the Fordist assembly line had fundamentally restructured the labour process: “For the proletariat there is the constantly growing subdivision of labor, decrease in the need of skills, and determination of the sequence of operations and speed by the machine.”[45] In response, the class revolted in a wave of mass industrial organising campaigns in the 1930s, conducted through the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO), aspiring to radically restructure production as part of an implicit rejection of the very basis of the capitalist economy[46]: the hierarchical division of labour and the private control and management of industry. Since the revolutionary aspirations of this mass movement:

> could not be carried through to a conclusion, the inevitable counterpart was the creation of a labor bureaucracy. The history of production since is the corruption of the bureaucracy and its transformation into an instrument of capitalist production, the restoration to the bourgeoisie of what it had lost in 1936, the right to control production standards. Without this mediating role of the bureaucracy, production in the United States would be violently and continuously disrupted until one class was undisputed master.[47]

In other words, the deal that had been struck was the legal recognition of unions and collective bargaining on the part of government and industry in exchange for a guarantee of 'labour peace' on the part of the unions. The upshot of this process, as Glaberman described in his 1952 essay *Punching Out*, was the recuperation of working-class demands and their codification in contractual

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[45] C.L.R. James, *State Capitalism & World Revolution*, 40.

[46] Social historian George Rawick, who belonged to the circle around James, considered the victories of the CIO in United States in the 1930s to be surpassed only be the achievements of the Russian Revolution. See George Rawick, “Working Class Self-Activity” in *Radical America* 16:3 (May-June 1982) available online: http://libcom.org/library/working-class-self-activity-george-rawick (accessed September 15, 2010).

[47] C.L.R. James, *State Capitalism & World Revolution*, 40-41.

obligations, which compelled union bureaucracies to suppress or discourage independent working-class action.

> A contract is a compromise. That establishes that, no matter what union gains are recorded, the rights of the company to manage production are also recorded. And in the grievance procedure it takes the power out of the hands of the workers and puts it in the hands of the stewards and committeemen. The union officials become the enforcers of the contract and the union becomes the agency by which the worker is disciplined and tied to the machine.[48]

As a result, both resistance to the control and discipline of capitalist production as well as the very content of its socialist alternative was not to be found in the Leninist party nor in the bureaucratised unions, but rather, in forms of working-class self-activity. Informal work groups, unsanctioned industrial actions, and the solidarities forged from cooperative practices that made life on the job more tolerable were examples of the formation of the 'new society within the shell of the old'. SouB held similar perspectives, as Castoriadis was to recall:

> If socialism is the collective management of production and of social life by the workers, and if this idea is not a philosopher's dream but a historical project, it ought to be found in what already is its root. And what could that be if not the desire and the capacity of people to give life to this project? Not only does it preclude “socialist consciousness being introduced into the proletariat from outside,” as Kautsky and Lenin put it, its seeds must already be present in the proletariat; as the latter is not genetically a new living species, this can only be the result of its experience of work and life under capitalism.[49]

The basic formulation that action preceded consciousness was the fundamental political outlook. Socialist consciousness could not be mechanically injected into the working class by an enlightened leadership. Rather, socialist ideas and their embodiment in new social forms would emerge directly from struggle itself, following the general pattern of previous revolutionary episodes: for instance, the Paris Commune, Russian soviets, and Spanish syndicates. The task of recording the direct experiences of workers' on the shopfloor became one of the main preoccupations of Correspondence, utilising what Raya Dunayevskaya termed the 'full fountain pen' technique. This method of working-

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[48] Staughton Lynd (ed.), *Martin Glaberman: Punching Out & Other Writings* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 2002), 14-15.

[49] Cornelius Castoriadis, “General Introduction” in David Ames Curtis (ed.), *Cornelius Castoriadis: Political and Social Writings, Volume 1, 1946-1955: From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 17.

class journalism “involved having members of the group interview workers and then allowing these workers to edit their comments for publication.”[50] The originality of the Correspondence paper, for Dunayevskaya, stemmed not simply from the fact that it was a workers' paper:

> but that it is a workers' paper that is published by a unique combination of worker and intellectual that is its core. To the intellectual it says aren't you for a new society, don't you see elements of it right now in the working class trying to work out its own problems in its own way free of all bureaucratism, and do you not consider the very method of producing this paper a blow to all bureaucratism and professionalism?[51]

These notions of workers' autonomy, and the critique of the bureaucratised capitalist societies of the 'East and West', later appeared to be validated by a number of developments: disturbances in Eastern Europe – specifically the uprisings in Eastern Germany in 1953 and the reappearance of the workers' council form in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and in Poland that same year – and the working-class militancy and self-organisation displayed in various industrial actions in Western Europe (for example, the British shop stewards movement) and North America during this period.[52]

## 6. Party or Class?: Revolutionary Organisation Reconsidered

It is no coincidence that some of the political vocabulary used by the SouB and Correspondence groups, such as state capitalism and the concept of workers' councils, resembled those of the council communists discussed in the previous chapter. Members of both groups had links with several surviving council communist theorists. For example, Cornelius Castoriadis corresponded with Anton Pannekoek[53], C.L.R. James was in communication with Karl Korsch[54], and Raya Dunayevskaya was

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[50] Kent Worcester, *C.L.R. James; A Political Biography* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 125.

[51] Raya Dunayevskaya letter to Paul Mattick, November 3, 1954, Paul Mattick Papers, Correspondence 33, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

[52] See for example C.L.R. James, Grace Lee, and Cornelius Castoriadis, *Facing Reality: The New Society: Where to look for it & How to bring it closer* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 2006), 11-45.

[53] Castoriadis-Pannekoek correspondence is available online: http://www.mondialisme.org/spip.php?article936 (accessed August 1, 2010). In her 1954 article “Socialism or Barbarism”, Raya Dunayevskaya commented on this correspondence and was delighted with Pannekoek's appreciation of the 'American Worker' articles produced by *Correspondence*. See Raya Dunayevskaya, “Socialism or Barbarism” in *Correspondence* (1954), available online: http://libcom.org/library/sob-dunayevskaya (accessed September 15, 2010).

[54] See Kent Worcester, *C.L.R. James; A Political Biography* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 30;

in contact with Paul Mattick.[55] In addition to inheriting some of the political ideas of the council communists, SouB and Correspondence developed similar divisions surrounding conceptions of revolutionary organisation, which also recalled the divisions between pro-organisational 'Platformists' and the 'Synthesists' preference for spontaneity.

In 1955, Correspondence split into two factions: the Facing Reality group with James, Glaberman, and Lee Boggs as its main figures, and the News and Letters Committees grouped around Raya Dunayevskaya. While both factions had rejected the traditional Leninist party, the issue dividing the two centred around the necessity of an organised political entity. For the Facing Reality group, the autonomous practices of the workers' themselves were the basic starting point and these practices would constitute the foundations of new forms of revolutionary social organisation, at least in Western societies. In the book *Facing Reality: The New Society: Where to look for it & How to bring it closer*, co-authored by James, Lee Boggs, and Castoriadis, they asserted that state power was the chief impediment to human advancement and its negation was developing from within capitalist society:

> Against this monster, people all over the world, and particularly ordinary working people in factories, mines, fields, and offices, are rebelling every day in ways of their own invention [...] Always the aim is to regain control over their own conditions of life and their relations with one another [...] They themselves are constantly attempting various forms of organization, uncertain of where the struggle is going to end. Nevertheless, they are imbued with one fundamental certainty, that they have to destroy the continuously mounting bureaucratic mass or be themselves destroyed by it.[56]

Dunayevskaya, on the other hand, felt the need for some kind of coordinating body: autonomous action was a necessary but not sufficient element in fostering revolutionary change. Andy Phillips, provided a succinct description of the organisational form of the News and Letters Committees:

> The form is a decentralized committee structure of freely associated local groups and individuals acting through and with a centralized National Editorial Board responsible for implementing decisions determined in the process of free and open discussions at annual plenary sessions and conventions [...] We chose the committee form of organization because it permitted the greatest flexibility and did not preclude any future organizational development. We are not opposed to the political party form on principle: we are opposed

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[55] See Raya Dunayevskaya letter to Paul Mattick, November 3, 1954, Paul Mattick Papers, Correspondence 33, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

[56] C.L.R. James, Grace Lee, and Cornelius Castoriadis, *Facing Reality: The New Society: Where to look for it & How to bring it closer* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 2006), 9.

> to the concept of the vanguard party to lead the masses and the practice that flows from that.[57]

SouB experienced a similar schism following the departure of a 'minority faction' centred around Claude Lefort and Henri Simon from that group in 1958, forming the *Informations et liaisons ouvrières* (ILO; Workers' information and liaisons) group which, two years later, became *Informations correspondance ouvrières* (ICO; Workers' Information and Correspondence)[58]. Here too the question of revolutionary organisation was the central dividing issue. For Castoriadis, who maintained links with both Dunayevskaya as well as the Facing Reality group, a 'vanguard party' (albeit an anti-parliamentary, non-electoral 'party') was necessary in the pre-revolutionary period, recognising that:

> any organization could degenerate into a bureaucratic monster, but that such degeneration could definitely be prevented if a conscious permanent struggle is waged against it. Furthermore, this could best be done by structuring the organization on a grass-roots basis. The working class badly needed a new type of organization along these lines, in view of existing needs for information, discussion, the exchange of experiences and communal action.[59]

Lefort, on the other hand:

> recognized the need for organized workers' action as well as for co-ordination and the exchange of experiences; but he denied that a separate party was necessary for this, as Castoriadis thought. That task could be fulfilled by groups of workers and employees in the firms, without intervention by a separate vanguard. The revolutionary socialists must, insofar as they themselves are wage labourers in a firm, actively participate. And insofar as they, as intellectuals, stood outside the production process, they could give theoretical and practical help to the struggle on condition that they subordinated themselves to the broad movement.[60]

Through these splits, these already numerically small organisations became tiny *groupuscules, and with the exception of the News and Letters Committees, eventually disappeared altogether.*

## 7. Workers' Autonomy and Anarchism: A Preliminary Balance Sheet

[57] Andy Phillips, in *News and Letters,* (January-February 1980) *9,* quoted in Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985: a documented analysis of the movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 934.

[58] For a concise history of the ILO-ICO, see Richard Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, available online: http://libcom.org/library/modern-leftism-four-b (accessed September 21, 2010) and Henri Simon, *1958-1998: Communism in France: Socialisme ou Barbarie, ICO and Echanges*, available online: http://libcom.org/library/communism-france-sob-ico-echanges (accessed September 21, 2010).

[59] Marcel Van der Linden, “Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group 1949-1965” in *Left History* 5:1 (1997), 18.

[60] Marcel Van der Linden, “Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group 1949-1965” in *Left History* 5:1 (1997), 18.

Having examined the histories and main ideas of the SouB and Correspondence groups, and before moving on, it might be useful at this point to discuss their theoretical relationship to libertarian thought, in general, and more specifically, their links to anarchist groups.

Socialism, as the common ownership of the means of production, was a foundational conceptual feature of the SouB and Correspondence groups, already evident in their common origins in Trotskyism. However, with the rejection of nationalisation and state planning as tantamount to the realisation and basis for a socialist economy, an important shift occurred in their political thinking. Conceptually, the 'libertarian' features of the groups examined above were primarily expressed as a thorough critique of hierarchy in modern industrial economies and the bureaucratic control and direction of the labour process: a feature that became particularly apparent following the break from Trotskyism-Leninism, the associated conception of state ownership as 'socialism', and the historical role assigned to the vanguard party as the genuine bearer of class consciousness. Indeed, the critique of bureaucracy was articulated in terms resembling the currents of 'socialist anarchist' and council communist thought of the interwar period: a distrust of state power informing an anti-parliamentary orientation; the conviction that decision making power should come from 'below'; the advancement of a system of democratic workers' councils as the basis of a socialist economy; and the creativity of the working classes as the inspiration and guide for advancing social revolution.

Castoriadis acknowledged that the SouB journal found a receptive audience among various sections of the radical Left, including council communists and anarchists.[61] In terms of the relations between SouB and anarchist groups, communication and discussion was primarily conducted with currents outside of traditional anarchist federations, particularly those which championed the 'organisational platform': the *Fédération Communiste Libertaire* (FCL; Libertarian Communist Federation) and the Groupes Anarchistes D'action Révolutionnaire (GAAR; Anarchist Revolutionary Action Groups, a collection of dissenting factions that split from the FCL). The former, with George Fontenis as its leading figure (discussed in the previous chapter), considered the SouB journal as a

61 Cornelius Castoriadis, "An Interview" *Telos* 23 (1975) 134.

important forum for reflection and analyses on the radical Left[62] and participated in discussions with SouB on revolutionary activism within labour union federations.[63] The latter was responsible for producing the review Noir et Rouge (Black and Red), which was close to Henri Simon and the ICO[64], and as Gombin suggested "was able to break out of the vicious circle of anarchism-Marxism and move on to the road towards possibly superseding this sterile conflict, the road in fact supposedly opened up by council communism."[65]

The Johnson-Forest Tendency/Correspondence linkages with anarchist social theory, or at any rate, the class struggle variants of anarchism, were more complex. While certain individual connections existed, for example the friendship between C.L.R. James and Daniel Guérin[66], *State Capitalism & World Revolution* identified anarchism, along with liberalism, social democracy, and other left tendencies, as a counter-revolutionary currents within revolutionary movements, although the pamphlet did not elaborate on the reason why anarchism was included in this list.[67] Some of James' followers, however, considerably modified their more rigid positions on anarchist thought later on. Martin Glaberman, a lifelong collaborator of C.L.R. James and the main figure responsible for maintaining the continuity of the 'Johnsonite' tradition until his death in 2001[68], noted in a 1998 work co-authored with Seymour Faber, that: "Marxism can mean anything from a libertarian anarchism to Stalinist totalitarian dictatorship. We tend in the first direction but we do not define Marxism as a political program or a party line. We see it essentially as a method for examining modern industrial

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62 Georges Fontenis, *Changer le Monde: Histoire du Mouvement Communiste Libertaire, 1945-1997* (Paris: *Éditions Alternative libertaire, 2008), 41-42.*

63 See Georges Fontenis, *"Présence dans les syndicats"* in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* 15 (November 1954), available online: http://raforum.info/article.php3?id_article=3751&lang=fr (accessed September 18, 2010).

64 Marcel Van der Linden, "Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group 1949-1965" in *Left History* 5:1 (1997), 36 n.56.

65 Richard Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism* (London: Penguin, 1975), available online: http://libcom.org/library/modern-leftism-four-a (accessed September 18, 2010).

66 Kent Worcester, *C.L.R. James; A Political Biography* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), xv. James also began an English-language translation of Guérin's history of the French Revolution *La Lutte Des Classes Sous La Première République,Bourgeois Et "Bras Nus" 1793-1797.* The unfinished manuscript of James' translation is held in the University of Trinidad and Tobago C.L.R. James collection.

67 C.L.R. James, *State Capitalism & World Revolution* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 1986), 132.

68 Glaberman considered himself an "unreconstructed Johnsonite." See Neil Fettes "Obituary: Martin Glaberman" in *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 34 (Spring 2002), 4.

capitalist society, and that is how we use it."[69]

## 8. Solidarity: From Trotskyism to Libertarian Socialism

As in France and the United States, the British Trotskyist movement had a considerable following from the formation of the International Left Opposition onwards,[70] and similar divisions amongst self-styled Trotskyists emerged as well. In Great Britain, one of the leading proponents of the state capitalist theory of the Soviet Union was Yigael Gluckstein (better known by his pen name Tony Cliff). However, unlike SouB and the Correspondence groups, Cliff, and the International Socialist Tendency that he helped form (known in Great Britain as the Socialist Workers Party), formulated his critical positions on the nature of the Soviet Union that allowed him to remain within the broader Trotskyist fold (albeit a heterodox variant) by maintaining the Leninist conception of the vanguard party. As Franks wrote, the Socialist Workers Party "deliberately follows Lenin. The leadership of the party has to be a professional corps, able to efficiently direct the subject class to its desired end. The division of labour within revolutionary groupings is essential for its effectiveness."[71] The British group most closely associated with SouB and Correspondence was Solidarity, treated here separately since it was a relative late-comer on the scene, but also because it outlived the previously mentioned groups while maintaining the continuity of the workers' autonomy perspective.

The British 'libertarian socialist' group Solidarity was formed in 1959, originally as 'Socialism Reaffirmed', by a group of ex-Trotskyists and independent radical Leftists, many of whom broke with, or were expelled from, the Socialist Labour League or the Communist Party of Great Britain. As 'Socialism Reaffirmed', group activity was centred around the publication of the London-based magazine *The Agitator*. After five issues, in May 1961 *The Agitator* changed to become *Solidarity: For Workers' Power*, and the group adopted the name Solidarity. Aside from Christopher Pallis (alias

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69 Martin Glaberman and Seymour Faber, *Working for Wages: The Roots of Insurgency* (Dix Hills, NY: General Hall Inc., 1998), 2.

70 For an overview of the British Trotskyist movement see "British Trotskyism" in Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, 437-499.

71 Benjamin Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The means and ends of contemporary British anarchisms* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press and Dark Star, 2006), 216.

Maurice Brinton), leading figures in Solidarity included Ken Weller, Joe Jacobs, and Andy Anderson. Although never a large organisation with a mass membership, Solidarity's contributions included excellent documentations of industrial struggles,[72] the translation and popularisation of Castoriadis' works, and activism in the anti-nuclear movements of the 1960s.

Politically, the single biggest influence on Solidarity was the work of Cornelius Castoriadis and SouB: specifically the text *Socialism or Barbarism*, drafted by Castoriadis and adopted as a common statement of principles at a Paris conference of revolutionary socialist groups in May 1961.[73] This statement formed the fundamental basis of Solidarity's political and economic views as expressed in their two central statements of their aims and principles: *As we see it* (1967) and *As we don't see it* (1972).

In *As we see it*, the basic antagonisms and divisions in society were described as between those who "have no control whatsoever over the decisions that most deeply and directly affect their lives" and those "who own or control the means of production" and "accumulate wealth, make laws and use the whole machinery of the State to perpetuate and reinforce their privileged positions." Nationalisation of industry, improved living standards, or ruling left-wing parties, they argued, had not fundamentally altered the exploitative and alienating relationship between the working-class and those who control production: "East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work and manipulated in consumption and leisure." Conversely the trade unions and traditional political parties were described as essential components of capitalist exploitation

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[72] See, in particular, the Solidarity 'Motor Bulletins' pamphlet series, a detailed and invaluable historical record of international struggles in the automotive industry. *Motor Bulletin No.1: Ford Struggles 1973 (Amsterdam, Antwerp, Bordeaux, Cologne, Genk, Melbourne)* (London: Solidarity, 1973); *Motor Bulletin No.2: UAW – Scab Union* (London: Solidarity, March 1974); *Motor Bulletin No.3: Datsun – Hell's Battlefield* (London: Solidarity, July 1974); *Motor Bulletin No.4: Wildcat at Dodge Truck (Detroit, June 1974)* (London: Solidarity, c.1975); *Motor Bulletin No.5: Struggles at Seat (Barcelona)* (London: Solidarity, October 1976); *Motor Bulletin No.6: Struggles at Ford, Halewood & Valencia* (London: Solidarity, March 1977)*; Motor Bulletin No.7: General Motors: the 1976 struggles at Strasbourg and Ste. Thérèse (Canada)* (London: Solidarity, c.1977); and *Motor Bulletin No.8: Chrysler workers, beware!* (London: Solidarity, 1973).

[73] These groups were *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (France), *Unita Proletaria* (Italy), Socialism Reaffirmed (Great Britain), and *Pouvoir Ouvrier Belge* (Belgium). The statement 'Socialism or Barbarism' was produced as a pamphlet by Solidarity in 1969, and as the introduction states, of these organisations, by 1969 only the Solidarity group continued to exist. See *Socialism or Barbarism*, Solidarity Pamphlet 11 (1969).

as “middlemen,” in determining the price of labour on the market, or as recuperative political organs which “use the struggles and aspirations of the working class for their own ends.” Solidarity's constructive programme was based on socialism, defined as “not just the common ownership and control of the means of production and distribution” but a broader process of a total “radical transformation” of social relations. The basic social form corresponding to this objective was outlined as the workers' council, emerging “from below” and “composed of elected and revocable delegates.” As a caveat, the precise form of this democratic self-organisation, or “workers' power”, was accepted as varying “considerably from country to country and from industry to industry” while its basic content – that “workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles and that the control and organization of these struggles should remain firmly in their own hands” – remained consistent. Moreover, the tendencies already in play within working class struggles were regarded as having an implicit socialist character: “its conditions of life and its experiences in production constantly drive the working class to adopt priorities and values and to find methods of organization which challenge the established social order and established patterns of thought.” In sharp contrast to the “hierarchical structure” of Leninist and social democratic parties, the role of the revolutionary organisation as envisaged by Solidarity would simply be to make the implicit socialist consciousness evident in workers' struggles explicit, and help develop a “mass revolutionary consciousness” by “[giving] practical assistance to workers in struggle, and [helping] those in different areas to exchange experiences and link up with one another.”[74]

The slightly lengthier statement, *As We Don't See it*, further clarified Solidarity's basic positions, particularly in elaborating a much more detailed critique of the established Left. The so-called 'socialist' countries, as well as Western liberal democracies, are described as “hierarchically-structured class societies based on wage slavery and exploitation.” This was to emphasize that Solidarity did not support, critically or otherwise, any existing manifestation of 'socialist' government, considering this, in

[74] “As we see it” (1967) in David Goodway (ed.), *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2004), 153-4.

fact, to be a contradiction of the basic principles of socialism: state power representing sectional interests of either competing capitalist views in national parliaments or those of a bureaucratic ruling caste in one-party dictatorships. “In every country of the world the rulers oppress the ruled and persecute genuine revolutionaries. In every country the main enemy of the people is their own ruling class. This alone can provide the basis of genuine internationalism of the oppressed.” This statement is also notable for the group's explicit self-identification as “libertarian socialist” or “left-libertarian,” qualified with the assertion that “We want no gods, not even those of the Marxist or anarchist pantheons.” The “libertarian socialist” outlook was distinguished from authoritarian or reformist variants of socialism through its embrace of autonomous, self-organised action, and the total rejection of the notion that socialism can be instigated 'from above' or that class consciousness can be introduced to the proletariat from 'the outside' by an enlightened elite.[75]

As membership in Solidarity became formalised, and the group expanded from London to a national organisation, the basis of unity became the two statements summarised above. Beyond this level of basic political agreement, each group was autonomous and had considerable scope for developing and elaborating theory and practice based on local conditions. Local groups were also encouraged to produce their own journals, newsletters, and pamphlets, and develop theoretical perspectives from their interventions in social struggles.[76] As many as 25 such autonomous groups existed through Solidarity's history, from 1959 to 1992. This organisational structure was described in a 1970 issue of Solidarity produced by the Central Scotland group:

> No orders come from any centre, whether in London, Glasgow, Aberdeen or elsewhere. There is no bureaucratic structure, or under the present system, any possibility of one, as there is no permanent national committee. Even the national conference is not a delegate conference and voting and speaking rights are open to all Solidarity members. Neither is it an anarchist free-for-all, as those present and voting must be Solidarists, duly accredited by recognised Solidarity groups. Thus we hope to avoid the bureaucratic sickness of the traditional 'left' and the chaos of the anarchist movement.[77]

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[75] “As we don't see it” (1972) in David Goodway (ed.), *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2004), 155-162.
[76] See the “Solidarity Conference” report in *Solidarity (South London)* 4 (1969), 21-2.
[77] “Editorial” in *Solidarity Central Scotland* (June 1, 1970), 2.

This general theme of charting a course between the 'traditional' Left and the anarchist movement, was a defining feature of Solidarity's politics in aspiring to a create something new and innovative on the radical Left spectrum. Illustrative of this attitude is an editorial, written by the Aberdeen Solidarity group, which elaborated this political space situated between anarchism and Marxism:

> It is often said by Solidarists that Marxists call us anarchists and anarchists call us Marxists. This paradox is a result of the inability of traditional revolutionaries to understand anything which falls out with their own outdated categories. The organisation of and the function of Solidarity magazine clearly shows the difference between the aims and principles of a Solidarity group and those of other left-wing political groupings.[78]

The Trotskyist movement, extensively criticised in other Solidarity publications[79], was dismissed for its Leninist orientation and 'transitional demands', while 'traditional anarchism' was criticised for its "mystifying morass of differing views." Solidarity's objective was to foster and encourage, as far as possible, working-class autonomy: "We do not intend the membership of Solidarity to become immense, we urge workers to form their own organisations within the factories to fight for self-management. We believe that individuals should have control over the decisions that daily affect their lives."[80]

Solidarity held back from explicitly identifying its politics as anarchist, preferring the term 'libertarian socialist'. Solidarity, stated Goodway, had moved far beyond Leninist interpretations of Marxism "to a fully left-libertarian position, while largely holding back from the self-description of 'anarchist'."[81] However, this does not mean that 'Solidarists' did not draw influence from some historical anarchist movements or from individual anarchists. In fact, as Franks observed, Solidarity "had a small part to play in the British anarchist revival of the 1960s and '70s."[82] Indeed, the various *anarchisms* and *Marxisms* that the organisation admired, or otherwise considered as reference points in developing

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[78] "Editorial" in *Solidarity Aberdeen* 3 (1969), 1-2.

[79] On the function and structure of Leninist parties "Solidarity in the 1970s and '80s [...] provided detailed accounts of the behaviour of party officials towards their lower-ranking members." Benjamin Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The means and ends of contemporary British anarchisms* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press and Dark Star, 2006), 216.

[80] "Editorial" in *Solidarity Aberdeen* 3 (1969), 1-2.

[81] David Goodway (ed.), *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (Edinburgh, Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 1.

[82] Benjamin Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press and Dark Star, 2006), 54.

their political orientation, is notable for its demarcation of revolutionary and libertarian traditions in socialism as opposed to bureaucratic, statist or individualist *anarchisms* and *Marxisms*, as illustrated in their literature.

For Maurice Brinton, the leading figure in the Solidarity group, the 'class struggle' traditions in anarchism – typified by the contributions of the Makhnovists and anarchists involved in creating factory committees in the Russian Revolution[83] – were to be considered as congruent with libertarian subvariants of marxism. While always careful to distance his own critical, libertarian, and anti-Leninist interpretations of marxism from anarchism, Brinton asserted in his 1967 preface to the first English-language translation of *The Kronstadt Uprising* pamphlet (written by Makhnovist and platform co-author Ida Mett and republished on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution) that Mett's perspectives:

> represent what is best in the revolutionary tradition of 'class struggle' anarchism. She thinks in terms of a collective, proletarian solution to the problems of capitalism. The rejection of the class struggle, the anti-intellectualism, the preoccupation with transcendental morality and with personal salvation that characterize so many of the anarchists of today should not for a minute detract 'Marxists' from paying serious attention to what she writes.[84]

Similarly, a 1982 Solidarity review of Michael Malet's *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War* gave a positive assessment of Makhno as a genuine revolutionary and commented on the contributions and relevance of the debates surrounding the platform and the Russian revolution:

> These problems of organisation, of the relations between workers and intellectuals, between thinkers and doers, still remain unresolved, and we are still haunted by the ghosts of the Russian Revolution – an event which will one day be seen as the biggest ever set-back for socialism.[85]

Murray Bookchin was another 'left libertarian' thinker whose perspectives on revolutionary

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[83] For an extensive discussion of the role of anarchists, syndicalists, and other revolutionaries in factory committees and Soviets during the Russian Revolution, and the opposed conceptions of workers' control and workers' self-management, see Maurice Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control: The State and Counter-Revolution* in David Goodway (ed.), *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (Edinburgh, Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 293-378.

[84] Maurice Brinton “Preface to Solidarity Edition” (1967) in Ida Mett, *The Kronstadt Uprising* (Montreal: Black Rose – Our Generation Press, 1973), 25.

[85] T. Liddle, “Book Review: 'Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War' by Michael Malet” in *Solidarity: new series* 1:1 (1982), 16. WCML, Solidarity Collection

organisation and history were greatly respected by members of Solidarity. A 1970 Solidarity review of Bookchin's essay *Listen, Marxist!* concluded that anarchism and Marxism as political categories were of the past, and new perspectives moving beyond these 'poles' of revolutionary thought were required.[86] Bookchin's *On Spontaneity and Organisation* was reproduced as a Solidarity pamphlet in 1975.[87] Another pamphlet produced that same year examined the role of anarchist women in the Spanish Revolution, affirming the commitment of Solidarity to areas of oppression outside the immediate 'point of production':

> The fate of women in revolution is closely connected with the fate of the revolution as a whole. In Spain, there were initial gains, even if partial, limited and fragmented (it could be argued that the lives of Spanish men were not totally transformed either); stabilisation set in with the wartime situation, to be followed by reverses; defeat brought reaction. But the fate of women must not be left as a neglected, subordinate factor, or the social revolution, as well as the women's cause, will be diminished and damaged.[88]

The impressive array of literature produced by autonomous Solidarity groups in Great Britain also included reproductions of council communist texts. For example, a 1966 issue of Solidarity Aberdeen included Otto Rühle's *From the Bourgeois to the Proletarian Revolution*[89] (reprinted as "Otto Rühle on German Trade Unions" and described as a 'libertarian marxist' text) and a 1974 issue of Solidarity reprinted Anton Pannekoek's essay *Party and Class*.[90] The recovery of council communist and 'left communist' traditions became a fundamental point of reference for Solidarity, not only in the elaboration of workers' councils as the reconstructive dimension of a socialist transformation, but also in countering Leninist/Trotskyist analyses by exposing that the bureaucratic and repressive nature of the Bolshevik government had emerged prior to Stalin's ascent to power in the Soviet Union.

## 9. Conclusion

This chapter discussed three radical Left organisations in the post-war period and their common political trajectories from Trotskyism to an anti-statist Left orientation. The international Trotskyist

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[86] Ian Mitchell, "Book Review: 'Listen, Marxist!' by Murray Bookchin" in *Solidarity* 6:5 (1970), 20-23.
[87] Murray Bookchin, On Spontaneity and Organisation, Solidarity (London) pamphlet 49, 1975.
[88] Liz Willis, *Women in the Spanish Revolution*, Solidarity pamphlet no.48, October 15, 1975, 15.
[89] "Otto Ruhle on German Trade Unions" in *Solidarity (Aberdeen)* 2:2 (July 1966), 13-18.
[90] Anton Pannekoek, "Party and Class" in *Solidarity* 7:12 (1974), 40-44.

movement had proved to be a powerful pole of attraction for a generation of intellectuals and activists on the anti-Stalinist Left in Western Europe and North America. However, in the post-war period, serious dissension among Trotskyists began to emerge surrounding the question of the nature of the Soviet Union. In sharp contrast to the orthodox Trotskyist call for a critical defense of the gains of the Soviet Union (meaning state ownership of industry and the centrally planned economy) groups within the Fourth International, such as Chaulieu-Montal Tendency in France and the Johnson-Forest Tendency in the United States, argued that nationalised production remained within the framework of capitalist social relations. Together with this rejection of the Trotskyist defense of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, albeit a degenerated one, was a break from the Leninist model of the vanguard political party. The autonomous forms of working-class resistance to the bureaucratic control and discipline of capitalist relations (of the 'totalitarian' Soviet or 'welfare state' Western varieties) both demonstrated an implicit, or often unarticulated, socialist consciousness as well as the rudimentary new forms of social organisation that would prefigure generalised workers' self-management.

While these assertions that the working class was able to instigate revolutionary change appeared to be confirmed, most dramatically, in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the reemergence of workers' councils in that country, divisions within this milieu again erupted between more or less spontaneist and pro-organisational conceptions of revolutionary organisation.

Despite eventual fragmentations and splits fairly early on (especially in the case of SouB and Correspondence), and the relatively small size of their respective memberships, they were tremendously influential in shaping the political thought and action of radical sections of the New Left[91]: in particular, the worker and student actions of May 1968 in France and the cycle of social struggles in Italy between 1969-1977. SouB could count Situationist theorist Guy Debord and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit as former members. Correspondence perhaps had its most significant and lasting influence on the Italian *operaismo* and *autonomia* movements of the late 1960s and 1970s. As the

[91] See for example Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (San Francisco/Edinburgh: AK Press and Anti/Theses, 2000), 58-77.

Correspondence and SouB groups gradually disintegrated into left groupuscules or dissolved altogether, in Great Britain, the Solidarity group continued to advance the perspective of workers' autonomy until it folded in 1992, identifying their politics as 'libertarian socialism', and in so doing, demonstrated affinities with both 'councilist' and revolutionary Marxisms and 'class struggle' anarchisms.

# CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM?

This thesis has examined two trends within the revolutionary socialist milieu between the dissolution of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) in 1876 to the reemergence of an anti-statist left-wing current in the mid-twentieth century in Europe and North America. First, a revolutionary working-class anarchism, emanating from the ideas of Michael Bakunin in the late nineteenth century, and developing towards an explicitly communist orientation. Second, a revolutionary Marxism, with its namesake Karl Marx as its founding intellectual figure, developing towards perspectives championing workers' councils and related forms of proletarian self-organisation as the appropriate tactical and organisational structures with which to transcend capital and the state.

In the introductory chapter, the various ways in which anarchism and Marxism have been presented as hostile or irreconcilable ideologies were problematised with reference to the dominant literature. In chapter 1, liberty and equality, as elaborated by Michael Bakunin and Karl Marx, were argued to be mutually reinforcing concepts at the very core of a libertarian communist politics – harmonising individual freedom with collective well-being. Prefigurative political practice, an internationalist perspective, and an anti-parliamentary outlook were argued to be other strategies and conceptual elements tied to an anti-capitalism premised on the state as an institution of class rule. Given this relation between the main targets of the libertarian communist critique – capital and the state – both mutualist economics, that would maintain small-scale ownership and market exchange, as well as reformist or revolutionary strategies for capturing state power were to be rejected. While the former failed to understand the inherently alienating and hierarchical nature of commodity production for market exchange, the latter would lead to class collaborationist compromise and the reemergence of class rule. The rapid rise and decline of the Paris Commune in 1871 provided a key moment where a rapprochement between Marx and Bakunin became possible. Both celebrated the short-lived insurrectionary Commune as a model for a post-capitalist, self-organised economy and polity, and Marx revised some of his previously held positions on the role of the state through the influence of this revolutionary situation.

As demonstrated in chapter 2, it was the radical labour movement in Chicago where the unity of Marx and Bakunin was preserved vis-à-vis the Paris Commune. The Commune, for proponents of what came to be known as the 'Chicago Idea', would be ushered in by militant unions that would provide both the organisational form conducive for class struggle and the general strike as well as the basic units of prefiguring a communist society defined by direct workers' control of the economy. These ideas were outlined, in part, in the *Pittsburgh Proclamation* of 1883. This was the founding document of the International Working People's Association, a political organisation that sought to unite revolutionaries in the United States. However, concessions were made to the more insurrectionary currents of the movement based in the East coast by the omission of any discussion of the role of labour unions in a radical social transformation. Insurrectionary anarchists, notably Johann Most, remained suspicious of labour union activity fearing that it would merely blunt the sharp edge of capitalist exploitation and could accommodate itself to the status quo.

That the Chicago Idea made reference to the ideas of Marx is of obvious interest. But these ideas were also defined against statist Lasallean electoralism as well as a challenge to market-oriented American individualist anarchism in the context of a broader shift in anarchist praxis favouring communist arrangements over collectivism. Libertarian communism, during this period, was a synonym for anarchist-communism, combining Bakuninist non-hierarchical organisational practices, Marxist economic theory and prescriptions for a communist society. May Day and the commemoration of the Haymarket Martyrs represents the worldwide cultural influence of the Chicago Idea and their ideas informed the nascent syndicalist movements of the 1890s. However, it was the 'revolutionary industrial unionism' of the American Industrial Workers of the World that carried these ideas into the twentieth-century and helped transmit them to a receptive audience of left-wing Marxists and Russian revolutionaries, among others.

If the boundaries between Marxism and anarchism were fairly porous through the late nineteenth-century both were also crystallising around social democracy, the dominant form of Marxist orthodoxy until 1914, and revolutionary syndicalism, one of the most visible mass expressions of anarchistic

ideas. As was demonstrated in chapter 3, the crisis provoked by the First World War redrew the parameters of radical Left praxis. Not only were various left-wing currents divided between pro-war and anti-war positions, but the Russian revolution introduced Leninism as a new challenger on the radical Left, which henceforth became the standard bearer of 'orthodox Marxism' for decades. The Makhnovists were examined in chapter 3 as the first serious challengers to Leninism in the Russian revolution, both in terms of their alternative conception of soviet power, based on federated and self-managed workers' councils, and in their guerilla campaigns launched against the Red Army. But equally important, and largely neglected in the scholarly literature, were the political ideas developed by Nestor Makhno, Piotr Arshinov, and other leading Makhnovists that were developed in exile after their ultimate defeat by Bolshevik forces. The Makhnovists, now grouped together around the journal *Dielo Truda* as the Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad set out to examine why anarchist social movements failed to realise their revolutionary objectives in Russia and the Ukraine. Their conclusions were summed up in a document entitled *The Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)*. The Platform, as it came to be known, was in essence an anarchist critique of Bolshevism-Leninism and a communist critique of anarchism, specifically, the individualist currents in the anarchist tradition. Anarchist social theory, they argued, was weakened by this individualist orientation that contributed to a lack of accountability and to disorganisation, and thus, defeat in the Russian revolution. Conceptually, class struggle was at the centre of their analysis, as was a socially and historically situated conception of humanity. Human emancipation would be advanced by social revolution towards a society in which material well-being would be guaranteed for all, providing the basis for individual liberty and free association. Humanistic philosophies which minimised class struggle or proposed ethical practices that would accommodate rather than challenge existing conditions were to be rejected. Platformists proposed a more tightly organised anarchist movement based around common principles and collective discipline. The anarchist social revolution, if it was to avoid the failure of the Russian revolution, would require considerable preparation in the pre-revolutionary period, organised interventions into social struggles, and work within mass

organisations that were not necessarily anarchist in order to build popular revolutionary consciousness. The Platform generated considerable controversy when it was published in 1926, and sparked debates within the anarchist milieu that arguably extend into the present day.

The Friends of Durruti (FoD) group came to similar conclusions, in the context of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution (1936-1939), outlined in a document entitled *Towards a Fresh Revolution.* This document was written shortly after the defeat of anarchist and other forces during the street fighting of the May Days of 1937, a moment, famously described by George Orwell, in which in effect signaled the end of the revolutionary period in Barcelona and the restoration of state power. Unlike the experience of the Makhnovists, Spain in this period had a well-organised mass anarcho-syndicalist labour union whose membership had successfully collectivised large segments of industry and agriculture and formed workers' militias to combat the fascist uprising. The key failure of the revolutionary movement, from the perspective of the FoD, was that it did not seize power in areas where they were a clear majority. Seizing power was defined by the FoD as the formation of a 'revolutionary junta,' composed of and directed by working-class organisations, which would suppress counter-revolutionary movements and direct the military effort against fascism. This policy, it was argued, would protect gains and deepen the revolution as well as boost the morale of the working class, crucial in the war effort. Indeed, the FoD originally formed to oppose the militarisation of the workers' militias, reorganised under the direction of the state, and the participation of the anarcho-syndicalist leadership in the Popular Front government. This collaboration on the part of anarchist leaders was argued to have helped neutralise dissent, by having anarchists as willing partners in the Popular Front, and to have provided the Republican state with sufficient time to reorganise and reassert state power in areas where it had all but disappeared. The aim was to curb the revolutionary tide which was as unpopular with with the Soviet Union, France, and England as it was with the fascist-backed forces.

The Platformist innovations to anarchist praxis came to be defined as libertarian communist. Indeed, the Platform was frequently translated as the *Organisational Platform of the Libertarian*

*Communists* from about the mid-1950s onwards. Contemporary neo-platformists, largely grouped around the international Anarkismo.net project, consider the FoD as part of their political lineage alongside contributions like George Fontenis' 1956 *Manifesto of Libertarian Communism* and the *especifismo* current of anarchism that developed in Uruguay in the 1950s.

This interpretation of libertarian communism has multiple similarities with the council communist tradition in Marxism that developed from the radical Luxemburgian left-wing of the German Social Democratic Party. As discussed in chapter 3, the councilist interpretation of the 'party' was as a grouping of militants dedicated to fostering workers' self-organisation, rather than as a group formed for the purpose of an electoral or revolutionary take-over of state power. The factory-level organisations created by council communists, modeled on organisational forms pioneered by the Chicago Idea and the IWW, were tasked with the expropriation of all productive assets and the operation of industry by workers' councils. The councilists, like the Platformists, were among the first to denounce the Soviet Union as a form of state capitalism. The 'proletarian dictatorship,' envisaged by the councilists was similar to that of the 'revolutionary junta' of the FoD, was to be a political form of direct workers' control that would suppress counter-revolution and be subordinate to the workers' councils. Indeed, the councilist formations that remained after the German revolution had been crushed – the most prominent being the American Group of Council Communists – celebrated the achievements of the Spanish anarchists. Drawing on the work of Rosa Luxemburg, their major contribution to libertarian communist theory, also revealed through their critique of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism, was that new social forms are forged through the revolutionary process. Unions and other pre-revolutionary mass organisations, formed in periods when the main objective was to improve working conditions within a capitalist framework, could become obstacles to furthering revolutionary aims if the bureaucracies and sectional interests from these periods remained. The main task, then, was for the division between economics and politics as separate spheres to be overcome through unified organs of working-class power in revolutionary periods. To maintain this division would also be to maintain the basis of bourgeois politics. The critique of the practice of forming 'popular fronts,' or

forming alliances with liberal and moderate socialist groups in order to defend liberal democracy as the only bastion against fascism, was another point of convergence between the councilsts and the FoD. The council communists developed an anti-bureaucratic conception of socialism that resembled Bakunin's warnings of the dangers of a ruling elite seizing power in the name of the working class, although it was later in the post-war period that councilists like Anton Pannekoek made this connection explicit.

The post-war period was a dark era for radical Left organisations. Not only had the war made effective radical organising impossible, but an anticipated revolutionary wave following the war – similar to the unrest that followed the Great War – failed to materialise. The new bipolar geo-political arrangement pitted the now expanded Soviet sphere of influence against the Western liberal democracies, with the looming threat of nuclear holocaust, further marginalised perspectives that regarded both as competing variants of state capitalism. In this era, historian George Woodcock had announced the death of the anarchist movement in Spain in 1939, and other radical groupings remained small and isolated. The 'New Left', and the antecedents of this burgeoning radical Left, however, challenged the Cold War 'end of history,' and in so doing, renewed the libertarian dimension of the socialist movement.

Unusually, perhaps, some of the earliest and most coherent exponents of this new radical Left emerged from the Trotskyist tradition, rather than from the remnants of pre-war anarchist or left Marxist groups. Chapter 4 discussed the trajectory of some of these dissident Trotskyist groups – from a Leninist position to what later came to be referred to as 'libertarian socialism'. The break with Trotskyism came as the result of differing interpretations of the Soviet Union. Was the legacy, however degenerated, of the October revolution and the gains made by the workers' and peasantry to be critically defended against Western imperialism? Or was the Soviet Union simply another form of state capitalism, and thus, a counter-revolutionary force in the international working-class movement? *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, the Johnson-Forest Tendency, and Solidarity maintained the latter of the two positions. The abolition of private property in the Soviet Union in the form of a nationalised economy

was not a sufficient definition of socialism. Other major problems were evident, including the managerial stratum that directed industry, Taylorist methods used to extract more surplus value from the work force, and in general, a lack of any meaningful mechanisms through which the working class could shape their destiny. Again, echoing the ideas of Bakunin, the primary antagonism not only in the Soviet sphere but also in the technocratic societies of the West was the division between directors and those who carried out orders. The Hungarian revolution on 1956, as well as disturbances in Poland and East Germany in 1953, not only seemed to confirm their critique, but importantly, it also placed workers' self-management firmly on the agenda. Direct workers' control represented the very essence of socialism, and as such, Leninist organisational forms were to be rejected for their division between professional cadres and the masses as much as for the results of their degenerated state capitalist revolutions. The implicit socialist consciousness of the working class as demonstrated in wildcat strikes, absenteeism, the struggles of blacks and other marginalised groups, and their autonomous nature were viewed as the kernels of the new society. These perspectives attracted the attention of surviving councilists, like Anton Pannekoek, and informed the libertarian praxis of New Left and post-1968 struggles – most famously in May 1968 in France and in the struggles of the Italian New Left between 1969 and 1977.

The linkages between the different tendencies discussed in this thesis have ranged from conscious borrowings from anarchist/libertarian and Marxist/communist ideas (as in the case of the Chicago Idea and the theory and practice of the Industrial Workers of the World), a less conscious adoption of common positions combined with non-sectarian collaboration (as with the Platformist and councilist elaboration of revolutionary political organisation), to a rearticulation of revolutionary Left praxis that set out to develop something new and, in so doing, aimed to transcend the categories of established socialist thought (*Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Correspondence, and Solidarity). However, three crucial points must be emphasized.

First, that these tendencies and analyses represent living political traditions, and as such, continued to develop after their original articulations (often maintaining their political identities as

'Marxist' or 'anarchist') but nonetheless expressed an openness to collaborate or dialogue with each other. This can be seen, for example, by the collaborations between Platformists and 'ultra-left' Marxist groups in the post-1968 period. The IWW has also provided an organisational home for those identifying with both Marxism and anarchism since its formation in 1905.

Second, it is evident through an examination of the ideas and practices of these movements that a 'final' or 'complete' break between the anarchist and Marxist traditions is strictly speaking impossible to locate. While Marx and Bakunin parted ways in the IWMA, anarchists participated for a time in the so-called 'Second International,' and the Chicago Idea as well as the smaller groupings of 'anti-state' or anarchist communists in Europe continued to draw on the ideas of both figures. As Left movements began to coalesce into the opposing 'orthodox Marxist' social democratic and revolutionary syndicalist camps in the early twentieth century, the deep crises provoked by the First World War and the Bolshevik (October) Revolution redrew the parameters of socialist thought. The revolutionary anti-parliamentary left-wing which emerged from the mass social struggles during this epoch, composed of both anarchist and Marxist elements, came to reject Bolshevism and the direction of the 'Third International' as well as reformist views within their own political traditions. With the period of de-Stalinisation and the fracturing of Soviet hegemony on the Left in the 1950s and 1960s, and again with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, political spaces were opened up in which these minority and dissident anarchisms and Marxisms could operate.

Third, the notion of a 'singular' 'Anarchism' or 'Marxism' is a political fiction – ahistorical and essentialist. While anarchism, in its various manifestations has ranged between individualistic, free-market capitalist doctrines, and insurrectionary and methods, it has also exhibited a left-wing dimension expressed through organised, mass-based labour and community organisations. Similarly, the revolutionary and reformist Marxisms are equally divided and multifarious. There is precious little in the way of similarity, for example, between Lenin's democratic centralism and the vision of anti-parliamentary workers' councils as articulated by the council communists. If we are to accept a division within the revolutionary Left between an 'authoritarian-statist' current and a 'libertarian-anti-

statist' tendency, then this division does not correspond to a split along anarchist/Marxist lines.

Although the interwoven 'black' and 'red' threads that this thesis has examined are only rather tenuously linked in an organisational sense – or in terms that would suggest the existence of a distinct continuous tradition – the arrangement of their main political concepts suggests a strong commonality which places them in a sphere between the extremes of individualism and anti-organisationalism, on the one hand, and rigid hierarchical control or authoritarian statism on the other. Conceptually, the groups and movements discussed in this thesis attempted to define a conception of communism controlled directly by the working-class through self-organised and self-managed social forms. This vision of a self-managed socialist economy and polity differed considerably from the versions advanced by social democracy and Leninism in that it placed no faith in the ability of state institutions to decree socialism by the capture of state power through revolutionary means or gradually through parliamentary mechanisms. Its avowed anti-capitalism also meant that any strategy advocating self-managed firms producing for market exchange was to be rejected as, at best, a half-way measure, and at worst, an economic form that could reproduce competitive tendencies. Their internationalism was as much a political project as it was a real expression of the exiled or stateless status of its main exponents or a reflection of their economically motivated migrations. Another notable commonality were the tensions between calls for specifically political organisations – the 'party' in Marxist terminology, although stripped of its electoralist or Leninist connotations, and the 'federation' or 'General Union of Anarchists' in anarchist jargon – and the opposing views that either political organisation was redundant (mass organisations being sufficient) or looser groupings were more acceptable or consistent. If the former risked recreating divisions between 'leaders' and 'led', the latter verged on a kind of spontaneism which implicitly espoused a deterministic and socially passive outlook – the belief that genuine social revolution could only emerge spontaneously from the antagonisms between labour and capital, and as such, any attempt to direct, coordinate, or make interventions in social movements were misguided or harmful.

The evolution of the term 'libertarian communism' is itself revealing. The term 'libertarian

communism' was first adopted in the 1880s as a synonym for 'anarchist communism'. This marked a shift in the economic theories of the international anarchist movement from collectivism, a socialised economy which would maintain wage labour, to communism, which would abolish wage labour and distribute all goods and services on the basis of need. Italian anarchist Carlo Cafiero, who wrote a popular summary of Karl Marx's *Capital*, was one of the key intellectual and activist figures responsible for this shift to communist ideas in the anarchist movement. Similarly, during this epoch in North America the 'communistic-anarchists', most famously associated with the struggle for the eight-hour work day and the Haymarket Affair in 1886, sharply distinguished their ideas from both individualist anarchism, which accepted private ownership and the market economy, and the parliamentary socialist parties. Labour unions were to be the prefigurative organs of revolutionary change, guided by the conviction that a consistent anarchism must be communist in economic outlook and that main function of the state was to perpetuate economic subjugation.

In the early twentieth-century, libertarian communism was explicitly adopted as the guiding principle of several social revolutionary mass movements in the early twentieth-century, most notably in the agricultural and industrial communes of the anarchist-Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine (1918-1921) and the anarchist labour unions, popular militias, and peasants' organisations during the Spanish Civil War and Revolution (1936-1939). Some of the critiques of the perceived shortcomings of these revolutions, such as the 1926 *Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)* and the 1938 *Towards a Fresh Revolution*, may be considered to be seminal yet controversial rearticulations of libertarian communist praxis during this period, presenting challenges to anarchist orthodoxy in the form of an attack on the principle of individualism.

Also in the post-war period, the term 'libertarian communism' (or sometimes 'libertarian socialism') has frequently been used to denote the intersection or convergence between left-wing Marxists and social anarchists. The contributions of the *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Johnson-Forest Tendency, and Solidarity groups were grouped together as libertarian socialist through their challenge of Leninist-Trotskyist orthodoxy and their celebration of workers' self-management and workers' councils as the

embodiment of socialism.

If we are to designate the currents examined in this thesis as exponents of a 'libertarian communist' politics – with convergence of anarchist and Marxist ideas and analyses as a defining feature – the essential outlines of this current have been elaborated less as a formal doctrinal system or tradition and more along the lines of common considerations and commitments formulated during periods of social, political, and economic crisis. This perhaps helps to explain the historical invisibility of movements, whose vitality and substance is intimately linked to revolutionary periods in history and the social forms created in such periods, and which have thus far failed to reshape and radically transform the Western body politic. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) are a notable exception. As a continuously existing radical labour organisation, primarily although by no means exclusively in North America, the IWW represents an important historical link to Chicago Idea ideology; the council communists, anarchist, and syndicalist organisations in the interwar period, and a source of inspiration for factions within the 'autonomist' and anti-parliamentary Left of the 1970s, and beyond, in Europe.

If we were to construct a theoretical conception of a libertarian communist politics – abstracted from historical specificities – the following picture emerges. Libertarian communism has a twofold character. It is at once a vision for a new, classless and stateless society – premised on the critique of capital and the state – as well as a set tactics and strategies regarded as being consistent with this vision. The libertarian communist vision is of a society composed of networked, self-regulating units in which production will be geared to satisfy human needs, rather than the subordinate to the dictates of production for market exchange. Common ownership of the means of production, as a core conceptual feature of socialism, is fleshed out to mean that organs of workers' self-organisation will administer the economy, rather than the state or self-managed firms operating in a free market framework. As was examined in the case studies, the models of self-organisation anticipated to prefigure communist society have varied and emerged as the result of the revolutionary process itself. The insurrectionary commune of Paris in 1871 was a source of inspiration for revolutionaries ranging

from Marx and Bakunin to the Haymarket martyrs and Lenin, all of whom in one way or another saw in it a model for a future society beyond the capitalist state. The labour union as an organ of day-to-day struggle for improved conditions as well as the basic unit of social reconstruction – as elaborated by proponents of the 'Chicago Idea', the Industrial Workers of the World, syndicalists, and others – similarly served not only as a model but also as a part of a strategy for realising communism. In the inter-war period, as well as in the post-war period, it was the workers' councils, or variants thereof, that for revolutionaries signified the embryonic form of the new society emerging from the shell of the old. Mass, collective action, rather than 'substitionist' acts by individuals or self-proclaimed vanguards, would be regarded as the only viable catalyst for revolution. Organisationally, specifically revolutionary political organisations are considered as necessary counterparts to mass, economic organisations of the working class. Since mass organisations will have less stringent membership criteria and thus represent broader elements in the working class – not only revolutionary tendencies – the role of the political organisation in pre-revolutionary periods is to group militants for the purpose of propaganda, agitation, and theoretical clarification in the task of encouraging self-organisation. In revolutionary periods, the great task is for the specifically political bodies to dissolve into mass organisations, and ultimately, for the distinction between politics and economics to disappear altogether. During these revolutionary periods, anticipated counter-revolutionary insubordination will be countered by the armed populace with the direction of all military matters by the various organs of working-class self-organisation.

Conceptually, liberty and equality are two mutually reinforcing ideas that are at the very core of a vision of libertarian communism. Liberty, decontested as 'free association', or the capacity of individuals self-organise in the absence of social constraints, is premised on the fact that under capitalist economic arrangements the working-class is compelled to sell its labour power. The classical liberal ‘formal’ economic ‘freedom’ to sell labour power in this view does not enhance free association, but rather, restricts it since the working class is deprived from the means of production and forced to enter into an inequitable, alienated, and exploitative relationship. Similarly, the ‘formal’

political ‘freedom’ to democratically elect political representatives is meaningless if democratic decision-making is not extended into the economy. Equality, then, is not encompassed in an abstract 'equality before the law', but rather, in the fair and equitable distribution of social wealth. The nation state, as the basic political unit and representative democracy (maintaining the division between the political and economic spheres) as the framework for decision-making, are viewed simply as class structures with the coercive power to enforce and perpetuate the rule of a privileged elite.

The goal of a stateless and classless society can be considered to a shared objective of a great many tendencies across the revolutionary socialist spectrum, the crucial difference, however, is in the timeline which in turn impacts appropriate strategies and tactics. Lenin for example in *The State and Revolution,* regarded as his most libertarian work, envisaged the gradual 'withering away of the state' when nationalised production would eventually give way to full communism as the necessary material and social preconditions had been realised. As Bakunin had theorised a generation earlier, temporary institutions have a tendency to become permanent and reproduce the very conditions that they set out to abolish. For libertarian communists, the means of struggle must as much as possible prefigure the desired ends.

In terms of areas for further historical research, there is a tremendous lack of scholarly work on the groups and movements discussed in this thesis. To proceed chronologically, lacking are comprehensive historical studies of the IWMA; the Central Labor Union in Chicago (which continued to exist until 1909), or more broadly, studies of the radical immigrant press during that period; and the IWW.[1] Common to all these movements are important primary source materials, in a variety of languages, that are relatively unknown and/or untranslated from their original languages. For example, James Guillaume's mammoth French-language, four-volume history of the International.[2] With the topic of the IWW specifically, treatments of the foreign-language locals and their press

[1] In 2002 Franklin Rosemont wrote that “Amazing, after all these years, there is still nothing even faintly resembling a comprehensive and reliable history of the union.” Franklin Rosemont, Joe Hill: The IWW & the Making of a Revolutionary Workingclass Counterculture (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 2003), 13.

[2] James Guillaume, *L'Internationale; documents et souvenirs (1864-1878)* (Paris: Société Nouvelle de Librarie et d'Édition, 1907).

represents a major lacuna that needs to be addressed. Research on the Russian-language section of the IWW, for example, has been almost totally neglected, and yet such work would shed light on the relationships between anarchism, revolutionary industrial unionism, and the exodus of Russian militants from North America to Imperial Russia in the early stages of the revolution. On that note, also lacking is a comprehensive study of the Platformist current of anarchist-communism. Here too are a plethora of primary sources, including the publication *Dielo Truda* in Paris and its successor, *Dielo Trouda-Probuzhdenie*, published in Chicago from 1939 to 1950 under the editorship of G.P. Maximoff. (That the IWW, exiled Russian revolutionaries, and council communists inhabited Chicago during this period is an interesting element.) The now declassified Communist Party of the Soviet Union files in Russia are another major source that might shed light on the activity and fate of activists and intellectuals such as Piotr Arshinov and other revolutionaries who returned to the Soviet Union after 1925. Also neglected are biographical treatments of some of the major figures in the councilist movement, especially Paul Mattick, Herman Gorter, and Otto Rühle. Other crucial and unknown studies have yet to be translated: for example, Wolodymyr Holota's unpublished 1975 PhD dissertation *Le Mouvement machnoviste ukrainien 1918-1921 et l'évolution de l'anarchisme européen à travers le débat sur la plate-forme 1926-1934* (The Ukrainian Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921 and the evolution of European anarchism through the debate on the platform 1926-1934), which is the best treatment of Makhnovism-Platformism; Hans Manfred Bock's account of the relationships between anarchist and left communist movements in the German Weimar Republic, *Syndikalismus und Linkscommunismus von 1918-1923: Zur Geschichte und Soziologie der Freien Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands (Syndikalisten), der Allgemeinen Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands und der Kommunistischen Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands* (Syndicalism and Left Communism from 1918-1923: On the History and Sociology of the Free Workers' Union of Germany – Syndicalist, the General Workers' Union of Germany and the Communist Workers Party of Germany); and Miquel Amarós' authoritative account of the Friends of Durruti group *La revolución traicionada: la verdadera historia de Balius y Los Amigos de Durruti* (The Revolution Betrayed: The True History of Balius and the Friends

of Durruti). Finally, lacking is a comprehensive account of the Correspondence group and its press, related groups in the Detroit area and internationally, and the groups that formed after this group split. Other areas of research that are sorely lacking are analyses of these trends outside of Europe and North America and analyses of 'libertarian communist' groups in the post-68 period.

Daniel Guérin, in his final years, emphasized the emergent character of libertarian communist thought as a living and evolving synthesis in a short essay from which this thesis takes its title. Guérin wrote that “Libertarian Communism is as yet only an approximation, and not a dogma of absolute truth” and that it would not be “a rationalisation of the past, but a rallying point for the future”; the future social revolution being libertarian, self-managing, and councilist.[3] Guérin passed away in April 1988, and did not live to witness the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reemergence of anti-capitalist activism in the late 1990s, events which he no doubt would have celebrated. His project for a libertarian communism remains relevant – perhaps even more so in the contemporary political climate – in the search for viable left-wing alternatives to capitalism and statism as well as in the ultimate objective of harmonising individual liberty with social equality. As a contemporary intellectual position and activist orientation, a libertarian communist political outlook is crucial for the questions that it can pose to movements of the Left: for example, what are the benefits and limitations of participation in the trade union movement, how should we orient ourselves to anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, and can various oppressions be reduced to capitalist economic exploitation? The challenge then is to create revolutionary political organisations capable of making interventions in mass movements while respecting the autonomy and internal dynamics of these movements. To recover the historical traditions of revolutionary left-wing thought, and build on them with reference to contemporary struggles as a part of creating a renewed anti-parliamentary Left oppositional pole, it is submitted, may provide perspectives critical to the social problems of our times and avenues contributing towards genuine human emancipation.

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[3] Daniel Guérin, *Towards a Libertarian Communism* (1988), available online: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/ws88_89/ws29_lib_communism.html (accessed October 8, 2010).

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