

Anarchism and American Labor

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An aged Italian-American Communist, whose memories reached back before the First World War, took me by surprise in defending the arch-anarchist and advocate of terrorism, Luigi Galleani, deported from the U.S. in 1919. "Galleani told people *how to live*," the old man emphasized, "and that was important."¹ This ethical, cultural aspect reached across the two men's differences about the state, the party and the role of unions. In some ways, one could say, practically nothing remained of anarchism in Europe (except in Spain) and the U.S. after 1910 but morality. Such an insight, however, threatens to hide a subtler truth. Anarchism put forward a distinctive world-view, non-determinist and even non-materialist, for the world revolutionary project. The Second International parliamentary triumphs, the Russian and Chinese Revolutions seemed to bear out the "scientific" hypotheses to different generations. But disillusionment with Marxist orthodoxy has recently been severe in East and West. History has not made a final statement upon Anarchist contributions.

We need most especially to reassess American working class anarchism, which has been regarded as a quaint sidelight on Emma Goldman's personality or (by the Right and much of the Socialist and Communist Left) a movement of mad bombers. As we are beginning—but only beginning—to learn from scholars, anarchists played a fundamental role in launching a modern labor movement among key groups. Among German craftsmen of the 1880s, Jewish clothing workers of the 1890s, Italian clothing and garment workers of the 1910s, anarchist and syndicalist militants had an importance all out of proportion to their numbers. Without them craft and industrial unionism might not have happened for another generation. Certainly it would have lacked the verve, the dynamic impulse toward universality, the poetic spirit they imparted.

Moreover, if Bolshevism captured the space to the left of the social democratic mainstream after 1920—and a not inconsiderable portion of the anarchists themselves for at least a crucial interval—it did not free itself of the contradictions in Marxist theory and practice that anarchism had earlier exposed. I will suggest in the following pages that syndicalist and anarchist themes have remained a hidden text, awaiting the unraveling of the political knot bound up in the Russian Revolution and the generations of Cold War that have followed.

I

James H. Billington's *Fire In the Eyes of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* is an unconscious tribute to the anarchist mentality.² Unconscious because the author himself does not realize the significance of at once celebrating millennialist thought as it emerged from the late eighteenth century, and then portraying Bolshevism as the greatest deceit of the twentieth century. The claim is patently anarchist, and the method Billington develops has been utilized earlier, with more clear-headedness if a great deal less detail. Rudolf Rocker's *Nationalism and Culture* (1936) defied the Marxist canon by locating the seeds of Anarchism, Nationalism, Socialism and Fascism in culture rather than in the relations of production.³ The greatest Yiddish literary scholar, immigrant American anarchist B. Rivkin, similarly located Jewish radicalism in the millennialist traditions passed from the prophets to the shtetl and awakened by industrial development.⁴ For several decades radical scholarship has been moving, if sometimes at a seemingly glacial pace, toward the kind of sensibility which can make use of abundant religious and quasi-religious symbolism expressed in revolutionary movements without vulgarizing either profane or sacred sectarianisms. Unfortunately, and despite nearly 700 pages of effort, Billington is not the one to see that job through.

Fire In the Eyes of Men "seeks to trace the origins of a faith—perhaps the faith of our time . . . the belief that a perfect secular order will emerge from the forcible overthrow of traditional authority." For Billington, this idea is "inherently implausible," but nevertheless it has managed to provide a driving force in nineteenth century Europe and the Third World of our century. With enormous patience and not a little pedantry, Billington traces the millennialist vision across the classic bourgeois and proletarian revolutions. He is always looking for the definitive origins of an idea or phrase, and he is too often satisfied to find some little group of fanatics who supplied the particular formulation. There is so much here that Billington becomes lost in the material, apparently unaware that the conclusions he tosses off have little novelty but only recapitulate stereotypes long exhausted by Bertram Wolfe or for that matter G.D.H. Cole. Fresh evidence is not enough.

Billington might have broken through the conceptual barrier separating us from an understanding of the revolutionary idea by carrying the anarchist logic to its origins and its implications. The key to a clearer understanding lies in a reinterpretation of the 1870s-90s when the anarchists framed their ideas against the ascending Marxist currents. By widening the context, we may follow this pattern to the fires Billington himself could not see.

Paramount is the observation that the contest between Marxism and Anarchism remained wide open until at least the 1890s, with many of the talented contestants themselves uncertain where their real allegiance lay. The evolving institutional strength of the Marxist parties, the anti-institutional character of the anarchists, tended naturally to telescope the process to its end results, much as official party and union histories have almost invariably stressed leaders and institutions. To peel back the layers, one must in a certain sense enter the mentality of the earlier era.

As the Communist historian G. M. Steckloff long ago made clear, the First International was at its inception not a Marxist body but rather a coalition with many ideological currents. Even at its most advanced stage, neither Marxists nor anarchists spoke absolutely for the majority of delegates, who must have seen the factional jockeying as many rank-and-filers perennially do (and not without justice), as a contest of intellectuals. The Paris Commune over-dramatized the significance of the International, which was at its practical best a fraternal gathering of mutually sympathetic trade unionists and labor radicals, and only symbolically a “spectre haunting Europe.” In thus dramatizing, the Commune raised the stakes too high; only a continuous revolutionary development and perhaps not even that could have held the movement together. The expulsion of the anarchists, the removal of the headquarters to the United States, was a *coup d'état* which left the victors with practically nothing but the charter. The victims, as they were to realize repeatedly thereafter, had little in common except a resentment against centralized leadership. After a few police-agent-ridden anarchist conclaves, the prospect for a “Black International” became a mere fancy.⁴

In a deeper sense, both sides had lost out to the recuperation of bourgeois society after the Commune. Marxism became increasingly captive to the parliamentarist opportunities opening up through increased manhood suffrage. Its philosophical kernel of dynamic change gave way to a fixed and scientific notion of victory by measured stages of European civilization. Anarchism went on the defensive as the ideology of the dispossessed without electoral hopes, the marginal and the enraged.

Along the road toward the stasis of the Second International, anarchists supplied much of the energy and no few of the insights for the severe challenges the bourgeois political, economic and cultural order received. For in speaking to the marginalized lumpen-intelligensia and unskilled, unorganized, often ethnic minority workers, the anarchists evoked a passionate response to the appeal for resistance against the ascending system. They elaborated a world-view by no means as comprehensive as Marxism, but bristling with acute warnings against the socialist illusions of the age. They also deeply influenced the great radical thinkers of every variety.

Recent literature permits a sideways glance at one of anarchism's truly mass manifestations, the German-American labor movement of the 1870s-80s. It is of the utmost significance that Germany, which had contributed so much to the anarchist origins by way of Hegelianism, Max Stirner's *Ego and Its Own*, and the early workers' movements, sent its anarchist currents to American shores. The paradoxical relation of repression and partial suffrage made the German Social Democracy the political cult of the 1880s, shadow government of the workers' movement. In the U.S., meanwhile, prejudice directed against German “Tramps” (so-named especially after the 1877 rioting), the brutality and chaos of conditions in the immigrant-heavy urban areas, the apparent futility of political action in a society where workers' votes had not seemed to have made any fundamental difference—all these made fertile ground for anarchist or “Revolutionary Socialist” activists. On their own, and

without any significant German influence, notable indigenous labor leaders of the early 1880s such as Burnette Haskell (who led the organization of west coast sailors) and Joseph Buchanan (whose Rocky Mountain Social League sent out syndicalist energies in all directions) declared the imperative of bringing together "the Red and the Black." Only a dynamic leadership seemed lacking.

Johann Most, biographical subject of Frederick Trautmann's *The Voice of Terror*, was the logical candidate.⁶ Victim of a terrifying childhood which left him mentally and physically scarred for life, frustrated thespian, Most was a man possessed. Notorious for assailing the patriotic legendry of the Franco-Prussian War, he also proved too much for German Social Democracy; given the cold shoulder by Marx and Engels, Most set out for the U.S. in the peak year of German immigration, 1882.

He soon got his constituency. Crowds turned out by the thousands to hear his rolling denunciations of authority, his promise to "stamp on ruling heads." Thomas Nast among a host of less-remembered cartoonists caricatured him, and the young, impressionable Emma Goldman took him to her bed. He made some 300 speeches in six months, establishing his personality if not necessarily his politics within the Left. In the aftermath of Haymarket, he was banned from speaking in most major cities, nervous even in New York lest the police entrap him (as they regularly attempted). He allowed himself to be indicted on a test case involving the deportation of anarchists, survived imprisonment and returned to Europe where he had lost political leadership once and for all. He came back to America a diminished man, still hounded by the newspapers but deserted by much of his old following. Once more imprisoned after Czolgosz' assassination of McKinley, Most barely managed to continue his organ, the *Freiheit*. He died in 1906 waiting to set out upon another speaking tour.

What had failed? Rudolf Rocker's early biography of Most and Max Nettlau's historical volumes on nineteenth century anarchism help us find the answer.⁷ The great tragedy of Most was that he desired to express a cultural vision of the world. He loved nothing more than occasional turns at the stage, and he may have written anarchist plays performed in "Little Paris," Chicago of the mid-1880s. Impelled toward politics and demagogy, he articulated his sentiments best as (in Rocker's phrase) "the Rabelais of the Proletariat," a savage humorist with reproductive and eliminative organs his metaphors. Trautmann preserves one example: Most was fond of saying that the stockmarket is like a toilet, with the difference that on the stockmarket the paper falls before the crash and in the toilet, the crash comes first.

In the dense subculture of Chicago *Deutschthum*, anarchists achieved the kind of infrastructure and institutional staying power they possessed in most other places only where they set down roots among the marginal and the illiterate, Spanish Andalusia or Mexico. They took over the radical network of German-language gymnasiums, singing societies, fraternal halls and free schools earlier established by free-thinkers and socialists, brought forth the most varied and powerful radical press (a daily, one cultural and one political weekly) an American working class sector

had yet seen. Their support of the eight-hour movement almost brought them to a national labor leadership.⁸

Sad to say, Most and the anarchist propaganda groups around the country missed the opportunity. Few of even the best-thinking German immigrants could appreciate the promise of a Knights of Labor organization whose leaders foreswore alcohol and talked about class reconciliation.⁹ The hard-line anarchists could hardly reconcile themselves to unions as such, even when their followers who took the opportunity of a lifetime to intervene in union struggles frequently rose to local leadership in a variety of German-heavy trades. An adaptation that might have more nearly foreshadowed the I.W.W., ranging immigrant ideologues alongside indigenous radical unionists, fell decisively short. What followed in 1886 in most quarters recapitulated the European drift toward craft unionism and social democracy, with the German-American AFL activists retreating to the safe haven of industrial issues and an indigenous political-propaganda insurgency inspiring visions of electoral challenge.

One might observe, more sympathetically, that the moment passed with a terrifying suddenness. Perhaps the bulk of revolutionary activists had hardly been in the country a half-dozen years gaining new experience and acclimating themselves when the Haymarket events and the repression that followed destroyed German leadership of American revolutionary labor forever. Immigrant radicals could hardly avoid a skepticism toward an indigenous labor movement which seemed to fade away overnight, and whose leaders showed no particular sympathy for the martyrs. No wonder survivors like Most saw themselves as pariahs, strangers in a strange land. No wonder anarchism almost retreated to nostalgia at this early date.

II

A different conjunction of cultural influences and immigration patterns gave the movement new life. In contemporary Europe the anarchist impact upon artists and spiritual rebels was far greater than historians have subsequently allowed. Tolstoy and Kropotkin issued a penetrating moral doctrine from Russia which had a profound impact on the radical intelligentsia. In Paris, the anarchists published brilliant literary journals with contributors like Anatole France, Guy DeMaupassant and Alfred Jarry, and Sara Bernhardt as Nora in "The Doll's House" became a veritable anarchist provocation. Dutch Socialists, who never agreed with the Marxist exclusionary mentality, touched young aesthetes like Herman Gorter and converted them into theorists of spontaneous workers' action. Even in Germany where the Social Democrats stood supreme, anarchist intellectuals like Gustav Landauer had enough following to threaten the philosophical confidence of materialist philosophy and the patient waiting game of the mainstream Socialist leaders.¹⁰

Britain, as so often, provided a vital link with resurgent American anarchism. William Morris, always suspect in the eyes of Marx and Engels, set forth a doctrine and a personal practice of openness which challenged Marxist exclusivity, even when he felt uncomfortable with doctrinaire anarchists themselves. The circles

around his *Commonweal* saw Socialism as a redefinition of life, perhaps even more than an economic doctrine. Perhaps none felt this influence as anarchist impetus more than Jewish workers, miserable in their London poverty, a culturally insular community outside the trade union pale. Morris Winchevsky, the founder of Yiddish Socialist journalism, shaped his paper, the *Arbeter Fraind*, largely along the lines of *Commonweal*. And the *Fraind*, in turn, passed by the late 1890s into the hands of the great anarchist intellectual spirit, Rudolf Rocker.

As William Fishman's little-appreciated work *Jewish Radicals*, has shown best, Rocker rapidly became a cultural guru to the radicalized Jewish workers. On pitifully small resources, he published Yiddish anarchism's first cultural magazine, *Germinal*, where by the early years of the present century he elaborated his critique of Marxist logic. "My innermost conviction," he was to recall of those days, "was that Anarchism was not to be conceived as a definite closed system, nor as a future millennium, but only as a particular trend in the historical development towards freedom in all fields of thought and action, and that no strict and unalterable lines could, therefore, be laid down for it." This was Enlightenment philosophy applied to the proletarian era. Its practical implications (rendered into doctrine by Landauer, working along the same lines) entailed a sense of the revolution being made every day, in every life, rather than being postponed for some future eventuality. But this was no mere middle-class ethical culture. When London's slum proletariat rose to action in the mass strikes of 1906, Rocker's friends and not the trade unionist regulars (or Socialist parliamentarians) guided the struggle toward its fullest potentialities.¹¹

The doctrines of Rocker in London set the path for Jewish anarchists in the U.S. From the late 1880s through the mid-1890s, the anarchists bid fair to take the leadership of Yiddish-language radicalism. Their press carried some of the great poetic voices of the ghetto. A handful of their sympathizers became foremost leaders in the early garment unions. When the unions disintegrated amid factional warfare and deep economic recession, the anarchists faced up to their difficult situation and made a decisive choice. Henceforth they would conduct themselves within the ranks of socialists and unionists as an educational force, the voice of freedom that Rocker's philosophy apotheosized. The weekly *Freie Arbeter Shtimme*, revived by Sh. Yanovsky who had been stamped by the London interregnum, because in time the foremost publisher of "free" (undidactic) radical poetry and undogmatic and far-ranging cultural interpretations by B. Rivkin and others, as well as the publishing bookhouse and popularizer for Rocker and Landauer when these thinkers had been almost entirely forgotten elsewhere. Anarchism had, through the paper and the circle of trade unionists and fraternal activist who supported it, accepted a narrower gauge of political possibility: the preservation of their ideas for an unforeseeable future.¹²

There are two more moments of modern anarchism in the Western labor movement, one actual and one ideological. The mass strikes just prior to the first World War posed in a practical way the final opportunity for intervention and leadership. The Russian Revolution posed the faith of the anarchists that Social

Democracy's failure would bring some radical breakthrough alongside and against the reality of Bolshevism, major contender to parliamentarism over the next half-century.

Across Europe and in the United States, syndicalists elaborated their themes of mass action as the inevitable outcome of the great strikes and as the only cure for the approaching war. Gorter, by this time the outstanding poet and literary critic in Holland, looked back with bitterness upon the scene:

There were workers of all lands busy with their fine plans drawn up for them by the reformists. With their national insurance and taxation proposals and electoral legislation and the pensions that the liberals were to help them obtain. What was not done to achieve even the least step forward! Socialists became ministers, pacts were formed with liberals, social democracy crawled in the dirt, toned down its own campaigns, drove the marxists out!

Everywhere was seething with small-scale activity. Like little gnomes, thousands of members of parliament busied about their work; and the masses, in their millions, waited expectantly.

And what was approaching? Downfall, death . . . the revisionists had promised reforms for the present. Reform came: death . . . The revisionists promised the workers democracy; equality was to come. It came, in the equality of death: for capitalists and workers are truly equal in death. The revisionists promised universal suffrage if the masses would only trust the liberals. The liberals granted the workers suffrage: in death! The dead, the thousands of dead workers, raised their voices in protest . . .¹³

Rhetoric about "revisionists" aside, Gorter's plaint (as well as his lyrical aspirations) properly placed him within the anarchist fold. Like other syndicalists, he no longer believed in History as social evolution; reality had battered every vestige of faith in the certainty of a hopeful outcome.

In the United States, immigrant radical leaders especially in the Italian sector embraced a similar neo-romantic perspective. The prophetic phrases of Arturo Giovannitti, poet-philosopher and editor of the Italian Socialist Federation's *Il Proletario*, rang with anarchist ideals; the picturesque agitators, Luigi Galleani and Carlo Tresca (who remained on the scene until his assassination in 1943) avowed anarchism outright. Like the militants of the 1880s, they saw their time come and pass quickly. By the end of the War, the radicalization of mainstream unions had bypassed the I.W.W. Italian-American syndicalism and became, like the Jewish Anarchist movement before it, an appendage to the mainstream trade union movement, a moral and educational force based upon the power of a few personalities and the resonance of fading traditions.¹⁴

III

Russia reposed the whole question of anarchists' relations with other radical and labor movements. This was not because of any substantial, continuous Russian rivalry between anarchists, Bolsheviks and other political aspirants. Indeed, perhaps the most telling revelation in the histories of Russian anarchism is the youth of the cadre in the 1917 insurrectionary days. A profound, widespread anarchist sentiment obviously grew out of the crisis and lasted only until the Bolsheviks in government co-opted or repressed their left-wing critics.

Peter Arshinov's *History of the Makhnovist Movement, 1918-1921* and Voline's *The Unknown Revolution*, both reviewed earlier in ILWCH's pages, make available once more the evidence that anarchists have offered up in Yiddish and other languages about the "revolution."¹⁵ The silence on the other side—in English at any rate—has been deafening. No scholar will ever settle the question of which side's retributions and terrorist tactics were least humane, who most roused anti-Semitism or most effectively tried to quell it, and so forth. Neither will anyone ever "objectively" determine the appropriate use of force in a civil war atmosphere with the countryside full of actual saboteurs and the new administrative apparatus full of opportunists. But one thing is sure. The kind of creative power that Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* (along with every standard Stalinist account) granted the Vanguard, pulling the masses out of ignorance and apathy straight into revolutionary consciousness, has been decisively shown to be a drastic overstatement. Local movements, as we have learned from social history in general, begin generally out of immediate experience, on their own accord even when aided by some larger inspiration; their strength and their weakness is their provincialism. Non-Bolshevik soviets, publications, committees flourished, often with a freer and more egalitarian atmosphere than ordinary people could expect anywhere in post-1921 Russia. Before the Communists repressed, they co-opted.

No texts that I know have followed out the implications worldwide, and sought to show the ways in which Communist programs actually took over slogans and activities that anarchists had begun, depriving the older movement of breathing space.¹⁶ Certainly the Comintern stole the appeal of the anarchists toward the non-industrialized, non-Western world; to various degrees in Italy, the Iberian peninsula and Latin America, the insurrectionary strategies and egalitarian slogans disappeared into Communist political and ideological functions. They certainly did not disappear without a trace in the Communist movements themselves, and this remains an important matter for historical investigation. If at some later point—as the present in Latin America—the Communist orthodoxy is displaced by yet other millenarian tendencies tinged by overtly religious sentiments, the revolution will have come full circle from the anarchists' expropriation of religious utopias. And Communism, which for more than a half-century combined diverse strains in itself, will finally have completed its fragmentation into disparate segments!¹⁷

So long as the Russian hegemony survived in the Left, defections spawned by the retreat of the revolutionary forces and the subsequent shifts in Communist

positions remained in a kind of ideological suspension. Skeins of what would have been Anarchism or Syndicalism in another time took on the appearance of Communist heresies. In this extraordinary turn of events, dissident activists and ideologues continued using apparently unaltered Leninist logic to defend local political or trade union autonomy against Communist party interference, or again they themselves grafted a Bolshevik centralized leadership model overtop otherwise indigenous de-centralized tendencies. Mixed in with this confusion were an erstwhile social-democratic emphasis upon alliances with existing union leaders and a healthy respect for America's "exceptional" capitalism, creating a nightmare for the intellectual historian. Still, if the threads are pulled patiently they come out one by one.

So we find in the heretofore least analyzed, least understood "deviation" from the Comintern, the "Right Opposition." Internationally, this current can be traced to Bukharin and his strategy of a kind of free-market socialism within the Soviet Union; the national corollary, a kind of patience for Capitalism to expose its own weaknesses, might be taken as a social democratic current within Communism. Such were the charges in the 1920s, in Russia, Germany and the U.S.A. But things were not so simple. In New York, the very garment locals that became havens for aging anarchists brought "Lovestoneites" to power. Sheer coincidence?

Not really. In Bertram D. Wolfe's long-awaited autobiography, *A Life in Two Centuries*, and in the monographic *The Right Opposition: The Lovestoneites and the International Communist Opposition of the 1930s*, by Robert J. Alexander interpretive clues are gradually teased out for the close reader.¹⁸ To get to the message, it is necessary to wade through an enormous amount, respectively, of incidental reminiscence and exegetical detail, both colored by a post-hoc doctrinaire anti-Communism. We rehearse the painful story of Stalin's intervention to overturn the American party leadership, his ordered expulsion of some talented leaders and trade union functionaries for their disloyalty, and their attempts over the course of almost a decade to gain their way back into the fold. Alexander's is a thin intellectual account, giving us almost no sense of who the several hundred Lovestoneites really were, or how they conducted themselves on a week-to-week basis. Wolfe tells us a little, mainly from the viewpoint of an erstwhile professional revolutionist who increasingly regarded himself as an intellectual working in agreement with Bolsheviks rather than under their discipline. Neither book explains how most of the Lovestone leadership ultimately became catspaws of the ILGWU's anti-CIO sentiment and of the CIA's labor foreign policy. This conundrum is, in fact, part of a mysterious inability of most anarchist, quasi-syndicalist and other currents to the left of the Communist parties—at least until the appearance of the New Left and Maoism—to come to grips with the social crisis of the Third World and the narrow choices that this crisis allows. Somehow, the original strength of nineteenth century anarchism's became its heirs' great weakness. A better history would have made Lovestoneism the very touchstone of that weakness.

Still, Wolfe tells a very engaging tale about at least parts of the odyssey. He explains how, as a young intellectual in Brownsville and in the Rand School, he chafed at insufficient Socialist militance on the War issue and with John Reed wrote

the “Left-Wing Manifesto.” “Until the Russians made us adherents of Soviets and Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” he recalls, “*mass action* was our touchstone to separate the true revolutionist from the false.” Wolfe lived through the subsequent factionalism and repression by moving under an alias to San Francisco, where he helped piece together a most remarkable local movement. By 1922, when the Bay Area Workers’ Party helped put forward an independent labor ticket, it had abandoned radical infighting to the point where it supported an SLP activist for mayor. “We were regarded as a legitimate part of the organized labor movement, and had already worked out for ourselves a prolabor united front, not as a maneuver, but as an expression of the way we felt . . .” Wolfe thinks that a series of local studies of the early Communists, largely out of day-to-day touch with their national officers, would reveal similar tendencies elsewhere. Certainly there are rambunctious hints in the few scraps of evidence we have, like the paper *Truth* in Duluth, Minnesota, which published its resistance to Comintern directives. These people, for all their enthusiasm about the New Russia, were the “honest socialists” who thought of the Communist movement as a fresh attempt for a better, but unsectarian, educational, electoral and recreational practice. The Yiddish Communists, who called their paper *Freiheit* (a name previously reserved for anarchist publications) certainly wanted the same kind of open atmosphere, socialism cleansed of its opportunism, its stuffiness and its bureaucracy.

Wolfe and his fellow thinkers got something very different. His attempts to establish a Rand School-like Workers’ School in New York during the mid and late twenties, briefly successful, were crushed from within. At the end of a series of Russian misadventures he found himself and a few others courageously defying Stalin before the Third International’s representatives. And he found himself with comrades he describes as essentially trade unionist, anarchist, pacifist, intellectualist, trying to establish a democratic opposition based upon the unique conditions of American history, life and culture. The organization, known under a variety of names during the ’thirties, never had much following outside New York. But through the skills of Wolfe, Will Herberg and a handful of others, they turned out a very respectable weekly with the highest intellectual quality of any Leninist sheet. Wolfe, meanwhile, gained his first notoriety as publicist for a Free Art—specifically, the murals of Diego Rivera, commissioned for American buildings and then threatened with destruction because of their ideological content. In one of his last shots before retiring from radical ranks entirely, Wolfe ardently supported the formation of the free artists’ movement, FIARI, by Andre Breton and Leon Trotsky. He even wrote a science fiction novel! Meantime, he sought to think his way out of the confusion that found Communists (by this time leaning ever-rightward from the Popular Front toward the Wartime United Front) usurping every revolutionary position and nearly every young person interested in radicalism.

His movement, meanwhile, had come more and more to recapitulate the evolution of those nineteenth century anarchists like Dyer D. Lum, Frank Foster and a handful of Yiddish ideologues who ended as champions of the labor bureaucracy. This was not a marginal phenomenon. Lum, it may be remembered, was

Albert Parsons' successor at the *Alarm*; Sh. Yanofsky went from the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* to the *Forward* and the Yiddish-language ILGWU paper, *Gerechtheit*. By virtue of their initial determination to stay within the clothing unions, the Lovestoneites (along with the Yiddish anarchists) became a loyal opposition to David Dubinsky's leadership. The more they were troubled by Communist re-entry and opposition, the more loyal they became. For his part, Dubinsky gladly ceded autonomy over Local 22, the largest unit (and before the CIO, the largest union local in the entire country) to Lovestone's lieutenant, Charles Zimmerman, one-time Communist darling of the trade, and used to take out personal advertisements in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* hailing Rocker's contributions to labor. When the ILGWU returned from the CIO to the AFL, the sympathies of these left sectors followed. By the close of the 'thirties, Lovestone himself had come to declare "Everything in and through the unions," a genuine if distorted syndicalist position.²⁰

It is one of the grand ironies of American Communist history that the Lovestoneites, who engineered Homer Martin's bid for UAW leadership and his withdrawal of a conservative auto faction into an AFL union, were in ideological competition with both a Unity Caucus, led by Communist Wyndham Mortimer and the Socialist-inclined Reuther brothers, and a Trotskyist grouping which plumped for the spontaneous militance of the rank-and-file. The full range of Left attitudes toward unions had been thus recapitulated within a single Leninist tradition, however hostile its various parts had become by this time. Thirty years earlier a similar line-up would have shown ex-anarchists and house anarchists supporting AFL middle-of-the-roaders, political Socialists backing the industrial unionists left of the AFL, and the revolutionary socialists supporting Wobblies. But like the SDS convention of 1969, the 'thirties found all the claims couched in Leninist vocabularies. During the same 'thirties the Minneapolis Trotskyists had, to Trotsky's discomfiture, accommodated themselves with the AFL regulars in a very trade unionist fashion, against the more politicized CIO. And in the Wartime era to follow, the militant "Third Camp" Trotskyists of the American Workers Party supported every initiative of unionists (including some very racist leaderships) to resist the joint appeal of the government and the Communists for discipline in the War effort. And so on and on it goes, not inherently illogical in a certain wide perspective, but argued out in terms which have no necessary bearing to the issues at hand.²¹

All these years, the dissidents had sought to destroy the Communist regulars' hegemony over membership and influence. They had been disappointed times without end by the disappearance of the disillusioned Communist individual from political activity (especially Leninist political activity) altogether. After the initial split-off, Trotskyist, Lovestoneite and for that matter other non-CP groupings gathered their members among neighborhood pals, union and intellectual contacts rather than from sophisticated political ranks. Likewise, they could never do much more intellectually than formulate a platform of opposition. Beyond occasional essays, one finds no treatises that make for worthwhile reading today and no pattern of success except at the local level. (Wolfe's complaint that the Communists disrupted every Lovestoneite success begs the question; America is a big country west of the Hud-

son, with thousands of industrial communities where Communists had minimal impact.) Part of the answer is to be found in the Communist move into the Popular Front, which allowed the Party to absorb the idealism, anti-Fascism, and anti-racism alive in the society of the 1930s-40s. Another part seems to lie in the inability of non-Communist party radicals to confront the impact of 1917 on the whole revolutionary tradition. After 1917 the revolutionary movement had two poles with no choices in-between, no room at all (outside the marginal anarchist and pacifist currents) for the objections and moral imperatives that anarchism had once represented. In a curious way, the New Left which arose out of the weakening of that bi-polar hegemony also failed to confront 1917, even as it reassimilated much of anarchist style and rhetoric. For the 1960s anyway, only the old language had been bypassed, the old logic had not been overruled.

Fire in the Eyes of Men is right, then, to have seen the Russian Revolution as the turning point in the revolutionary faith. But the story which follows is not simple—and it is not over. If the Third World proved the victory of Leninism over its erstwhile revolutionary competitors, that victory might yet be pyrrhic. Consider for instance the last prominent revolutionary poet to occupy the Cultural Ministry of a revolutionary state—Gustav Landauer, who presided in the Bavarian republic until assassinated by forces approved by the German Social Democracy. Landauer's successor is Ernesto Cardenal, Nicaraguan poet, priest, and author of works hailing the character of society before the rise of the state, apotheosizing the Native Americans' oneness with Nature as the essence of the newer revolutionary quest. Anarchism? Whatever the words used, Christian, Communist or some other, Cardenal is closer to Rocker than he is to Lenin, and perhaps closer to Landauer than to either of these. Cardenal is, above all things and like the notorious terrorist Luigi Galleani, determined to help people find how to live as revolutionaries in a class society. This would make him an anarchist if his every other statement pointed otherwise.²² Perhaps, in time, this anarchist spirit will return to American labor by way of the Third World and its people, our newest immigrant workforce. Perhaps the Farm Workers' patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe, was a symbol of a radicalism socially broader and deeper than any in the U.S. since the break-up of the blue-collar inner-city neighborhoods of white ethnics, the disintegration of solidarity into individualism and the decline of Marxism into sectarianism. Whatever the self-designation used, it will embody an anarchist spirit.

So anarchism has not died. Nor have historians yet comprehended the interregnum which separates its "Golden Years" from our own time. If the two stand related, if we are now at the point where the bi-polar hegemony comes apart, then we should have a new perspective on its past.

NOTES

1. Tape with Luigi Nardella, Cranston, R.I., 1977. Archives of the Oral History of the American Left, Tamiment Library, NYU.
2. *Fire in the Eyes of Men* (New York, 1980).
3. *Nationalism and Culture*. 1978 Edition, published by Michael E. Coughlin, 1985 Selby Ave., St. Paul, MN, 55104.
4. For instance, B. Rivkin, *Grunt-Tendentsen fun der Yidisher Literatur in Amerika* (New York, 1948).
5. G.M. Stekloff, *History of the First International*, tr. Eden and Cedar Paul (London, 1928).
6. *The Voice of Terror: A Biography of Johann Most* (Westport, 1980).
7. Rudolf Rocker, *Johann Most : Das Leben eines Rebellen* (Berlin, 1924).
8. See, e.g., Bruce C. Nelson, "Counting Anarchists," Chicago Project Conference, Chicago, 1981, to be published in a book of collected essays, edited by Hartmut Keil and John Jentz.
9. See, e.g., my essay, "Knights and Socialists," from the Knights of Labor Symposium, 1981, to be published in a book edited by Jonathon Garlock.
10. One of the most interesting memoirs about this period is Rudolf Rocker's *In Shturem*, tr. I. Birnboim (Buenos Aires, 1952).
11. William J. Fishman, *Jewish Radicals: From Czarist Shtetl to London Ghetto* (N.Y., 1974).
12. For Yiddish readers, there are substantial, hardly-used sources: B.I. Bialosotzki, ed., *Dud Edelshtot Gedenk-Bukh* (Los Angeles, 1952), a large compendium about the great poet of the early movement; Joseph Cohen's autobiography, *Di Yidishe Anarkhistische Bevegung in Amerika* (Philadelphia, 1945), now being translated by Esther Dolgoff; Sh. Yanofsky's autobiography, *Ershte Yorn fun Yidishe Frayhavylekhn Sotsianism* (New York, 1948); and Aba Gordin, *Sh. Yanofsky. Zayn Leben. Zayn Shafn* (Los Angeles, 1957).
13. "The Origins of Nationalism in the Proletariat," in *Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism*, ed. and introduced by D.A. Smart (London, 1978), 90-91.
14. Sources here remain especially scanty, outside the primary and still scarcely used ones: Galleani's *Cronaca Sovversiva*, Giovannitti's *Il Proletario*, Tresca's *Il Martello*, among others, all available at the Immigration History Research Center, St. Paul, Minnesota. Occasional essays have been published in *La Parola del Popolo*, last of the inheritors to the Italian immigrant radicalism. See my preliminary effort, "Italian-American Radicals and the Labor Movement, 1905-1930," *Radical History Review*, 17 (1978).
15. The former translated by Lorraine and Fredy Perlman, the latter by Holly Cantine and Fredy Perlman, both published by the Perlman's press, Detroit: Black and Red, 1974. Available from Box 9546, Detroit, MI 48202. And see the earlier work in ILWCH: Martin Miller's fine essay, "Anarchism vs. Marxism in the Russian Revolution. A Review of Recent Literature," *ILWCH*, 9 (May, 1976), 28-37.
16. Ahrne Thorne, the final editor of the *Freie Arbeiter Shtimme*, made this point to me.
17. A single vivid text by a foremost ideologist of Liberation Theology: Jose Miranda's *Communism in the Bible*, tr. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, 1982).
18. Bertram D. Wolfe, *A Life in Two Centuries* (Briarcliff Manor, N.Y., 1981); Robert J. Alexander, *The Right Opposition* (Westport, 1981).
19. My comment on Yiddish communists in "Jews and American Communism: The Cultural Question," *Radical History Review*, 23 (1981). Unfortunately, outside some work done on California, little study has been given to the early Communist movement's local activities; periodicals like the *Truth*, edited by a former Christian Socialist minister, remain virtually unexplored.
20. *Workers Age* (New York), Mar. 26, 1938.

21. CLR James has repeatedly insisted that his own perspective, breaking free of all vanguard conceptions to release the spontaneous capacity of the working class, cannot recapitulate anarchism or syndicalism because these formations represented an earlier stage of production. This is a point well-taken, and not explored here; but I am convinced that the post-vanguard view actually reiterates key insights of anarchism and syndicalism at a higher level. See my essay on James, "Marxism in the U.S.A.," in *CLR James: His Life and Work*, published as *Urgent Tasks*, 12 (1981).

22. See Cardenal, ed., *The Gospel in Solentiname, III*, tr. Donald Walsh (Maryknoll, 1979); or his *Homage to the American Indians*, tr. Monique & Carlos Altshul (Baltimore, 1973).