

## Editorial

Here *The Raven* comes again, both wings now flapping slowly but strongly.

As you see, we have yet another new cover design, this time by Clifford Harper. It incorporates his illustration to one of Kenneth Rexroth's poems from *A Bestiary*, and another eight of them appear on the following pages. Incidentally, this series contains not seventeen but twenty-six items, so there are nine more to come in a future issue. The first batch won universal approval from our readers, and no doubt the second and third will too. We hope that the whole work will soon be made available separately.

Then we have a long and important article by George Woodcock. This was first published last year in the Canadian anarchist-feminist magazine *Kick It Over*, but there it appeared in two parts back to front; here it appears in one part and in the right order. We are glad to give it wider circulation on this side of the Atlantic, and we look forward to further contributions from this indefatigable veteran.

Then there is another piece of biographical detective work by Heiner Becker, this time into one of the obscurest and strangest people who ever played a significant part in the history of anarchism — the so-called Dr Edward Nathan-Ganz, who suddenly appeared in 1880 and just as suddenly disappeared in 1882. He has long been known as a mysterious figure who did serious damage to the anarchist movement during its formative period a century ago, and he now emerges as a recognisable personality, a remarkable adventurer and crook, though many of the details remain mysterious.

Then there is another article by Brian Richardson, this time not so much a general discussion of 'what is wrong with modern architecture' as a specific description of a particular example of 'architecture for all', a recent episode in London in which libertarian theory and practice were successfully applied to the housing problem on a small scale in a single place, even in our bureaucratic and hierarchical society. Let us hope that self-building becomes as common in the coming decades as squatting did two decades ago, and that self-management and direct action and mutual aid continue to spread in the world of housing and planning.

Then there is a conversation with Nellie Dick, one of the last survivors of the old Jewish movement in the East End of London, who talks about her particular contribution to the libertarian schools there, and who is introduced by one of the busiest historians of popular anarchism in Britain. On the back of the centenary issue of *Freedom*, two years ago, there was an illustration of an invitation card to the 25th anniversary party for *Freedom*; Nellie, then a girl of 18, was one of the speakers there, though she no longer remembers the occasion. When we spoke to her ourselves, at the time of the 100th anniversary, she was full of life and fun. One remark we particularly appreciated was when she said she wouldn't call herself an anarchist because she rejected all labels.

Then there is an article by Peter Gibson on the relevance of modern biology to anarchist ideas about human nature. Of course Peter Kropotkin discussed this important subject at considerable length, but a lot has happened in biology since *Mutual Aid* was written nearly a century ago. It is essential for us to keep in touch with recent developments, and it is good to get a fresh look at the issues from someone who has an anarchist background but isn't trapped by the anarchist past.

Then there are a couple of classic contributions to anarchist thought by one of its founders more than a century ago, Carlo Cafiero. They have been hard to find in English but are still worth reading for the light they throw on some of the central ideas which originally made up the anarchist ideology.

Then there is a review by Denis Pym of a book on technology recently published by the Freedom Press. We are very grateful to have this stimulating and challenging article, but we must admit to disagreement with some of its points. In particular, it seems strange to have such a total condemnation of rationality and literacy and technology in a carefully considered and written review in a printed periodical of a printed book, all produced and distributed by the latest forms of the most sophisticated technology available and intended to be read and carefully considered by all those into hands we hope it falls!

We much regret that in *The Raven* 5 Caroline Robertson's name was misspelt in the running headlines over her article on Victor B. Neuburg, as a result of an error at a late stage of production.



### Aardvark

The man who found the aardvark  
Was laughed out of the meeting  
Of the Dutch Academy.  
Nobody would believe him.  
The aardvark had its revenge –  
It returned in dreams, in smoke,  
In anonymous letters.  
One day somebody found out  
It was in Hieronymus  
Bosch all the time. From there it  
Had sneaked off to Africa.



### Cow

The contented cow gives milk.  
When they ask, 'Do you give milk?  
As they surely will, say 'No.'



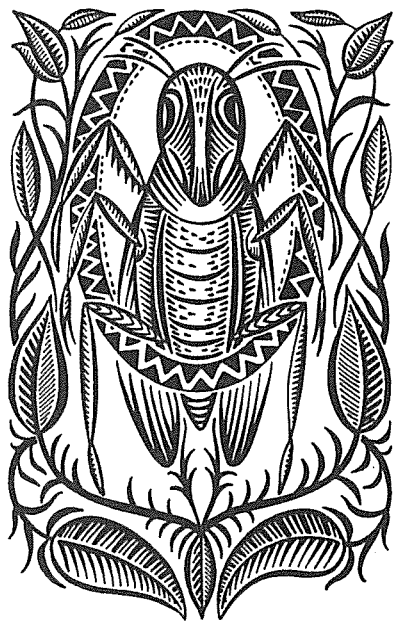
### Eagle

The eagle is very proud.  
He stays alone, by himself,  
Up in the top of the sky.  
Only brave men find his home.  
Few telescopes are sharper  
Than his eyes. I think it's fine  
To be proud, but remember  
That all the rest goes with it.  
There is another kind of  
Eagle on flags and money.



### Herring

The herring is prolific.  
There are plenty of herrings.  
Some herrings are eaten raw.  
Many are dried and pickled.  
But most are used for manure.  
See if you can apply this  
To your history lessons.



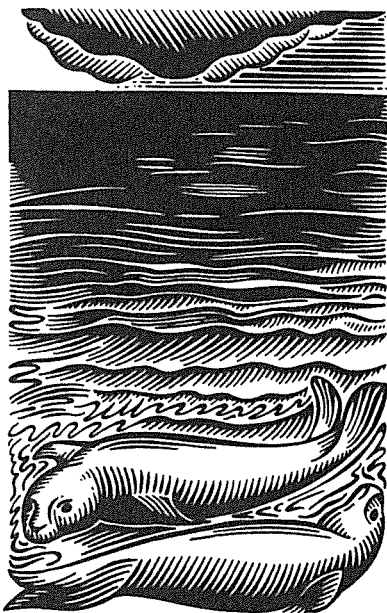
### Mantis

In South Africa, among  
The Bushmen, the mantis is  
A god. A predatory  
And cannibalistic bug,  
But one of the nicer gods.



### Raccoon

The raccoon wears a black mask  
And he washes everything  
Before he eats it. If you  
Give him a cube of sugar,  
He'll wash it away and weep.  
Some of life's sweetest pleasures  
Can be enjoyed only if  
You don't mind a little dirt.  
Here a false face won't help you.



### Seal

The seal when in water  
Is a slippery customer  
To catch. But when he makes love  
He goes on dry land and men  
Kill him with clubs.  
To have a happy love life,  
Control your environment.



### Vulture

St. Thomas Aquinas thought  
That vultures were lesbians  
And fertilized by the wind.  
If you seek the facts of life,  
Papist intellectuals  
Can be very misleading.

\* \* \*

## George Woodcock

### Tradition and Revolution

From the beginning it has been one of the commonplaces of anarchist thought that men and women are naturally social; that left to themselves people will develop voluntary associations to meet their social, economic and cultural needs; and that if these needs are met there are no strictly political needs that go beyond them, since freely organised institutions would make government as we know it, with its rigid laws and systems and bureaucracies, entirely unnecessary. Human societies, the theory goes, took a wrong turn long ago, about the time human beings shifted from a simple tribal or early urban communities, with their folk moots and their citizens' assemblies organising everything from below by direct participation and mutual aid, to the imperial or feudal model in which the social pyramid was reversed, everything was arranged from above rather than at the ground level, and the necessities of power brought in coercive institutions. This is the progression sketched out by Kropotkin in works like *Mutual Aid* and *Modern Science and Anarchism*, and referred to earlier on by William Godwin in his *Political Justice* (1793), where he declared that:

Men associated at first for the sake of mutual assistance. They did not foresee that any restraint would be necessary to regulate the conduct of individual members of the society toward each other or towards the whole. The necessity of restraint grew out of the errors and perverseness of the few.

Godwin also anticipated the later anarchists when he pointed out how government impeded the natural dynamism that emerges in a free community. He claimed that:

. . . government 'lays its hand upon the spring there is in society and puts a stop to its motion.' It gives substance and permanence to its errors. It reverses the general propensities of mind, and instead of suffering us to look forward, it teaches us to look backward for perfection. It prompts us to seek the public welfare, not in innovation and improvement, but in a timid reverence for the decisions of our ancestors, as if it were the nature of mind always to degenerate and never advance.

Subsequent history has done nothing to lessen the force of Godwin's exposure of the stultifying effects of government. For when government has put on a mask of benevolence, and has transformed itself in the Welfare State, it has proved just as destructive as it had been in its more openly malevolent manifestations, since the

presumption that a bureaucratic machine can care for men and women from birth to death and keep them happy in the process results not merely in the intensification of the state's grip over the lives of its subjects by registration, regulation and supervision, but, more importantly, in the erosion of those voluntary institutions that appear naturally in a free society.

In this way the Welfare State becomes just as ingenious a means of repression and regimentation as any more overtly totalitarian system. By destroying the voluntary elements out of which a different kind of society might be developed, it makes its own replacement more difficult and increases the danger of a relentless progression towards the society based on total submission for which Geroge Orwell invented the telling image of 'a boot stamping on a human face — for ever'. In compensation for such perils, the Welfare State does not even keep its promise of making people happier: witness the high rate of suicides in Sweden, surely the most cushioned of cradle-to-the-grave pseudo-democracies. But if the Welfare State has obviously failed in its avowed aim of creating a more joyful life, it has certainly succeeded in its covert aim of making men and women less free, for, in more devious and unobtrusive ways than an overt dictatorship, it has made them more dependent by eliminating or co-opting voluntary institutions and dissolving the spirit of mutual aid under the pretence of providing security.

The Welfare State has not merely bribed people to exchange freedom for a promise of material sufficiency that in the end is kept only at the price of a life of dependent idleness instead of productive leisure, as millions of recipients of welfare and UIC payments now realise. It has also consolidated the power of the state more effectively than any secret police apparatus, since, apart from its vast network of information on people and their affairs, it has created in its dependents a haunting fear that if they rock the political boat too violently, their social security may be endangered. (And, in parenthesis, consider the ambiguities of the word 'security' in a modern 'democracy'. It describes the subsidies by which the state seeks — like Roman emperors — to keep its subjects quiet, and it also describes the repressive forces — the security agencies — that can be used to detect and frustrate rebellion. So, by a coalescence of connotations, the word shows how the 'benevolent' and the malevolent aspects of the state apparatus are the obverse and the reverse of a single coin.)

This is one of the reasons why there has been a fading of the old anarchist dream of a revolution in the near future which would demolish the old order and allow a world without authority or property or war to spring up immediately in its place. That dream was based on a



failure to understand the protean adaptability of the state, which enabled it to change at will from the reality of malevolence to the appearance of benevolence. Bakunin certainly believed in the revolutionary dream until he declined into old age, and so, for large parts of their lives, did militants like Malatesta and the syndicalist Pelloutier and many of the Spanish anarchists. There were times indeed, in Spain after the people of Barcelona, with the anarchists in the lead, had defeated Franco's generals and in Russia when Makhno led his mobile guerrilla columns over a Ukraine largely liberated from Red and White armies, when the eve of the great social transformation seemed, at least locally, to have arrived. But revolutions are times of peril as well as hope, particularly for those who seek for freedom, since they open the way not only for the people who seek to destroy authority, but also for the more ruthless people who seek to transfer it in their own favour. And in both Russia and Spain at the times of their respective civil wars, it was the revolutionary authoritarians who won at the expense of the revolutionary libertarians. In Spain the revolutionary authoritarians, playing Stalin's totalitarian game, were willing to let the country fall into the hands of their rival authoritarians of the right rather than allow truly revolutionary gains in terms of workers' and peasants' control of the means of production to be sustained.

Kropotkin was one of those who began with a belief that the libertarian revolution could come in the near future, and in the articles he wrote in the mid-1880s and eventually collected in *The Conquest of Bread* he actually sketched out the kind of society based on voluntary associations that might come into being on the morrow of the revolution. In 1902, when he published *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin's attitude had changed considerably, and without actually stating a loss of faith in a revolution in the near future, he began to place the emphasis, in books like *Mutual Aid*, less on what might happen in a revolutionary situation and more on the kind of voluntary institutions that had existed in the past and in many cases had stayed alive even in a society dominated for many centuries by governmental systems.

I think there are three reasons for Kropotkin's shift in emphasis. The first was the generally anti-utopian attitude of the anarchists, who dislike the idea of people in an unfree society prophesying what might happen in a liberated world: better get ahead, in however a modest way, with the process of liberation. The second was the inclination of the scientist — and Kropotkin wrote *Mutual Aid* as a concerned scientist rather than as a propagandist — to prefer basing his conclusions on actual phenomena — happenings in the past or present — rather than on unverifiable futuristic speculation. The third was an inclination, as an evolutionist who saw revolutions as speed-ups — or rapid mutations

— in the evolution of society, to consider the fact that evolution can continue by other means even in a non-revolutionary period. Voluntary associations can emerge at any time; in favourable circumstances they can survive even in an authoritarian society, and by demonstrating in *Mutual Aid* how many voluntary associations still operated in the world he knew, Kropotkin was clearly intent on demonstrating that here and now, within a modern society, there existed a potential parallel structure to that of government. It might appear uncoordinated and ramshackle because it embraced the efforts of millions of people and thousands of groups often working unaware of each other. But, in all its diffuse variety, it operated as a genuine network of mutual aid which performed, without the aid of the state, many of the vital functions of society in his time.

Kropotkin wrote at the turn of the century. In the eighty years since then the mutual aid network has not disappeared, but it has radically changed in form, since in many fields once largely dominated by voluntary groups and individual initiative, like education, welfare and medicine, the Welfare State has largely taken over. It has made the scope of these services more universal, but that could certainly have been achieved by voluntary groups if they had access to the proportion of social wealth which the state has appropriated, and it would undoubtedly have been done more efficiently and more economically than the best of bureaucracies could do. But in spite of this, voluntary groups continue to proliferate in other fields: groups dedicated to protesting infringements on rights or liberties; groups devoted to environmental protection or to ending nuclear weaponry; groups representing minorities; groups devoted to foreign aid and doing it more efficiently than government departments; groups devoted to theatre, to music, to art, to crafts, to intellectual interests of all kinds; mutualist institutions like credit unions and co-operatives increasing in numbers and assuming new forms. Obviously some of these groups — like the right-wing fundamentalist movements — are not in themselves either libertarian or anything but regressive. Yet even they represent the stubbornness of the human inclination to co-operate voluntarily in the achievement of group aims and an equally stubborn awareness among people even of conservative views that the state cannot and should not be relied on for everything. What we do for ourselves is better done and more satisfying than what is done for us by impersonal bureaucratic agencies. A growing awareness of this fact is at the base of the increasing distrust of politics and politicians that one sees and hears expressed in so many countries nowadays.

It is always possible that such a dwindling of confidence in the current political process may produce a crisis situation of revolutionary

dimensions. Political regimes that for decades or generations seemed impregnable are very often so fragile, so dependent on the image of power rather than its reality, that they collapse at the first serious assault. In recent years we have seen several such regimes fall apart with dramatic suddenness: the rule of the Shah in Iran, the rule of the Duvalier dynasty in Haiti, the rule of the Somozas in Nicaragua, the reign of Marcos in the Philippines. These breakdowns of government were due to a combination of the inner exhaustion of the regime and a growing popular discontent, which produced a revolutionary situation. Revolutions, as Bakunin and Kropotkin and the other anarchist theoreticians have argued, are not initiated by self-styled 'revolutionaries', whose attempted coups inevitably fail whenever the essential conjunction of a weakened regime and well-nigh universal discontent fails to materialise. The 'revolutionaries', the Lenins and Castros and their kind, who later take control if the people are not vigilant as well as rebellious, are not representative of the original insurgent masses; the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the Islamic fanatics who now control Iran were in fact — like the Bolsheviks in Russia at the end of 1917 — single-minded minorities who moved into the vacuum of power because there was no alternative in the form of an emergent libertarian society based on an existing network of voluntary associations. The fact that the anarchist model remained a viable alternative in Spain during the early stages of the Civil War was due to the existence of such a strong network of syndicates in the industries and anarchist cells elsewhere that the voluntary groups were able immediately to take over the means of production and other vital aspects of society in large areas of Spain. That the experiment failed was due not to inherent faults but only to circumstances that the Communists who opposed it were provided with the arms that in the long run assured their superiority and, as a consequence, the collapse of the anti-Fascist cause in Spain.

Such considerations suggest the wisdom of the approach adumbrated by Kropotkin in his later books, and followed by a number of contemporary anarchist thinkers like Colin Ward in *Anarchy in Action* and Paul Goodman in books like *New Reformation*, *Drawing the Line* and *People or Personnel*. Such writers point out that anarchism is not a matter of future societies only. It is a matter of sustaining libertarian ideas and models in a practical manner so far as that can be done here and now. As Kropotkin showed in *Mutual Aid* and Ward in *Anarchy in Action*, one does not have to wait for a revolution to begin living like an anarchist or finding anarchist ways of doing things. Indeed, the anarchist ways are always there, even if people do not recognise them, sustained in a network of voluntary efforts and organisations that even the Welfare State has been unable to destroy. Paul Goodman has often

been described as that paradoxical animal, a conservative anarchist, and so in a way he is — in the sense that he recognised that there are positive as well as negative values even in existing society, areas of improvisation and spontaneity and traditional mutual aid that are threatened by the homogenising tendencies of the modern world and that must be defended if we are to move forward in the direction of a free society. I don't think either Ward or Goodman can be accused of gradualism *per se*; what they are suggesting is that the infrastructure of an anarchist society exists in skeleton around us, partly in the form of the battered remnants of a less regimented society in the past, partly in the form of new spontaneous urges towards cooperative and voluntarist organisation. Our task now should be not to wait passively for the revolution, which may never come or, if it does come when we are unprepared, will strike us off our guard. It should be to strengthen and encourage all the libertarian and mutualist urges, whether they are constructive in the sense of creating new libertarian organisations, or rebellious in the sense of resisting new attacks on freedom or seeking to put an end to old tyrannies and discriminations. We should strengthen and tighten the infrastructure of an alternative society so that even now we can become less victimised by manipulative politicians and so that in the future we may be able to act positively and effectively in times of crisis.

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How we can act depends a great deal, I suggest, on the traditions of the community to which we belong. Anarchists have always had ambivalent attitudes towards tradition. They rightly denounce it when it is used to justify the perpetuation of authoritarian institutions: churches, monarchies, party organisations, etc. But throughout libertarian writings you find the inclination to look back in history and search out the clues that add up to a different kind of tradition: the tradition of mutual aid, of free spontaneous associations which together build up a history of the people quite different from the history of governing classes of states.

The tradition anarchists maintain is not embodied in any institution, for the idea of a rigid framework for human co-operation is anathema to those who love freedom; by the same token it is not embodied either in a constitution, like that of the United States or the one recently acquired by Canada, or a sacred and immutable text like the Bible or the Koran or the Communist Manifesto, for we do not believe that people now or at any period can lay down how others should act until the end of time. The tradition anarchists recognise is embodied in the free and changing arrangements that men and women have come to in

many different circumstances without the help of governments or priesthoods (religious or political); it is also embodied in the thoughts and writings and the symbolic acts (which some anarchists have called 'propaganda of the deed') of the men and women who have been exponents of anarchism, or merely seekers of freedom according to their own lights, but who never claimed the finality of divine revelation or the immutable authority of Marx and Lenin for their thoughts or words or actions.

The anarchist heritage, compounded of all these strands of mutualist action and rebellious thought, is a true tradition, but it is frozen into no institutional frame and it is subordinated to no authority, physical or intellectual; it is no respecter of persons or, for that matter, of precedents. Nevertheless, it finds in the past much that illuminates the present, and more than other more rigid traditions it learns from history, since history is not for anarchists, as it is for orthodox Christians and Jews and Moslems and Marxists, an eschatologically conceived progression towards an inevitable millennium. It is much more like the vision of the early Greek philosopher Heraclitus, in which, within the given physical order of the universe, humanity lives in the flux of everlasting change; by accepting and observing that process of change which is not necessarily progression, we come to realise that men and women can learn and live by the laws of mutual attraction that operate within the given order and can utilise them to create a free and viable society. This is the great paradox of liberty within destiny, which gives meaning to the journey of life between the darkness of birth and death.

Tradition and even history mean different things to the anarchist from what they do to the Communist or the conservative. They mean accepting and learning from the past without being enslaved to it; one of the constructive ways to learn from the past is by considering examples, which reveal not only those negative aspects of the collective human experience that made Voltaire remark despairingly that 'history is nothing more than the record of crimes and misfortunes'.

History is in one sense universal — for, as Donne said, 'No man is an Island, entire of itself' — and it has become steadily more so, as the world has tended toward cultural homogeneity and the distances that preserved many small cultures more or less intact have been telescoped by the technologies of transport and communications. The fatal encounters between cultures have all taken place, and we are living in a world where the exploitation of the poor by the powerful has become multinational and where we share our perils if not our prosperity. Nevertheless, even within such a world, as events in Iran and Haiti and the Philippines and Latin America have shown, what actually happens

at times of crisis in specific communities tends to be governed as much by influences coming out of their local history as by those that move out over the world from the major centres of economic and political power like Washington and Moscow and Peking. If we are to plan the kind of action that in the short run will enable us to turn a possible revolutionary situation in the right direction, we have to recognise not merely the broader movements of world history, but also the histories of the regions and the countries in which destiny has placed us.

This is what makes it important to consider the decentralist and communitarian elements that have emerged in Canadian history and may be regarded as constituting the rudiments of a libertarian tradition. Readers from other places will, I'm sure, be able to fit in data from their own societies, for the law to which all particular instances of this kind apply is, I suggest, the fact that even in the most coercive of social orders the voluntarist urge, the spirit of mutual aid, always continues to assert itself, and society would, indeed, collapse without it.

Though Canada has never been a totalitarian society, and appears to observe the classic formulas of a representative democracy, in which the rights of individuals are surrendered every four or five years to a ruling political party, its history shows an exceptional tendency, particularly in comparison with the United States, to rely on government to provide essential services and to surrender to the state wide control over vital aspects of economic and social life. The Conservatives came into power in the last election largely by stressing the fact that Canadians are over-governed, which nobody can dispute, and that the blame lay on the Liberal administration of Pierre Trudeau, with its insatiable urge to multiply laws and regulations (largely 'orders in council' arbitrarily imposed by the Cabinet) and to encompass more and more of the country's economic life in an unwieldy and inefficient network of crown corporations. In fact, the Trudeau era represented merely the crescendo of a process that had begun long before Confederation and in which all political parties and factions have played active roles.

It began in the period immediately after the Anglo-American War of 1812-14, which was followed by a large influx of immigrants who mainly settled in Upper Canada, the present Ontario. The old transport network, through narrow waterways, with portages where the rapids were not negotiable by canoe, proved inadequate for the needs of settlement, nor did it meet the strategic anxieties of British military commanders who feared a renewed American attack. So canals were built around the worst portages and the Rideau system was built between Kingston and Ottawa to provide a waterway by which fairly large craft could travel well away from the international border. Such costly undertakings did not attract the merchants of the time who, like

the Molson family, were making easier money running the first steamship services on the St Lawrence. So the taxpayers, British and Canadian, were called on to foot the bills, and the state began a long career of involvement in Canadian transport.

A generation or so later, when the various colonies of British North America were brought together through Confederation in 1867, the construction of a railway to link British Columbia with the original colonies and to open up the prairies to settlement seemed imperative. Once again the state intervened at the expense of the taxpayer and the capitalists got the better part of the deal. The Canadian Pacific Railway was built by a consortium of Montréal financiers, but its completion was possible only because the government of the day subsidised it with massive land grants, money grants, and guarantees for loans. To this day the shareholders reap the benefits of such state benevolence, as the land sold to the CPR more than a century ago is sold at vastly inflated prices.

Later, early in the present century, the state interfered massively in transport by saving a number of failing railroads from bankruptcy and merging them into the Canadian National, which has been state-operated ever since. Afterwards the state went further into the fields of transport and communications by establishing the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Air Canada, and during the Trudeau regime the tendency to spread state control of industry while benefiting capitalists at the expense of the taxpayer reached virtually epidemic proportions as scores of failing businesses were taken over by heavily bureaucratised crown corporations. There can be few societies not avowedly state socialist in which government has assumed so strong a role, as entrepreneur and regulator alike, as in Canada. And this does not take into account the extent to which the Canadian Welfare State has inhibited voluntary initiatives and created artificial dependencies through a failure to face the real social and economic problems underlying unemployment and preventing enforced idleness from turning into productive leisure.

But this is only one side of the picture, and a look at Canadian history, particularly if one does not restrict it to that of the colonising groups who are generally known as the 'founding peoples', shows a somewhat different picture. We can begin with the native peoples, who were once thought of as a doomed group representing obsolete cultures — the 'vanishing Indian' and so forth — but who in the past generation have shown not only a reversal of their apparent demographic decline but also a resolution in pressing their claims to a right to control their own destinies. The native people now see themselves as a number of 'nations' with rights to autonomy within Canadian society — to

'self-government', as it is sometimes called. But what they mean by nation bears no resemblance to the nation-state as the major modern states, whether 'democratic' or Communist, have developed it. The 'nation' as conceived by the Canadian Indian or Inuit or Meti consists of the community that shares a common language and common traditions and hopes to regain enough of its land to operate again as a distinct cultural entity. Nor does the 'self-government' which the native people demand for their 'nations' approximate the bureaucratic state. It is a concept based on traditions of consensus rather than coercion that goes back far into the past of the various native groups.

It is doubtful, in fact, whether any native people north of the Valley of Mexico developed a concept of authoritarian government like that which has held sway in the Middle East and Europe from the early days of the great Mesopotamian empires. In the European sense, both the Inuit and the Indians were politically unorganised. The Inuit, living as extended family groups that wandered independently over the tundra and the ice and came together only occasionally for ceremonial and trading purposes, had virtually no system of authority and certainly no kind of organised government, which did not prevent them from developing a culture perfectly adapted for ensuring survival in one of the world's most rigorous environments. Their life, before they were taken over by the Department of Northern Affairs and became wards of the welfare system, was an object-lesson in the ability of men and women to live a good and joyful life even in harsh conditions without the need for government.

Among the Indians the degree of organisation varied from tribe to tribe. There were wandering groups of northern Indians who moved about like the Inuit in family groups, since the poor terrain would support nothing larger; the families would sometimes come together for short periods, but they had no permanent political structures. At the other end were the confederations of prairie Indians and of the Iroquois, in which families were organised into bands, and into tribes, and among whom there were also warriors' fraternities that cut across the band organisations. Finally the tribes were formed into alliances that shared hunting grounds and combined to keep other tribes out. The Iroquois confederation consisted of six tribes or 'nations', and the Blackfoot confederacy of four tribes, covering a considerable area of the prairies both north and south of the international border.

The institution of chiefdom that existed among these people has often been misinterpreted by White historians, who have thought of the chief as the equivalent of a European absolute ruler. In fact, in both the Blackfoot confederacy and the Six Nations of the Iroquois, he was rather the first among equals, delegated to act mainly as arbiter in tribal



affairs, and depending on the support of the council of elders and of the warriors' societies, which sustained the voluntary discipline of the tribe during hunts and wars. During hunt and war expeditions special chiefs were chosen, who retained no powers beyond the particular occasion, and held office only as long as they had the approval of the tribe. As Father De Smet, an early missionary in the West, remarked:

If a chief does not succeed in gaining the love of his subjects, they will despise his authority and quit him on the slightest opposition on his part; for the customs of the Indians admit no conditions by which they may enforce respect from their subjects.

This kind of delegated authority, immediately revocable and leaving each individual his or her essential freedom, was inherited by the Metis, who tended to live with virtually no political organisation except at times like the annual buffalo hunt and their two insurrections against Canadian authority, when a degree of agreed communal discipline was needed. At the buffalo hunt the hunters would gather in assembly to decide on the rules to ensure fairness during the hunt, and would elect a council of ten captains, of whom one could become the leader of the expedition because he was regarded as the most experienced hunter. His role lasted only for the period of the hunt. Next year a different leader might be picked, and for the year in between the Metis lived as free hunters. The idea of a permanent authority, not subject to recall by the people, was anathema to the Metis. Alexander Ross, in his classic book *The Red River Settlement*, gave a critical account of them which suggests how much of natural anarchism entered into their attitudes:

... these people are all politicians, but of a particular creed, favouring a barbarous state of society and self-will; for they cordially detest all the laws and restraints of civilised life, believing all men were born to be free. In their own estimation they were all great men, and wonderfully wise; and so long as they wander about on these wild and lawless expeditions, they will never become a thoroughly civilised people, nor orderly subjects in a civilised community. Feeling their own strength, from being constantly armed, and free from control, they despise all others; but above all, they are marvellously tenacious of their original habits. They cherish freedom as they cherish life.

These inclinations which the Metis shared with the Indians and the Inuit have not vanished, any more than the native peoples have vanished. All these peoples remain resistant to imposed as distinct from delegated authority. By virtue of their different languages and strongly held tribal traditions they are natural decentrists. The Dene may talk of themselves as a 'nation', but one never hears talk of a 'nation' embracing all the native peoples. Self-government, as they see it, means each group governing itself on its own land; it does not go beyond the concept of a band or, at most, a tribe managing its own affairs without interference, and choosing its own form of political structure. Given

native traditions, in most cases that structure is likely to be a relatively loose one.

Another direction in which decentralist, experimental and at least partially libertarian urges have come to the surface in Canadian history has been that of intentional — rather than ethnic — minority groups. An intentional minority, as I see it, is one distinguished by beliefs, political or religious, that induce it to try and establish an alternative form of society; there is no necessary connection — though there is sometimes an accidental one — between the intention of the group and its ethnic composition. The Doukhobors, for example, have not been distinguished by being Russian but by having a religion that has led them to attempt communitarian living patterns strikingly at odds with the Canadian society which they entered as refugees from an even more hostile Tsarist Russia in the 1890s.

In comparison with the United States, where the mid-nineteenth century saw a considerable community movement, involving hundreds of settlements inspired by the various utopian creeds of Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Etienne Cabet, not to mention native anarchist communities following thinkers like Josiah Warren, Canada has a relatively slight history of utopian communities. So far as I have been able to trace, the only Owenite community was that established by Henry Jones at Maxwell in Upper Canada in the 1830s, and the largest of the Canadian secular communities was Scintula, a socialist settlement established by Finnish miners and loggers on Harmony Island off the coast of British Columbia in the early 1900s; 2,000 people took part in it but the actual population of Scintula at any one time can hardly have been more than 400.

A combination of personal incompatibilities, poor management and sheer misfortune resulted in short life for secular communities in Canada. Religious communities, like monasteries and those of ascetic sects like the Hutterites, had a cohesion of belief the lay communities lacked, and this led to a better survival record, which was usually paid for in rigid structures and constricted lifestyles. Even the Doukhobors, whose resistance to wars and to earthly governments was wholly admirable, were not in fact the natural peasant anarchists Kropotkin and Tolstoy believed them to be. They have always been dominated by spiritual leaders, a kind of theocracy modified by the strength of the Sobranie, the gathering of the people at which worship and debate mingled.

Still, the Doukhobors did show, in their great British Columbian community of 6,000 people, which lasted for almost three decades and only came to an end because the banks foreclosed during the Depression, the viability of a communitarian alternative to the capitalist

economy. Living in their big community houses, with whole valleys at their disposal, the Doukhobors did create a largely self-contained and communally owned economy; it was not merely agrarian, for it operated brickworks and sawmills, jam factories and flour mills, and it was only the exceptional circumstances of the 1930s and the politically inspired ill will of its creditors that brought it to an end.

To a lesser extent the communitarian ideal was also pursued by the Mennonites, another war-resisting sect from Russia, who settled on the prairies in village communities which had their own efficient voluntarily operated welfare system long before the poor and the old were looked after in the rest of Canada. The Mennonites did not hold their land in common, but they did practise various kinds of mutual aid, assisting each other in putting up buildings and at harvest time. To this day in Ontario they continue the old pioneer custom of barn-raising bees, and when the recent tornado in the Barrie area in Ontario destroyed many farm buildings, spontaneously organised teams of Mennonites left their farms in the surrounding countryside and worked for nothing replacing the destroyed buildings of non-Mennonites.

The community tradition is not entirely dead in Canada. During the 1960s it formed one of the ways in which the counter-culture experimented with alternative models of social organisation. A number of Canadians and of Americans fleeing the Vietnam War found their way into the marginal farmlands of British Columbia, Ontario and the Maritimes, and set up agrarian communes; others set up urban living communities, and working collectives of many kinds emerged, publishing books and magazines and operating small-scale industries. The people who took part in such ventures were also active among the protesters against war and against threats to the environment.

The communities and collectives of the 1960s have largely disbanded, and the visions of quickly achieving a participatory democracy which they nurtured have evaporated. But the network of protest groups survives as a positive heritage from that period, and — like the native rights movement — remains a focus of resistance to the Canadian tendency to accept authority. In such a movement the idea of community as a practical expression of mutual aid still lingers. When a hundred thousand people march for their future, that is mutual aid.

Finally there is a broader tradition of decentralisation and mutual aid that has opposed itself for over a century to efforts at political consolidation like John A. McDonald's National Policy and Pierre Trudeau's One Nation drive. Whatever the efforts made by the centralists in Ottawa to turn Canada into another unitary state nation state, it remains obstinately a country of regions, with Newfoundland, the Atlantic provinces, the Prairie provinces, British Columbia and the

northern territories all seeking to defend their interests in various ways from the financial-dictatorial power of the great central Canadian cities of Toronto and Montréal and their satellite industrial towns.

The regions in Canada are not distinguished merely by economic factors. History and geography have made them culturally different, as one can see by reading the writing and looking at the art that comes from them and which reflect different historical experiences and different social patterns. A Newfoundlander and a British Columbian may both be Canadians and both speak English, but they are as different in their views of existence as a Yorkshireman from an Australian or, for that matter, as a man from Trois Rivières from a Parisian.

The hinterlands of English Canada have never accepted the hegemony of Ontario, any more than the Québécois have accepted the hegemony of English Canada or the Acadians have accepted the hegemony within French Canada of the Québécois. We remain, territorially as well as by ancestry, a gathering of peoples with common interests, the principal of which is our shared intention not to be absorbed by the United States. To carry the concept of unity beyond such loose common interests in the direction of a centralised state always creates more disunity than there was before, as Trudeau discovered in spite of his blind eye. In separatist movements, in agrarian movements like the Progressive Party, in fringe parties like Social Credit, even in the CCF-NDP which started and first succeeded as an expression of regional prairie discontent, Canadians have repeatedly shown their rejection of centralism, their dogged adherence to regionalism as the pattern of their collective life.

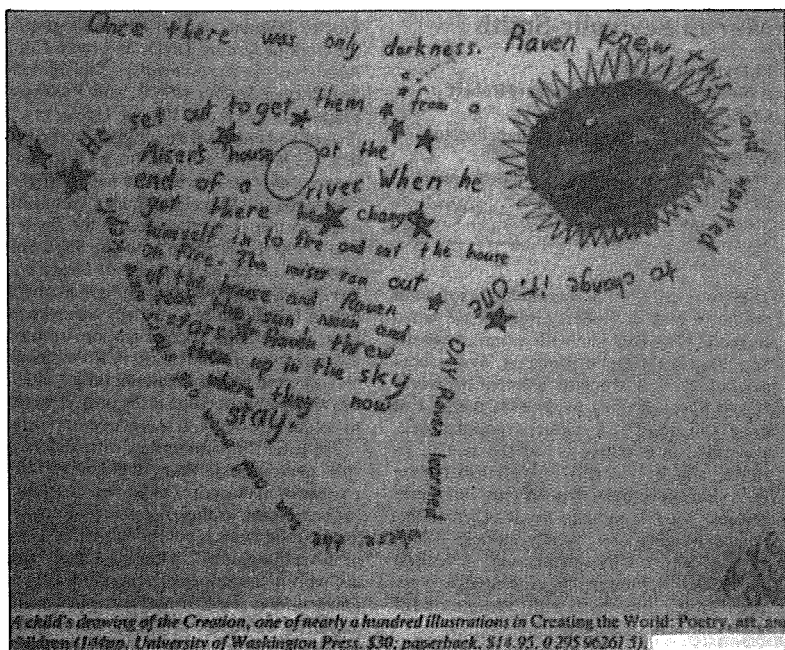
The manifestations of that adherence which I have quoted are all political, showing that, though their disillusion with politics is growing fast, Canadians up to now have largely been inclined to show their decentralism through the ballot box. But there have also been non-political expressions of rejection of the concentration of economic power. The movement among the prairie farmers to take grain sales out of the hands of entrepreneurs and organise them cooperatively through the Grain Growers' Associations was one example. Another was the Caisse Populaire movement in Québec, followed by the Credit Union movement in the rest of Canada, which in fact was an adaptation of an old anarchist idea, the People's Bank that Proudhon tried to found in 1848 to create a system of mutual credit among the workers that would break the grip of the banks.

Such movements, started in resistance to exploitation, have found their place within the economic structure of Canadian society, but in doing so they have modified it. They are not examples of anarchist

action; nobody would think of claiming that. But they do show the vitality of the idea of mutual aid even in a world of welfare states, and they show that men and women have a rooted longing for independence which may be ill-defined and misunderstood even by those who experience it, but which demonstrates that large numbers of people still have a capacity for free action and an awareness of the value of mutual solidarity. It is these tendencies we have to foster and support, always seeking new ways of expressing them, so that if a time of revolutionary crisis comes, as it has come to many countries in recent years, people will be so conscious of the superiority of voluntary organisation that they will fight for liberty rather than power and recognise the power-seeking opportunists such situations always push to the surface.

I have used examples in this essay from the history of my own country. People from other lands will be able to substitute others from their own history. I trust they, too, will find enough essential anarchism among them not to accept the future as a time of defeat.

First published as two articles (in reverse order) in the Canadian anarcho-feminist magazine *Kick It Over* 19 and 20 (Summer and Winter 1987).



## *Heiner Becker*

### The Mystery of Dr Nathan-Ganz

*Eduard Nathan, alias Dr Edward Nathan-Ganz, alias Charles Edward Robertson, alias Bernhardt Wyprecht, alias Steinmann, alias Da Costa, alias Dr Charles-Louis Hartmann . . . (1856-1934).*

\* \* \*

Two comments on the International Social Revolutionary Congress in London in July 1881:

One of the American delegates was a certain Dr. Nathan Gans. The model of an arrogant insolent fop. His whole appearance, as he capered into the congress, was repellent to me....

Josef Peukert (1913)

Even more mysterious was the other American delegate, Dr. Edward Nathan-Ganz, who resembled nothing so much as a character out of Dostoyevsky or Joseph Conrad.... A shadowy figure, whose history is not well known....

Paul Avrich (1984)

So who was this man, and what is his history?

\* \* \*

#### WHAT WE WILL AND WHAT WE WILL NOT.

WE WILL fight against all tyrannies and self-imposed authorities, may they appear in whatever form.

*We will* make this Review a rallying point and an assembling ground of the till now scattered socialistic army on this continent; in union there is strength.

*We will* give an asylum to every honest opinion on political and social topics that has been refused admission by the reigning press monopolists.

*We will* bear in mind that *Force* has since the beginning of history been the *accoucheur* of any serious reform; we have the sincere

conviction, and will strain our efforts to impart it to the masses, that their only salvation is in *Revolution*.

We will discuss all questions relating to human welfare in a loyal and honest manner. We will not consider insults as arguments, nor "mud" as reasons. We trust our adversaries within the army of social reformers will follow the same course, this being the surest means of leading our noble cause to early victory.

WE WILL NOT be afraid of any threats whatever, whether by government or by any class, or by individuals; and will always clearly speak out what we consider right and true.

We will not allow a word for or against religion to glide into this publication, considering that religion is a private affair of the individual, which concerns no one but himself.

We will not go into personal polemics, respecting our space and our readers too much to tire them with merely personal matters. Brother Bohemians, rejoice! There is a chance for you to slander and libel without any fear of contradiction or chastisement!

We will not proclaim this Review to be a "Bible" of Socialism, nor will we make it a vehicle for *Dogmas*. We will not advocate any utopian theories, having for their object an ultimate fixed state — to be the climax of all social evolution; but only such as can be executed by taking as a factor into calculation present economic and political conditions.

We will not load our pages with dry theoretical abstractions, indigestible by the common understanding; but rely for strength on practical demonstrations, practical means, and practical ends, together with brevity, expressiveness, and intrepidity.

We will not intend any personal gains by embarking in this enterprise, nor do we desire the gratification of any personal ambition.

In placing our enterprise before the public we wish to remark, that the general policy of its management will be in accordance with the anarchistic principle itself, — no centralization.

We are but a federation of writers; every one autonomous, and responsible only for what appears over his own signature; he will not be responsible, nor even assumed to favor the ideas advocated in the other articles, all being united only in the general aim, —

### THE HUMAN WELFARE

This editorial was the opening article of a paper which was entitled *The An-archist* (thus spelt) — the first in the English language to use such a title — and subtitled *Socialistic-Revolutionary Review*. The first issue appeared in Boston, Massachusetts, on Wednesday, 22 December

1880, was dated January 1881, was priced at 6 cents, and was edited and published by 'Dr. Nathan-Ganz' at 3 Worcester Square, Boston. *The An-archist* was intended to be a monthly, and the contributors listed on the cover of the first issue included Félix Pyat (the old French revolutionary), Johann Most (the old German revolutionary, then in London), Menotti Garibaldi (the eldest son of Giuseppe Garibaldi), Leo Hartmann (the Russian social revolutionary, then in London), W. G. H. Smart (an anarchist then active in the Boston area and in Irish Nationalist politics), and Adhémar Schwitzguébel (the Swiss anarchist and friend of Bakunin).

In London, George Standring's monthly paper *The Republican* published a report of *The An-archist* in January 1881:

The cover is black, the name, &c., being printed in orange, forming a novel and decidedly effective contrast. [It should be mentioned that the cover of the American paper *The Radical Review* of 1878 had been printed in the same colours, and that its editor Benjamin R. Tucker contributed a review to *The An-archist*.] The editor, Dr. Nathan-Ganz, writes to us as follows:- 'Ample means, and the exclusion from this project of any aim for personal gain, enable me to sacrifice for my ideas and the cause I fight for, such sums as shall be found necessary to make this publication a complete success. That it will be such in a literary sense also, is guaranteed by the array of collaborators, which contains only names of world-wide renown. This review will be unique of its kind on the whole American continent. There will be issued of the first number 20,000 copies.'

The *New York Herald* (19 December 1880) headlined: 'BOSTON'S NEW SENSATION. EXTREME RADICALISM TO HAVE AN ORGAN IN AMERICA. ABOLISH THE STATE. LEGALITY A WORD INVENTED BY RASCALS AND APPLIED BY COWARDS.' Its report gave extracts from the editorial and a couple of other articles, together with some information about 'Dr. Nathan-Ganz' — obviously supplied by himself. It stated that he 'is a Hungarian by birth, a medical doctor by diploma and a revolutionist by choice. He is a naturalized American citizen, and has been in this country since 1873, although he has crossed the Atlantic thirteen times since then.' His appearance was described a few months later in *The Republican* (September 1881) as 'being short and dark. He is a first-class linguist, being master of seven or eight languages.' But Standring already added in a rather different tone: 'As projector and editor of "The An-archist," Dr. Ganz made many glowing promises which he never fulfilled, showing that he is proficient at lying in English.' Such a view was echoed by Tucker (in a letter to Max Nettlau, 6 July 1937): 'He was simply a refined and rather fascinating crook.'

Dr Nathan-Ganz had made his first appearance in the revolutionary press only a few weeks earlier, in Johann Most's *Freiheit* when it was



# The An-archist.

## Socialistic-Revolutionary Review.

VOL. I.

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No. 1.

Registered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class mail matter.

*"From every one according to his ability: to every one according to his needs."*

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still published in London, with an article on 'Inhuman Warfare' (13 November 1880):

I am by no means a friend of war, I detest it like every Socialist. But I believe that, as long as war — and I include here also *our* war — is something inevitable, and the art of exterminating humans is cultivated as a science, the same has to have as its theoretical final aim, like all sciences, the absolute perfection.

After pointing out several times that warfare is not a human activity but is repellent to every sane human being, he stated what was in a way the leitmotiv of his life:

To rule by violence, to oppress, to force into submission, means to leave the opponent no choice than either dishonourable self-emasculation or the use of all means which may lead to the aim striven for. Here the word of the Jesuits is indeed to be sanctioned: 'The end justifies the means.' Who by means of force oppresses his equals, his fellow humans, is to be regarded as an outlaw, and every means with which he can be neutralised is a sacred means, whatever the professional assassins of God's grace say against it.

In my eyes, the morality which applies the only possible means to reach a noble aim and thereby to help hundreds of thousands to happiness, is the only true morality.

As long as such a morality is not recognised by all friends of freedom, so long the crowned assassins will be in a position by means of civilised murder to rule the world and to enslave Humanity.

He followed this three weeks later with a eulogistic obituary of Karl Heinzen, 'The Life of a Brave Man' (4 December 1880). Heinzen was a German Forty-Eighter whom he claimed to have known well and called his 'spiritual friend'. (Incidentally, when President McKinley was assassinated by the anarchist Leon Czolgosz 21 years later, Johann Most had just reprinted in *Freiheit* an old tyrannicidal article by Heinzen, 'Murder versus Murder', which got him his last prison sentence of a year.) Fifty years later Nathan-Ganz recalled (in a letter to Nettlau, 7 March 1931):

I visited Heinzen at Boston shortly before his death and assisted at his funeral. He was living with the family of his son in law, who had a large printing establishment. They took good care of him, but admitted few persons to see him and prevented any political discussions. Still we had a conversation on Anarchism which for him was simply Chaos. He did not understand one word of it. I had his paper *The Pioneer* up to the last number. He was autoritaire to the last end and Blanquist as to the means of realization, i.e. a small minority to seize by a coup de force the government and with a dictator at the head reorganize society.

The first issue of *The An-archist* contained, in the same vein as his first article in *Freiheit*, the first instalment of what was intended to be a series on 'Revolutionary War Science'. It was prefaced by Félix Pyat, a

French radical journalist, Forty-Eighter and Commune, who was vaguely socialist but, like Heinzen, thoroughly authoritarian and not in the least anarchist, and extremely ferocious:

Well, let us, too, be less Christian, less sheep-like, less stupid; let us no longer offer the right cheek after the left one; no more resignation, no more prayers, no more tears, and no more connivance! We have the right, we have the power; defend it, employ it! without reserve, without remorse, without scruples, without mercy. . . . It is the antagonism of caste, the repulsion of atoms; a struggle more than human, more than animal, more than instinctive; . . . without other end than the death of one of the two adversaries: democracy or royalty, revolution or feodality, liberty or servitude, civilization or barbarism! It is a holy war, a war of principles and defence. . . . *Salus populi*. For the good of the people, iron and fire — all arms are human, all forces legitimate, and all means sacred.

We desire peace, the enemy wants war.

He may have it, absolutely. Killing, burning — all means are justifiable. Use them; then will be peace!

After this encouraging introduction, and before beginning the first instalment of the series, on 'Barricade Warfare', the editor made clear in an anonymous comment that for a few pages he was going to forget his medical title, describing himself instead as 'a military officer in active service in the --- army, in sympathy with our cause, whose standing is a guarantee of his profound and thorough knowledge of the subject treated', and signing himself 'Col. N.....z'.

Apart from some technical descriptions of barricade warfare, the article then introduced for the first time in an anarchist context what was soon to preoccupy a large element of the anarchist movement and was eventually to be identified by the public with anarchism as such:

There are a great many advantages connected with the progress of chemical science, which in none of the foregoing instances were used at all, and which will have a deciding part in all revolutions hereafter. In any coming struggle, the engineers in our ranks will surely avail themselves of the opportunity which the large sewer-pipes underlying the streets in nearly all European capitals afford them by placing, at certain points, deposits of explosive compounds, — as dynamite, or nitro-glycerine, — to be united, by means of conducting wires, at a certain central point, from which they could, either simultaneously or separately, be fired at the necessary moment. . . .

But the agents of destruction in our reach are not even exhausted with the above. The enemy could be subjected to a more dreadful fate at the will of the engineer. An invisible gas, laden with arsenic . . . might be pumped into that part of the tubular system [of gas pipes]. . . . I might encounter, perhaps in our own ranks, opposition to the use of such extreme, 'inhuman' war expedients. Those, who will do so, forget that real humanity will be found in carrying on a war as energetically as possible, in order to gain the end proposed as effectually and speedily as may be. Adherence to conventional means of killing is based on

prejudice alone, and not upon morality. . . . I do not admire war, and no sane man does; but if it is once inevitable, it becomes my duty not to throw away any sort of power or aid within my reach!

This exposition — repeated and further elaborated by Nathan-Ganz in other articles (and reprinted in other papers, such as Burnette G. Haskell's *Truth* in November-December 1883) — made a deep impression on many Social Revolutionaries and also on anarchists, an impression dramatically strengthened by the assassination of the Russian Tsar a couple of months later, in March 1881. This tendency led to a redefinition of 'propaganda by deed'. This concept had been formulated originally by Paul Brousse in the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne*, in an article of 5 August 1877 (the third in a series of which the first two were written by Kropotkin). It had been prompted by several local initiatives during the previous year — such as the Red Flag demonstration at the Kazan Church in St Petersburg by Plekhanov and his friends, the Red Flag demonstration in Berne by Kropotkin and his friends in the Jura Federation, and the insurrection in Benevento by Malatesta and his friends — and had been based on the idea that propaganda by popular collective demonstrations or insurrections would have a stronger impact than conventional propaganda by the written or spoken word.

In spite of his flirtation with authoritarians and his willingness to cooperate with them up to the point of adapting tactics clearly opposed to basic anarchist principles (like the acceptance of the Jesuit principle, some time before Lenin, that the end justifies the means), Nathan-Ganz called himself an anarchist (or 'an-archist', as he generally wrote it), and with some justification. He had closely and carefully followed the revolutionary and anarchist press for some years, and — although it is improbable that he really made Malatesta's acquaintance as early as 1876 on board a ship from Egypt to Greece, as he claimed in conversation with Nettlau fifty years later — he knew even such little-distributed papers as the *Arbeiterzeitung*, produced by Brousse and Kropotkin in Berne from 1876 to 1877. In an unsigned article on 'The Theory of An-archism' (in *The An-archist*) he gave perhaps the clearest early exposition of anarchist socialism in the English language:

The Theory of An-archism is a political-social form; its economical substance is that of Socialism.

Its quintessence is the principle of Individual Autonomy, — which, under the designation of 'Individual Sovereignty,' has already quite a respectable number of ardent defenders, such as Buckle, Josiah Warren, Andrews, Tucker, Smart, Morse, etc. (An-archists without their knowing it, and who have nearly all over looked, that the *conditio sine qua non* of such a political-social state is, that its economical condition be based on Socialism, — *without* which the

principle of Individual Sovereignty is utterly untenable, and results only in Individual Servility!)

As a theory, An-archism is the application of the idea of Federalism to the smallest particles of human organization — the individuals.

He went on to say that Proudhon found

that the real solution of the problem of human organization will never be discovered by asking: 'How can we become the best governed?' — but: 'How can we become the most free?!' And he came to the very right conclusion that *the 'State,' the 'Government,' is a product of collective life, having for its aim the maintenance of an order established upon economical inequality and the antagonism of interests.*

Our main object must therefore be the abolishment of the 'State'; our main activity must for the present necessarily be a destructive instead of a constructive one.

Despite calling himself an anarchist, his fixation on 'success' by any practical means, no matter what the theoretical 'moral' price, was quite unusual at that time. This becomes clear from what he said about cooperation with other socialists, even going as far as forming a common organisation (a proposal which some fifteen years later made Merlino the object of the most violent criticism in the anarchist movement). He wrote in another article, 'Close the Ranks':

There is not one town in our 'glorious Republic' where our ideas have not already gained partisans. What is the reason that hitherto we have heard so rarely and so little of them?

The answer is not difficult.

An Organization was wanted.

*Separated*, — and if we were even a million strong, we do not count for more than zero.

Ten thousand earnest and energetic men, *organized*, are an *actual force*. *Organize yourselves!*

Proletarians arise! . . .

Organize yourselves as a distinct *Socialistic Revolutionary Party!* . . .

And he also wrote in the next article, called 'Federal Pact of the Revolutionary Alliance of the American Continent':

. . . *Considering*, therefore, that our first and principal object must be the dissolution of the present economical and political state;

*Considering*, further, that all questions of reorganization, *after* the revolution, come only in second order; that in our object — *the human welfare* — we all unite; that the differences between the positive measures proposed to bring about this result are not such as to render impossible all common action;

*Considering*, further, that the hatred and antagonism existing in our *own* ranks — between State Socialists, Federalists, Communists, An-archists, etc. — are not only unjustifiable, but one of the principal causes of our impotency;

*Resolved*, We hereby form a *Revolutionary Alliance of the American Continent*, having in view only the consolidation of the revolutionary forces — every group joining being autonomous in the discussion and adoption of any *constructive* theories coming WITHIN THE GENERAL TERM 'SOCIALISM.'

This was, of course, essentially how many anarchists and sympathisers — and indeed Bakunin himself — saw the International Working Men's Association (First International), and also how they acted in the American labour movement during the next few years. Anarchist willingness to work with (authoritarian) social revolutionaries was strikingly manifested in the International Social-Revolutionary Congress which was held in London in July 1881, which is often mistakenly referred to as an anarchist congress, and which was attended by Nathan-Ganz. After the break-up of the First International following the split between the Marxists and their opponents, however, a strong suspicion of those socialists who were influenced by Marx prevailed among most anarchists. The openness — what some would have called carelessness — of Nathan-Ganz's organisational efforts was at this time already somewhat unusual, and many on both sides, including authoritarians, looked at it with a rather grim suspicion which a few years later would find ample expression in the circumstances of the founding and first congresses of the so-called Second International.

During the period preceding the London Congress, Nathan-Ganz tried hard to propagate these ideas, and apart from articles he seems to have bombarded with duplicated letters the editors not only of numerous German and English papers in North America and Britain but also of various papers in France, Switzerland and Latin America. His interest in the Russian revolutionary movement (which lasted until his death) was manifested for example in an article on 'N. G. Chernyshevski' (*New York Belletristisches Journal*, reprinted in *Freiheit*, 29 January 1881). His first signed contribution to the French press was a report from Boston dated 22 December 1880 in the anarchist paper *La Révolution Sociale* (4 January 1881), which claimed:

The social-revolutionary party makes astonishing progress here very day.

Sections are now established in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston, and in nearly all other cities action committees are about to be formed. Boston has now German, French, Anglo-American and Russian groups, forming a Federal Council which is tirelessly active and which last week submitted to all sections of the country and the continent the project of a Revolutionary Alliance on the American Continent.

This project has already received the approval of the General Council of our party in Mexico, where we count more than three thousand registered and paying members, and of those in Montevideo and in Rio de Janeiro, where the project was presented already several months ago.

*The An-archist* named among 'our sympathetic companions' *La Revolucion Sociale* in Mexico and *El Internacionalista* in Montevideo, papers which seem not to have survived. But *El Socialista*, the 'scarcely nominally socialist paper' (Nettlau) of the Confederacion de los Trabajadores Mexicanos, printed a translation of the editorial from *The An-archist* and also an article by Nathan-Ganz entitled 'War Against the Authorities by Various Methods and Means' (10 January 1881). In late January he invited the Gran Circulo Obrero (Mexico) to send a delegate to the next International Socialist Congress in London (letter read in the session of 7 February), and on 21 February he was himself elected to represent the Mexican Confederation there.

But during these months he wrote not only for the socialist and anarchist press but also for bourgeois papers such as the *Boston Daily Globe* (on whose editorial staff Benjamin R. Tucker was then working). At the end of January 1881, however, Nathan-Ganz was arrested in Boston for allegedly taking part in large-scale fraud and misuse of the postal services. He later claimed that on this occasion the police seized the entire second issue of *The An-archist*, and burned it together with proofs, manuscripts, etc. 'Of course it was a completely illegal act, but you will find no jury in the United States to convict police officers for doing so' (letter to Nettlau, 12 March 1931). Certainly no trace of the second issue has survived.

In April he was acquitted, his release was enthusiastically welcomed by *Freiheit* in London, and he was invited to replace the imprisoned Johann Most as editor. After his arrival in London a few weeks later, however, the members of the editorial group were rather disappointed and sobered by his appearance, which seemed much too bourgeois and 'fashionable'.

He then represented the Mexican Workers Confederation at and took a leading part in the Social-Revolutionary Congress which met in London between 14 and 20 July 1881. The letter to Nettlau already quoted was written in response to the publication in *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre* (1931) of the minutes and papers of the Congress, which Nettlau had obtained from Gustave Brocher, the Congress secretary. Nathan-Ganz went on to recall that 'the congress took place in the Lodgeroom on the first floor of a public house No. 6 Charrington-street'. This is an example of how unreliable personal reminiscences can be, for while the Congress did meet in a room on the first floor of a London pub, it was not in Charrington Street in Somers Town but in the Fitzroy Arms, 42 Cardington Street, Euston Square (a quarter of a mile away). Nathan-Ganz was responding to the information given by Nettlau himself, which he had obtained in a conversation with Joseph Lane (another delegate) back in 1911. This is

also an example of how unreliable historical writing can be, for the same little mistake has been faithfully repeated ever since in every single published reference to the subject. Yet the police reports of several European countries (France, Germany, Netherlands) are unanimous in placing the congress at the Fitzroy Arms in Cardington Street. It almost seems a shame to spoil the fun by pointing out the truth!

To protect the anonymity of the delegates, they were designated only by numbers. Nathan-Ganz was No 22 (which he subsequently used to sign articles, like his report on the congress to Benjamin R. Tucker's *Liberty*). On 15 July, after declaring himself to be a revolutionary, an anarchist and a communist favouring violent means, he submitted a report on the workers' movement in Mexico — very well informed, it seems, and among other things claiming that the Mexican Confederation united eighteen sections with approximately 1,800 members. Of the four papers published by members or groups adhering to the Confederation, two according to him were frankly anarchist (*La Revolucion Sociale* and *La Reforma Sociale*), while the other two were 'pink' socialist — and one of which interestingly was *El Socialista* (which published material from him).

On 17 July he proposed

the establishment of an International Bureau of Statistics at London, where records of the war materials in store at the different capitals, and location and number of troops there, the spirit of the different battalions, lists of military or civil persons, functionaries, representatives or other individuals who may have any influence on the resistance, their places of residence, etc.; further records of the storehouses of chemicals, drugs, powder, steam-engines, etc., in the different quarters of those capitals; — in short, *of all those materials, of all those informations which could be used for a certain event.*

This proposal was not accepted, the Congress agreeing only on the establishment of a general international information bureau to facilitate the epistolary relations between the groups and federations involved.

But another proposal submitted by Nathan-Ganz on 19 July was more successful and more significant. It recommended 'the study of chemistry, electricity, and all the sciences offering the means of defence and destruction' — i.e. what he had proposed in 'Revolutionary War Science' in *The An-archist*. This was strongly opposed by Kropotkin and some others, but in the end the congress, 'recognising the necessity of supplementing propaganda by voice and pen with propaganda by fact', agreed to the following:

It is strictly necessary to make all possible efforts to spread by action the revolutionary idea and spirit of revolt. . . . In abandoning the legal ground on which we have generally stood hitherto to extend our action into the domain of





*Dr Nathan-Ganz in his prime*



*Félix Pyat*



*Gustave Hervé*



*Jim and Nellie Dick with the Modern School in 1925*



*Jim and Nellie Dick*



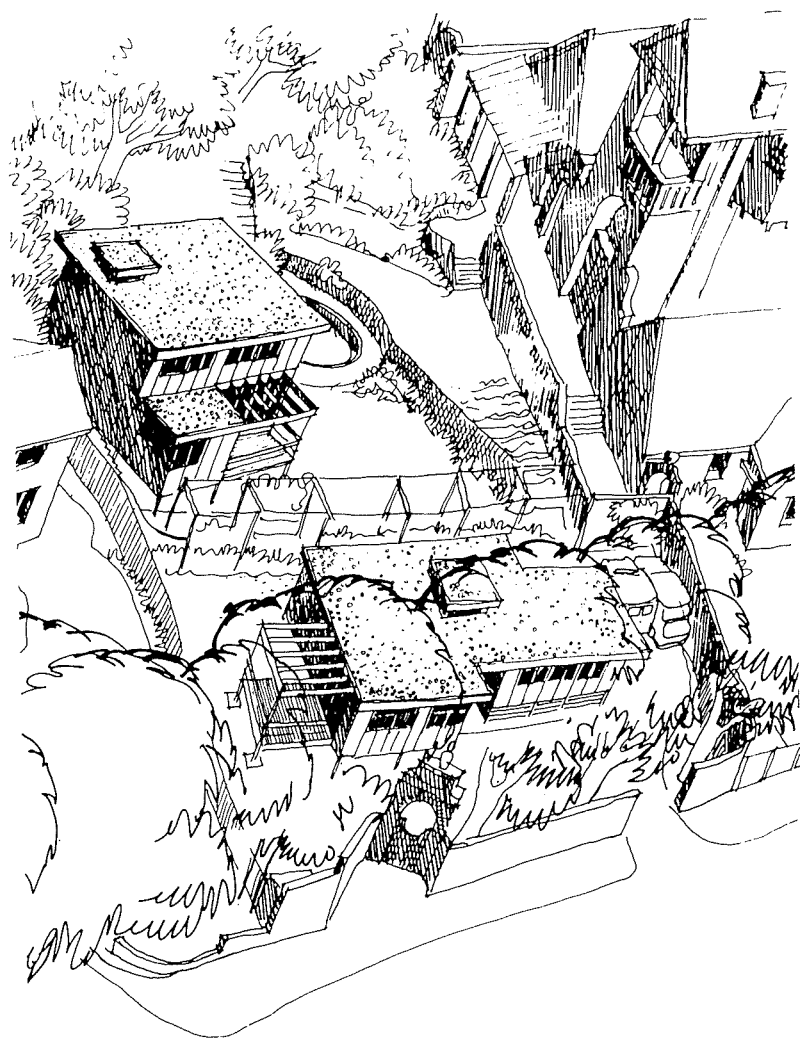
*Nellie Dick*



*Carlo Cafiero as a young man*



*Carlo Cafiero in 1878*



*A view of the Lewisham self-build project*



illegality, which is the only road leading to revolution, it is necessary to resort to methods in conformity with this end. . . .

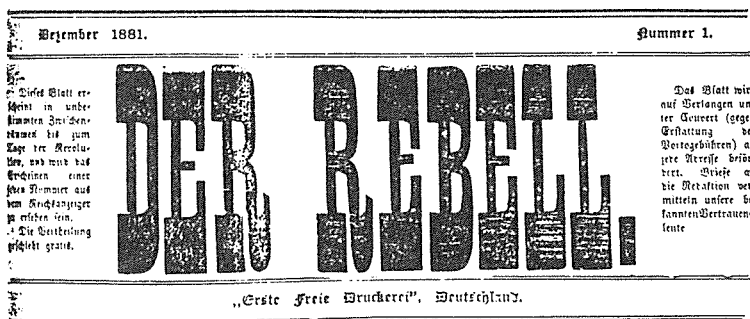
The technical and chemical sciences having already done service in the revolutionary cause and being destined to do still greater service in the future, the Congress recommends organizations and individuals belonging to the International Working-People's Association to give great weight to the study and application of these sciences as a method of defence and attack.

This is the text given in the report in Tucker's *Liberty* (20 August 1881), taken from the Swiss paper *Le Révolté*, which published a very full account of the whole congress. *Le Révolté* referred to 'propagande par le fait', which is generally rendered in English as 'propaganda by deed', and this resolution represents the definite shift in the meaning of the term from acts of collective revolt to acts of individual terror.

Following these lines, Nathan-Ganz soon published in *Freiheit* (13 August 1881) another article on 'Chemistry and the Revolution'. His next article in *Freiheit* (21 August 1881), 'Money and the Revolution', began with the motto: 'Really moral is everything which has has its starting-point altruism — the welfare of others. Really amoral is everything trying to promote egoism — self-interest — at the expense of others'. Nathan-Ganz then recommended the replenishment by all means of the 'Spandau Tower' (money-box) of the revolution and, although he though avoiding saying so explicitly, quite clearly implied the employment of such means as theft, fraud, and swindle. As a direct consequence of this article, Johann Neve closed the columns of *Freiheit* to Nathan-Ganz.

He soon left England, and in the autumn of 1881 spent two or three months in the Netherlands, living in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. From there he announced on 2 September the appearance of a clandestine German paper, *Der Kampf* (The Fight), which he eventually published in London in December 1881 under the title *Der Rebell* (The Rebel). It included articles on all Nathan-Ganz's favourite themes — 'Economic Terrorism' (fraud, etc.), 'The Revolution Approaches!', 'On Warfare', and 'The Social War' on his favourite practical propositions for the approaching revolution. He published only one issue of *Der Rebell* (which was continued in 1883 and ironically became the paper of the group around Josef Peukert, the Austrian Social Revolutionary and later anarchist who was at the London Congress one of Nathan-Ganz's most bitter opponents).

In January 1882 Nathan-Ganz was in Paris, among other things to discover the truth of the suspicions about the police spy Serreux (who had been a delegate to the London Congress and who was one of the editors of the Paris anarchist paper *La Révolution Sociale* to which Nathan-Ganz had contributed). On his return to England, Nathan-



Ganz was arrested in Southampton at the end of January 1882 at the request of the Dutch Government, which demanded his extradition on a charge of obtaining money by false pretences at Rotterdam. He lost the case at the Queen's Bench Division in London on 30 March and a few days later was extradited to the Netherlands. It seems that he had promised through advertisements directed at publicans in Germany large profits by offering them valuable jewelry and watches at ridiculously low prices — and such large amounts of money came in that while counting all the gold marks Nathan-Ganz completely forgot to send the promised watches. This forgetfulness led to his being sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

Thus ends the short, sharp career of the anarchist known as 'Dr Nathan-Ganz' — whose introduction of the emphasis on chemistry and dynamite for revolutionary propaganda and of the justification of financing propaganda and revolution by illegal means had such far-reaching consequences in the movement. But who was he, where did he come from, and what became of him?

\* \* \*

As in the interviews he had given as editor of *The Anarchist* in Boston, Nathan-Ganz also claimed during the extradition proceedings in London and in the trial in Rotterdam that 'he was a native of Pesth by birth and had been subsequently naturalized as a citizen of the United States' (report in *The Times*, 31 March 1882). However, all the people who met him in London in 1881 before, during and after the Congress agreed that he was not Hungarian, and that his accent both in English and in French sounded German. In the 1920s he claimed in published biographies to have been born in Cincinnati on 6 January 1855; and a little later he told Nettlau that he was born in Alsace. One of those who knew him in 1881 in London, Karl Schneidt, got much closer in his reminiscences (published on several occasions during the

1890s), saying that 'he was born a German and originated from Hesse. At least his accent when speaking German pointed to Hesse as his homeland. He mentioned also often that he had studied at the University of Giessen.'

As in other cases of such research, when everything leads to a dead end, why not try the occasionally if unwillingly helpful police? The record offices for this part of Germany are in Marburg and Wiesbaden, and a search in the Hauptstaatsarchiv in Wiesbaden confirmed that the police are sometimes better informed than academics, or even comrades. In a number of reports at the time of the Rotterdam trial the German police established that 'Dr Edward Nathan-Ganz' was identical with Eduard Nathan, described as a clerk, who had been born on 6 January 1856 in Mainz.

The birth-certificate then obtained from the record office in Mainz showed that his parents were Moises Nathan, a shopkeeper, 34 years old, and Amalia, née Ganz, 20 years old; both were Jewish. Eduard certainly wasn't a doctor of any kind; indeed, he never acquired any academic qualifications and didn't even attend a university. Almost certainly he never served in the army either. In 1873 or 1874, at the age of about seventeen, he went for a while to the United States (possibly to avoid military service in Germany), and he later said that an uncle edited a (German) daily newspaper, probably in either Cincinnati or Chicago. There he learnt the trade of a journalist — but also, as his police records show, exercised himself in the art of enticing money out of other people's pockets. Back in Germany, he was in 1875 sentenced in Frankfurt am Main to three months' imprisonment for fraud; he escaped from custody and was arrested in January 1876 in Budapest under the name of Charles Edward Robertson from America, again for fraud and obtaining money by false pretences. Soon, of course, he was back in the United States again.

Shortly after his release from prison in Rotterdam, he permanently dropped the name Nathan-Ganz. In 1888 he appeared in Paris as Da Costa, but he was soon identified and again wanted by the Dutch, Belgian and French police for the same offences as before. But then the police lost all track of him. When Nettlau began his historical researches in the late 1880s and 1890s, and inquired about Nathan-Ganz in the movement among people who had known him in 1881, no one knew what had become of him; he had completely disappeared from sight.

But, as every historian knows, if one is looking for something or someone and luck strikes once, it usually strikes a second time — generally when one doesn't expect it and is looking for something

completely different. A few years after having found out about Nathan-Ganz's origins, in a completely different context I was going through Gustave Hervé's French paper *La Guerre Sociale* (The Social War) for the period before the First World War — and suddenly felt as if lightning had struck when I looked at an article headed '500,000!' (20/26 March 1912). It printed a letter to the President of the French Republic signed 'Number 22, ex-Lieutenant and Proprietor'. Hervé had been in prison since May 1910 serving a sentence of six years and three months for his anti-patriotic propaganda, and the letter formulates the somewhat familiar thought:

Hervé in prison or out of prison makes little difference, for it is not men that this movement is lacking. What it needs is the *nervus rerum*, His Majesty Money — indispensable in our present society, even to make revolution it is needed. So — this money, I am going to put it at their disposal, and we shall see what is more dangerous, Hervé liberated without a penny, or Hervé in the dungeon with 500,000 francs at his disposal.

'Number 22' had already twice given 1,000 francs — first in January 1912, 'to protest in a practical way against your detention [as] an old Lieutenant who has said farewell to all theories and only preserves the cult of courageous men' (Eugène Merle, 'Un beau geste', *La Guerre Sociale*, 31 January/5 February 1912); and then in February, 'following my protest against your detention, I shall put at your disposal each month 1,000 francs until the day of your liberation' (Eugène Merle, 'Pour la libération de Gustave Hervé', *La Guerre Sociale*, 14/20 February 1912). In March, April, and June there followed a further 1,000 francs; however, half the last sum was to be given to the Malatesta Defence Committee in London (protesting against his threatened deportation from Britain). Then for the sixth time the receipt of 1,000 francs was announced and a further letter printed signed 'Ex-Lieutenant' (Miguel Almerayda, 'Le 6e billet de 1,000 francs', *La Guerre Sociale*, 10/16 July 1912). The following issue was decorated with the headline, 'HERVÉ LIBÉRÉ'. The following week Hervé thanked 'particularly the Ex-Lieutenant who during the last seven months of my imprisonment bombarded me every month according to his promise with a 1,000-franc note destined for my good revolutionary work and with a truly military precision'.

Two years later, several months before the First World War actually began, Hervé had shed his violent anti-patriotism and had turned from an anti-militarist into an ardent French patriot. In response to this betrayal *La Guerre Sociale* (11/17 February 1914) printed for the last time a letter signed 'Ex-Lieutenant No. 22', severely criticising Hervé's change of attitude and tactics and advocating an united front of 'all socialist forces, of all those who are united by a fundamental and

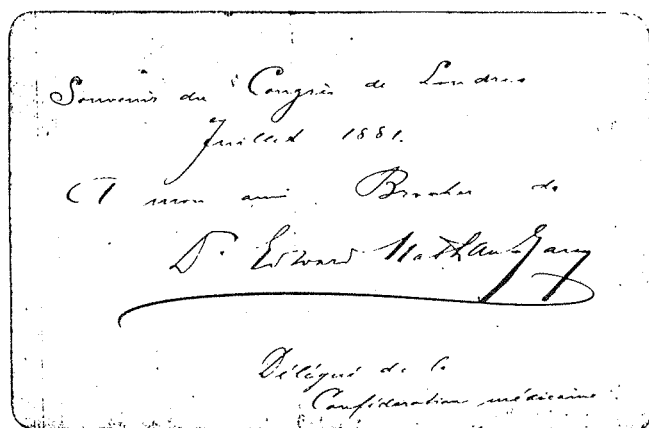
irreducible opposition to the bourgeois class in its entirety and to the state as its instrument. I shall never understand an alliance between those who want to destroy the present social order and those who defend it'.

It is not very likely that two different people would so mysteriously sign themselves as 'No 22', and it is easy to imagine reasons for the demotion of a false officer from Colonel to Lieutenant, but hard facts are elusive. Here the name of Hervé had to serve as a lead on the track of this evasive personality, and it eventually helped to unearth a 46-page pamphlet which was entitled *Le Général et le Lieutenant*, subtitled 'Correspondance entre Gustave Hervé et Charles-L. Hartmann', and published in Geneva in 1917. In his introduction the pacifist, former anarchist and future Communist Henri Guilbeaux informed the reader: Good fortune has enabled me to dissipate the thick mystery clouding this curious personality. American by birth and French, more exactly Alsatian by origin, Dr Charles-L. Hartmann, at present 62 years old, is a curious specimen of these Yankees which Walt Whitman understood and sang about, the great poet of American democracy in whose intimacy, by the way, he once lived and whom he admires.

Adventurous, audacious, intelligent, he discovered while still very young how much economic conditions weigh upon mankind. Socialist-anarchist, he did not hesitate to leave his family. . . . During several years he had a rough, painful existence. . . . He tried nearly all professions with more or less success, or more precisely more or less unsuccess. . . . His intention had been to acquire some kind of fortune which would not only ensure his material existence but which would also enable him to devote himself to a useful revolutionary propaganda. He made it, and generally curious, he travelled. He visited the five corners of the world, studying art, history, the political institutions of the largest and the smallest states.

At this point my doubts about the identity of Eduard Nathan alias Dr Edward Nathan-Ganz alias Dr Charles-Louis Hartmann were — perhaps a little prematurely — virtually dispelled. But when I was enthusiastically telling a friend and colleague the story, another of those strange coincidences finally settled the case. For, while working through thousands of pages of shorthand notes which Max Nettlau had taken during visits in Spain, he had suddenly come across a few pages with accounts of several talks Nettlau had in Vienna during 1928 and 1929 with 'Delegate No 22 at the 1881 Congress'. Once the connection with Nettlau was established, of course, much more material became available — including numerous letters to Nettlau from 'Consul Dr Charles-L. Hartmann' and Nettlau's reminiscences together with several explanations, such as the following:

The whole affair started in this way. In about 1926 *Rocker* told me . . . about an



older gentleman who had bought all of his and my historical books. . . . He had subsequently written to Rocker and visited him, inquiring about me and displaying a good knowledge of the ideas and the movement. . . . In 1928 this gentleman moved to *Baden* near *Vienna* and wrote from there. . . — There suddenly stood in front of my eyes *a riddle of the past* finally solved. His careful handwriting shaped the L in Charles-Louis in a peculiar way, and I picked up the papers of the London Social Revolutionary Congress (1881) which I had received from [Gustave Brocher], and among these resolutions etc. written by 'Dr *Nathan Ganz*', and I found the same L and identified both handwritings as identical.

In this way, and with the information given in his letters and books ('I have written *fourteen* books of which a number have been translated into four, five languages'), his biography since his 'disappearance' in 1888 could be at least roughly reconstructed as follows.

At the beginning of 1889, he was in Florida, travelling then in North and South America, where somehow, somewhere he became consul. In 1896 he was living in Hakodate (Japan) and in January 1898 in Havana (Cuba). At the end of 1899 or early in 1900 he married Marguerite Thouvenin. In October 1902 he was in New York, in August 1903 in Long Island. From at least 1906 onwards, he was living in France until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, with regular visits to Lugano (Switzerland) and Brighton, where he met Kropotkin again shortly before and during the first months of the war. On 1 August 1914 he left France for England, where he stayed in London and Brighton until February 1915. On 27 February 1915 he left Liverpool on board the *Carmania* for New York. On 21 April he left New York

again for Genoa, and on the way he was arrested on 27 April in Gibraltar. He was interned as an enemy alien, shipped in October to Liverpool, and eventually to Knockaloe on the Isle of Man. In February 1916 he was released on the intervention of Aristide Briand, partly in recognition of the 500,000-franc bluff which had contributed to the release of Hervé in 1912. He left England for Paris and shortly afterwards moved to Switzerland, settling near Zürich. There he got involved in pacifist and partly pro-German circles, cooperated for a while with Henri Guilbeaux (who published the Hervé pamphlet for him), and was involved in the creation of the daily paper *Paris-Génève*. Partly for all this activity, for his anti-French propaganda activities, and allegedly also for spying, he was — like Guilbeaux and several others — tried in France in his absence and sentenced to death.

In about 1920 he moved to Berlin where he opened a news agency, the Deutsche Presse Zentrale. In 1928 he moved to Baden, near Vienna, and at the end of 1929 back to Germany, first to Baden-Baden and then to Bad Homburg in Hesse. This was only 25 miles away from where he was born; indeed his wife said after his death not only that she was always convinced he was German but that she thought he had deliberately returned to the area he came from (letter to Nettlau, 11 July 1938). During these years in Germany and Austria he was no longer politically active. He made an increasingly precarious living by giving courses on writing and journalism and by producing publications on the subject, including a journal *Der Journalist und Schriftsteller: Fachorgan des Verbandes der Journalisten und Schriftsteller* (The Journalist and Writer: Professional Paper of the Association of Journalists and Writers — an organisation founded by himself). In 1930 he had an anxious time, when the true Dr Charles-Louis Hartmann was arrested in France on account of the death-sentence, and defended himself by claiming that for many years he had suffered in several ways by being confused with someone else who was using his name and papers!

The false Hartmann enjoyed his occasional correspondence with Nettlau, revelling in reminiscences and justifying his actions. In a series of letters responding to the publication in 1931 of the volume of Nettlau's *History of Anarchy* covering him and the London Congress, he recalled incidents or tried to correct errors or redress the balance.

Your criticism is completely justified and pleasantly impartial. Is it known to you that both Kropotkin and Malatesta were informed of the 'Expropriations' planned? The first refusing, M. on the other hand actively involved to procure the means for a paper *L'Insurrezione* [planned by Malatesta and Vito Solieri to be published in London in July and August 1881] and an insurrection in the province.

Nettlau in his unpublished memoirs at this point described Kropotkin's fury over Nathan-Ganz as hypocrisy and remarked drily: 'Who wrote more about *expropriation* than Kropotkin and yet would never touch other people's property?'

Nathan-Ganz also claimed to have succeeded

in this way to support financially several Russian events, in particular the liberation of Leo Deutsch, the Jeune Garde of Almereyda, Hervé's Guerre Sociale, L'Anarchie of Mauricius, etc. . . . A *conditio sine qua non* is to abstain from all political activity, even from visiting meetings, comrades; you have to be bourgeois with the bourgeois and to indulge yourself in the beautiful things of the bourgeois system. (Letter, 2 March 1931)

He also claimed:

Of course without 'The Anarchist', Liberty would never have appeared. . . . Tucker had received the entire contents of the archives of 'The Anarchist's' correspondence, subscribers, &c., which helped it a great deal. . . . It was no independent former plan of Tucker to have a paper of his own, but the opportunity and facilities which the disappearance of the Anarchist offered, that led to the founding of 'Liberty — not the daughter but the mother of order'. (Letter, in English, 12 March 1931)

Tucker's comment was curt: ' "Liberty" did not grow out of Ganz's affairs in any way' (letter to Nettlau, 6 July 1937).

Now, however, Nathan-Ganz had become more pessimistic:

I myself have really no wishes at all, I am despairing of any betterment for the masses, fifty long years I had the hope and the outlook today is gloomier than it was then! I feel bored of every thing, of that stupid joke of life itself and I am gladly awaiting the day when it will be over. You find forgetfulness and pleasure in your work — the sight of pen and paper is hateful to me! (Christmas Day, 1929)

And yet:

I am stuck presently up to the neck and head in work to earn bread without margarine, not to speak of butter.

As you see from enclosed pamphlet, I am trying presently to make editors out of hairdressers' assistants. That is by no means as difficult as you might think. It would be much more difficult to turn an editor into a good hair artist. (4 December 1931)

On 18 March 1934 the man who began as Eduard Nathan, is known to historians as Edward Nathan-Ganz, and was still calling himself Charles-Louis Hartmann, died at Bad Homburg of a brain haemorrhage at the age of 78.

For half a century Nettlau was the only person who knew that Charles-Louis Hartmann was Edward Nathan-Ganz, and he published nothing about this knowledge because he had been begged not to reveal it. And even Nettlau didn't know that this person was really Eduard Nathan. Now the mystery of his identity is solved, but no doubt there are still several other mysteries about him.



## Notes

This first reliable factual account of the life of Edward Nathan-Ganz is largely based on unpublished material from the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, and police and public archives in Wiesbaden, The Hague, Paris, and London. Published references to him appear in the third volume of Max Nettlau's *Geschichte der Anarchie* (History of Anarchy), *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre* (Berlin, 1931) and in several other places — Paul Avrich *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton, 1984), Ronald Creagh *Histoire de l'anarchisme aux Etats-Unis d'Amérique, 1826-1886* (Grenoble, 1981) and *L'Anarchisme aux Etats-Unis* (2 volumes, Berne &c, 1983), John M. Hart *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931* (Austin, 1978), Clara E. Lida 'Mexico y el internacionalismo clandestino del ochocientos' in *El trabajo y los trabajadores en la historia de Mexico* (Mexico and Tucson, 1979), A. Sartorius Freiherr von Waltershausen *Der moderne Socialismus in den Vereinigten Staaten von America* (Berlin, 1890). Reminiscences by people who knew him include Henri Guilbeaux *Du Kremlin au Cherche-Midi* (Paris, 1933), Josef Peukert *Erinnerungen eines Proletariers aus der revolutionären Arbeiterbewegung* (Berlin, 1913), *Die Hintermänner der Sozialdemokratie: Von einem Eingeweihten* [i.e. Karl Schmidt] (Berlin, 1890).

The known books of Nathan-Ganz, which were all published anonymously or pseudonymously, are as follows:

*Richard Wagner als Reformator der Tonkunst* (New York, 1876)

*Studies in German Literature* (Chicago, 1876, 1887)

*Lex Talionis* (Chicago, 1891)

*Esotheric Buddhism* (London, 1891)

*Lectures on Japanese Art* (London, 1895)

*Modern France* (illustrated 3rd edition, New York, 1910)

*Vor der Waffenruhe: Eine Kritik der reinen Unvernunft* (Basle, 1917)

*Le Général et le Lieutenant: Correspondance entre Gustave Hervé et Charles-L. Hartmann* (Geneva, 1917)

*Briefe eines Pazifisten* (1917)

*Das Recht des legitimen Besitzes und andere Ungeimliche Geschichten* (Halle a. S., 1917)

*Kriegsgefangener auf Gibraltar und der Insel Man* (Bern, 1918)

*Wer trägt die Schuld am Weltkriege* (Berlin, 1924)

*Hinter den Kulissen des französischen Journalismus: Von einem Pariser Chefredakteur* (Berlin, 1925)

*Journalist und Schriftsteller: Eine Einführung in den Beruf* (Bad Homburg, 1931)

Thanks are due to Jaap Kloosterman and Nicolas Walter.

## *Brian Richardson*

### Architecture for All

Architecture is too important to be left to the Architects. It is important to every one who lives in a built environment. We want to exercise proper control over our lives, so we attempt to fashion the space around ourselves to make it comfortable and beautiful. Architects can't do this *for* us, only *with* us. In modern times — as I have already argued (*The Raven* 5) — we have somehow lost control, left it too much with professional architects, designers, planners and economists, and consequently ended up with hideous buildings despoiling our formerly comely towns and countryside. I argued that we needed to re-learn a language of building, to make it common usage again, and to realise the utopian dream of Architecture for All.

#### The Lewisham example

The most direct approach to this is to design and build for ourselves. Drawing on the very many skills available to us in the community, including those of professionals who are willing to serve and not dictate, this is not an impossibly difficult task, and here I want to cite the example of the Lewisham Self-Build Housing Association.

About three dozen families now live in the London borough of Lewisham in some of the nicest Council houses ever built. Well, not exactly even Council houses, because they have a shared ownership arrangement — part rented, part paid for by mortgage — technically known as 'equity shared'. Each of these families planned their own detached house and built it, rather than wait around on the Council's list for suitable — or, in most cases, any — Council-provided flats, maisonettes, or terrace houses to come up. They are good, sturdy timber-framed houses — sunny, airy, cheerfully coloured, set among trees, comfortable to live in, cheap to run, and easy to maintain. The occupiers are happy, self-confident, sociable people who care for their neighbours and their surroundings, and who have nothing of the alienated relationships which are common between orthodox Council tenants and their landlords. How did this come about?

### The utopian dream and the cast in the drama

What happened was the convergence of a number of people's dreams and the resourcefulness and steadfastness of those involved, who were determined to make their dreams a reality. The cast in the drama that developed was as follows.

Colin Ward, our old friend and anarchist propagandist, the author of such books as *Anarchy in Action*, *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* and *When We Build Again*. With typical modesty, he claims that his role was merely that of go-between, but the ideas expressed in his writings were a strong influence on the other players.

Walter Segal, now dead (but still very much with us through his influence, to which we try to give expression through the Walter Segal Self-Build Trust), an extraordinary man, at once highly professional and anti-professional. Colin and I disagree whether to ascribe the word *anarchist* to him. Colin rightly says that because he abhorred labels and never described himself as an anarchist, we should not 'claim' him. I say that if a man behaves like an anarchist, as Walter Segal did to an astounding degree while still practising architecture mostly within the established system, then *anarchist* is the proper word to describe him. Certainly he had a special approach to people and their built environment which he developed with dogged determination and great intellect, and which flowered in the devising of a way to design and put buildings together that was revolutionary. This approach flouted many of the tenets of orthodox practice. He was no respecter of arbitrary authority. While treating officials with courtesy, he evaded their restrictive prescriptions by every means at his considerable disposal, both fair and foul. He would not delegate to anybody else responsibility for the outcome of his work, so he did not shelter behind compliance with regulations — he had to be satisfied himself with all aspects of the performance of his buildings. He did not employ any staff, not even a secretary, taking on all roles himself. If there was any failure, he knew it would be his. He was one of the rare architects who never insured himself against claims for negligence.

Whether overtly as anarchists or not, Walter and I met each other in May 1974 in Colin Ward's home on a social occasion which had been adroitly devised to bring together someone with a great idea and someone else in dire need of it. I needed it, as another member of the cast, because I took my job as a Council housing architect seriously and was trying to find my way out of a dilemma. I was trying, within the very limited confines of Government cost control and the capabilities of the building industry, to design fit houses for those people who had to

resort to the Council, not being able to afford what was offered on the capitalist market. I was frustrated. The resources available were too few and the possible occupants too many. Houses could not be designed for specific people but had to be for general classes of as yet unidentified people. Consequently they could never really fit the needs of their occupants, who could therefore never develop the feelings of pride and responsibility for them which are necessary for houses to be loved and cared for. The best way out would be to involve the occupants more deeply in the design and construction of their own dwellings, but the normal operation of Council departments (separate for Architecture and for Housing!) in the paternalistic way they produced buildings and selected tenants precluded this. Colin Ward had long advocated that, if it were done, a great untapped resource of energy and imagination could be made use of.

But how could this be done? I was very excited to learn that Walter Segal had a way.

Happily, a narrow majority of the elected members of the Labour Council also had a dream — that Lewisham should be in the forefront of enlightened housing policy — and they agreed after much doubt and discussion to consider this (for them) most radical proposal. After the meeting with Walter in Colin's house, I spent years propagating the idea of a self-building housing project in Council circles. I quickly found staunch allies in two influential elected members — Nicholas Taylor, the chairman of the Planning Committee, who had written *The Village in the City*, and Ron Pepper, the chairman of the Housing Committee — but the first response of most Councillors was sceptical.

Also in the cast were my fellow Council officers in other departments and a myriad of officials in other authorities in the pyramid of regional and national government, all of whom had to be persuaded that something new should happen against the grain of established practice. Many of them also proved to be secret dreamers of something better, but the reaction of most was to resist the idea, and some were downright hostile.

After apparently endless negotiations with the local, metropolitan and national bureaucracies and a series of committee reports, it was not until March 1976 that the proposal was finally adopted. All the mandatory building permissions had yet to be obtained, because in the absence of the self-builders the individual houses could not be designed, but the path was laid for all the requirements of the construction by-laws, the fire regulations, water, gas and electrical service authorities to be satisfied and for the design and cost standards of the Department of the Environment to be met.

It seemed that a scheme was possible, but all the detailed work had yet to be done.

The scene was now set for the enrolment of the principal members of the cast, who were of course the folk in Lewisham who, rather than wait passively for their names to come to the top of a Council list — or for the Pools to come up (which was hardly less likely) — were prepared to do something active and demanding of themselves and others to get good homes.

### **Enrolling the self-builders and organising the scheme**

Local advertisements announced that the Council was prepared to sponsor a self-build group, and in July 1976 a Town Hall meeting was held, at which Walter Segal spoke. So many people came forward that finally names had to be drawn from a hat by the Mayor. There was no qualification for entering the ballot other than being on the Council housing or transfer waiting list; age, sex, building skill and financial means were all unconditional. So two well-mixed groups emerged for the two phases of scheme undertaken — of old and young, men and women, black and white, relatively rich and relatively poor, and experienced and inexperienced in some aspects of building.

Because this way of providing Council housing was new, a tremendous number of standard bureaucratic procedures had to be followed, modified or, when they didn't exist, devised. Also, the organisational structure of this kind of self-build group was new. At the first Town Hall meeting, a steering group was set up which worked alongside the Council officers for about three years, organising the project before any building work was started. The members of this pressure-group were really the heroes of the piece, because it was an act of faith for them to continue working over this long period demanding extremes of patience and dedication. Meanwhile the self-builders and their families were in an agony of suspense about where they should live, what jobs they might take, which schools their children should go to, and so on.

Local government is fully accountable for its expenditure on Council housing. It is required that competitive tenders are obtained, the contracts fairly awarded, the work closely supervised, and on completion the accounts gone through with a fine toothcomb. Every stage is circumscribed by the Government paymasters who, through the Housing Investment Programme, pay about two-thirds of the bill, the other third coming out of the local authority rates.

Our scheme was so different that it didn't fit the standard procedures, but it still had to be made acceptable to the powers that be.

Since the self-builders were the contractors, there was no element of competition, so this requirement had to be waived. There was no realistic way in which the value of their work could be measured. The cost of materials was known, so a standard proportion was extrapolated from conventional jobs and added to cover the cost of labour. Thus the mandatory Government cost limits could be complied with and the subsidy obtained. The self-builders were not prepared to build Council houses to be rented back to themselves; but the Council was not prepared to support the building of wholly private houses: so they met halfway. The equity in the complete house would be shared equally between the occupant and the Council. The occupant would pay half the cost of the house (by way of a mortgage loan advanced by the Council) and would pay half the rent. The building labour allowance 'earned' by the self-builder was set against the purchase price of the half-share, and thus the mortgage repayments together with half a 'fair' rent were kept within reasonable reach. Total weekly outgoings started a little higher than ordinary Council rents and, as rents have subsequently risen while mortgage repayments have stayed down, they have become relatively lower.

At the outset — and this was agreed before the popular Conservative practice was introduced of giving sitting tenants the right to purchase — the self-builders insisted that they should have the opportunity to buy out the Council's equity share by stages until they finally had complete leasehold ownership (which the majority of them have since done).

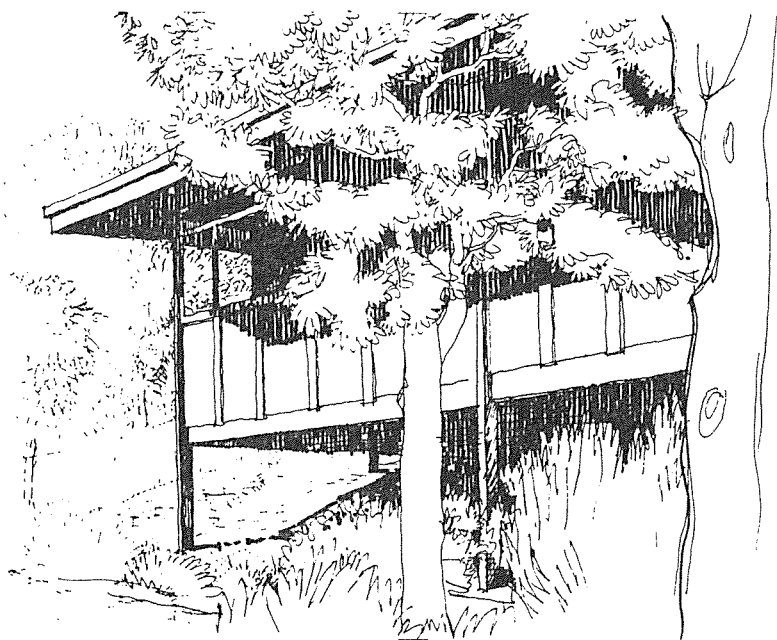
### **The house designs and building methods**

Having committed themselves to the project, the first-phase group of fourteen ballot-winners set about planning their houses in collaboration with Walter Segal†. Then they arranged classes to learn the necessary basic skills. These were gladly provided by the local Adult Education Institute and were tutored by Walter Segal, a local plumber, a local electrician, a Council solicitor, and so on.

Like so many great ideas, Walter's new way of building is based on accepting the soundest principles of the old ways and discarding the dross. It is so essentially simple that, once we drop the barriers to

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† And later Jon Broome, a young architect colleague of mine who lived in the area. He joined the cast in two roles, becoming a self-builder in the scheme and the co-architect with Walter. Now, after Walter's death, he is the chief proponent of the Segal building method.



comprehension that cloud our minds when we believe that things like building are too difficult for us, any of us could grasp the method and work through the processes. Only the most straightforward use of simple tools is required — saw, drill, spanner, and screwdriver. The heavy, wet skilled trades like brick-laying, reinforced concrete work and plastering are simply eliminated.

Everybody seems to have a basic inclination for woodwork. Wood is an easy material to fashion and rewarding in the beauty of the finished product. There is a strong tradition of timber frame all over Europe, and its merits have long been recognised. Walter applied a lot of thought to interpreting the tradition in the modern context. His house frames are arranged so that they can be made by one or two people with an electric saw and drill, bolted together while flat on the ground, and then in a burst of communal activity raised upright and braced together to form a stable structure (a similar procedure is the collective barn-raising in traditional North American communities). This can be quickly roofed, allowing the great bulk of the work to go on under cover by the family building with such occasional help as they need from the group from time to time. The timber floor framing is designed to be well off the ground, and the framing posts extend downwards so

that the building is on stilts. This has many advantages — one is that sloping ground does not have to be levelled before it can be built on; another is that foundations under the relatively few posts are extremely economical and a light task compared with those for a brick building. Wall panels and doors and windows are inserted into the completed frame, and there is much flexibility possible in their positioning and any subsequent rearrangement.

### **Work on site**

After the long frustrating period of planning, organisation and waiting on the bureaucracy, when at last work started in March 1979 the energy released was amazing. Working in evenings and at weekends as it suited them, and with most families taking some summer holiday to relieve the pressure, individual houses were built in periods ranging from the quickest at ten months to the slowest at two years. (The actual number of hours worked naturally went unrecorded as family, friends and other self-builders came and went on site as circumstances demanded.) This is in striking contrast to the ordinary type of self-build scheme in traditional brick and block construction when members are selected for their building skills. All the houses in this kind of group are built together by a team working to a programme with strict time-keeping enforced, the members therefore having to guarantee attendance on the site for a fixed period each week. Such is the importance of everyone conforming to the work plan that fixed penalties have to be incorporated into the rules to ensure compliance. Furthermore, the extensive foundation works and lengthy wet and heavy building trade processes take a long time to complete. It is difficult work, and often the rules forbid women and children to be on site.

At Lewisham, by contrast, sensible design, thought out from first principles, complemented with a thoroughly anarchist approach to organisation, made the building work an enjoyable process. Each family was responsible for their own house, but drew on the other skills in the group as required on a mutual-aid exchange basis. The only rule was that there should be no rules. The 'model rule book' for self-builders proposed by the National Federation of Housing Associations was simply thrown out. No obligations, no penalties. Just the ordinary forces of enlightened self-interest and comradeship were sufficient cement to keep the group working together as an entity. As authoritarian and commercial interests were not dominant, altruism flourished. The stronger helped the weaker. Differences were resolved by discussion.



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### **The successful outcome**

By July 1980, when I had finished my stint with the Council and been given early retirement, the first phase scheme was virtually complete. I wanted to get on with building my wife's paper-making workshop and our house in Herefordshire (that's another story), and it seemed a good time to go.

As a Council architect, I was delighted with the technical success of the scheme. My elected employers were pleased, too. The houses were cheap. Even though the Council had in a way paid for the labour contributed by the self-builders, by allowing a reduction in the mortgage repayments (for the half-share being bought by the occupants), the house costs came out very low by comparison with commercially built Council houses of the same size and quality. They were also no trouble for the Council to maintain. One of the worst burdens a local authority has to carry is the management and repair of its housing stock. To the Lewisham self-builders, maintenance is little problem because, having built the houses themselves, they know them so intimately that faults developing can be quickly detected and easily put right. Indeed they were so confident that for the rented portions of the equity-shared houses which they might have reasonably expected the Council to pay for they undertook to maintain them free of charge. Another gain for the Council had been that the land offered for the scheme was difficult to build on in orthodox construction. They had not been able to come up with a viable scheme for it under Government cost control restrictions and, unoccupied, it was a political embarrassment. No problem, though, with the Segal method.

It seemed as though the gate was now open for many other similar schemes to follow the path we had trodden.

### **Self Build — build selves**

The main success, though, was not kudos for the Council, nor even an architectural triumph that has been noted in the professional press and even earned an international award from the United Nations during the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, but the effect on the people who had done it. From being dissatisfied tenants putting up with bad housing because there was no hope of anything better for people in their circumstances, they became transformed through their own actions. Deeds of daring, marathons of effort, triumphs of skill and ingenuity were performed by individuals on their own and working together which they had no idea they were capable of before. They have an air of fulfilment about them which comes from the completion of a

hard but worthwhile task. The effort was not aimed at just getting on to the bottom rung of a property-owning ladder which would bring in a fortune as prices rose, but the more truly valuable one of fashioning their own living environment to have it just the way they wanted it. None of them so far has sold out to make a profit. As Ken Atkins (the chairman of the the first phase) observed when he had to have his house valued so that he could increase his mortgage and build on an extension (which is so easy in Segal construction), the sum quoted was staggering. But, he added, if he sold he would find it hard, even moving up market, to find anything like as nice a place as he has got, or be embedded in such a good community.

### **The Sequel**

Disappointingly, however, there has been a distinct lull in the action since the second-phase scheme was successfully self-built between 1985 and 1987. No other Council has yet emulated Lewisham, partly perhaps because of central Government pressure on local authorities to curtail their housing activities, partly because of confused political thinking by those very Labour councils who want to do something about the poor housing situation but mistakenly think that self-building turns their socialist supporters into capitalists.

But there are two factors which might help to end the hiatus. One is the little campaigning group which I mentioned at the outset — the Walter Segal Self-Build Trust, formed by Lewisham self-builders and friends and relations of Walter who are determined to see his liberating approach to building perpetuated. We have been holding teach-in sessions with aspiring self-builders and with local authority and housing association people up and down the country, and we are getting a strong response, though getting access to reasonably priced land comes up again and again as a major obstacle.

The other has perhaps been stimulated by the Lewisham example and the handful of 'community architecture' schemes that have caught the attention of Prince Charles (who, perhaps fortunately, shied away from any involvement in our anarchist-inspired enterprise!). It is the launching, this very autumn, by a Government quango, the Housing Corporation, of a big drive to promote more self-building by providing official finance.

Whatever factors apply, if self-build groups drawing on the Lewisham experience become numerous enough to start making a measurable impact on the housing problem, then we shall be one step nearer to reclaiming Architecture for All.

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## John Pether

### Conversation with Nellie Dick

Never before or since has anarchism gained in this country the popular resonance it achieved among the Jewish immigrants in East London during the period before the First World War. The Jewish movement was for a time considerably larger than the native British movement, and this was the only time that anarchism has ever come near to being the dominant ideology of any sizable community in Britain. Yet this episode in the history of British radicalism is often regarded as suspect, and it is neglected in most accounts of anarchism in this country. Even John Quail's effervescent history — *The Slow Burning Fuse* (1978) — makes no more than a passing reference to the Jewish movement in the East End. This neglect is partly the result of seeing that movement as alien. The general (though not exclusive) use of Yiddish prompted the false view that the Jewish anarchists were isolationist and inward-looking. And orthodox labour historians have tended to suggest that the impoverished immigrants turned to anarchism with some kind of messianic fervour — that their movement was more for 'primitive rebels' (to use Eric Hobsbawm's patronising term) than for true 'labouring men'.

The main published accounts of the Jewish movement — the section of Rudolf Rocker's autobiography published in English as *The London Years* (1956), and William J. Fishman's prize-winning history, *East End Jewish Radicals* (1975) — have emphasised the richness and diversity of the milieu. But they too have tended to present it as a world apart. This transcript of a conversation with one of the very few surviving activists of that period goes some way towards redressing the balance. Nellie Dick talks of the awareness of the outside movement, the use of English, the involvement of Gentiles, the endeavours to establish links with the local non-Jewish labour movement. There is of course no questioning the fact that the Jewish movement was the product of a distinct cultural environment and that integration and assimilation weakened the bonds of solidarity and shared adversity on which the movement had been founded. But it was not hermetically sealed from the outside world. Nellie Dick was originally approached in an attempt to find out more about the Jewish movement; but in a later

letter she riposted that she 'never got the feeling that it was Jewish question'.

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Before giving the transcript, it is necessary to set the scene. The Jewish anarchist movement in London has always been closely associated with the German Gentile, Rudolf Rocker (see Nicolas Walter's article on him in *The Raven* 4). He was not the only leader of the movement, but he was certainly its main inspiration, being widely revered as a man of evident sincerity and courage. He was originally involved in the German movement, but he had first encountered Yiddish-speaking anarchists in Paris during the early 1890s. He settled in Britain in 1895, and he became involved in their meetings and papers here during the late 1890s. From 1898 he was a leading writer and speaker in the Jewish anarchist movement. Rocker's German could just about be understood by Yiddish speakers, and in time he came to master the Hebrew script; but he always spoke the language with a strong German accent. (His English remained less fluent, and his son Fermin says that it was not until he settled in the United States in the 1930s that he felt confident enough to address a public meeting in English.)

The movement in the East End revolved around several focal points. There were the small, sometimes ephemeral trade unions, particularly in tailoring and cabinet-making, which were often founded and led by anarchists. These unions reflected the distinct economic structure of the Jewish community, with its special trades and notorious sweatshops and sub-contracting system. Then there was the Arbeter Ring (Workers' Circle), a radical friendly society and self-help organisation in which Rocker and many other anarchists played a prominent role. This proved to be the most enduring embodiment of Jewish radicalism, not finally disbanding until the 1980s. Another bastion was the clubs, one of which opened in Berner Street in 1885 and the most successful of which opened in Jubilee Street in 1906. This was a venue for concerts and socials, and it was also where Rocker and others delivered lectures — not only on politics, but also on art, literature, and science. For those whose appetite was whetted there was also a library (indeed the Workers' Circle and several trade unions had their own libraries too). The other buttress of the movement was the thriving Yiddish political press. Its best-known organ was the *Arbeter Fraind* (Workers' Friend), which was first published in 1885 and first edited by Rocker in 1898; but there was also the cultural monthly, *Germinal* which he founded in 1900.

The anarchist movement was temporarily damaged by the series of criminal events known as the Tottenham outrage and the Houndsditch

murders and the resulting siege of Sidney Street during 1909 and 1911, although none of the participants was in fact an anarchist. But the role of the anarchists in securing at least a partial victory in the bitter tailoring strike of 1912 helped to banish their unjust reputation and confirmed their high standing within the Jewish community. The two following years were a kind of indian summer, but soon the movement was to be permanently devastated first by the First World War and then by the Russian Revolution.

Official repression during the war, especially when conscription was introduced in 1916, took a heavier toll of the Jewish movement than of any other section of the British anarchists — with the internment of ‘enemy aliens’ (i.e. refugees from the German and Austrian Empires), the deportation of ‘allies’ (i.e. refugees from the Russian Empire who were liable to military service there), the arrest of anti-war campaigners, and the harassment and suppression of papers and clubs. In these harsh circumstances, many Jewish radicals left Britain for the slightly easier climate of the United States, and many others dropped out of politics. Then came the long-awaited fall of the Tsarist regime in Russia and the rise of the Bolshevik regime. The latter acted as an ideological and also a physical magnet for many Jews who had roots in or links with the revolutionary movement in ‘the Old Country’. It is no coincidence that the East End, which had once been the anarchist heartland, soon became the main stronghold of the Communist Party in England (culminating in the election of Phil Piratin as the Member of Parliament for Mile End in 1945). The rise of Zionism and the growth of the Jewish settlements in Palestine, following the Balfour Declaration and the fall of the Turkish Empire, also attracted many British Jews, especially with the rise of organised anti-semitism on the Continent and then in this country.

Rocker himself was interned for most of the war and deported before it ended, spending the last 40 years of his life in his native Germany and then the United States, where he died in 1958, and his family left with him. But his memory still lives, and the movement he led has not been forgotten. At a packed meeting at Toynbee Hall in the East End in 1973 to commemorate the centenary of his birth, several people gave first-hand testimony of their contacts with him. Indeed the passage of time has added piquancy to the tales of the good old days, and the dwindling number of survivors will always gladly talk about the past. Bill Fishman’s energetic research and the resulting publicity have inspired many successors, and the increasing openness and inquisitiveness of the Anglo-Jewish community about its background have combined to give a certain vogue to studies of Jewish anarchism. It is now almost a commonplace for young Jewish people to show an increased interest in

the world of their grandparents, and many of them soon come up against the anarchist movement of the days before the First World War.

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There are now very few people who can still say, 'I was there.' One such is Nellie Dick. She was born as Naomi Ploschansky near Kiev in Ukraine on 25 May 1893, and was brought to Britain as a baby. Her father, S. Ploschansky, was a cabinet-maker who was prominent in the anarchist movement in East London, which was how she herself first became involved in it. There was a tradition of children's activities associated with the *Arbeter Frainst* group, and there had been an Anarchist-Socialist Sunday School at the Jubilee Street Club during its early years. When she was little more than a child herself, she took the initiative of starting a new Sunday school at her home and became involved in the activities discussed in her interview.

Those involved in such schools were influenced not only by their elders in the Jewish and the wider anarchist movement but particularly by Francisco Ferrer, the anarchist who had pioneered a libertarian 'Modern School' in Spain from 1901 to 1906 and had visited Britain in 1907, and after his execution by the Spanish authorities in October 1909 such schools were generally named after him or his school.

The anarchist school movement spread in both East and West London, rose and fell, and split, but it continued in the East End until the mid-1920s. There was also a lively parallel movement in Liverpool, led by James H. Dick (who was born of Scottish parents in 1882). He wrote frequently from 1907 onwards in various anarchist papers over his own name or initials or various transparent pseudonyms ('Jay H. Dee', 'Dick James', 'Uncle Jim', 'Jimmy'), and was active in the local [anarchist] Communist Group. He met Ferrer in 1907, and opened a local [anarchist] Communist Sunday School in November 1908, renaming it the International Modern School in November 1909. It closed in May 1911, and in 1912 he moved to London. There he continued his work, and met Nellie Ploschansky in 1913. From the autumn of 1913 they worked together running the renamed International Modern Sunday School in various places in East London, and at the end of 1914 they began to live together. Among other activities the school produced its own papers (*The Modern School* in 1914 and *Liberty* in 1915). It was finally forced to close at the beginning of 1916, as the struggle against conscription intensified.

Nellie's involvement in anarchism was not confined to the Jewish movement or to education. On 28 October 1911 the 25th anniversary of *Freedom* was marked by a meeting at the Food Reform Restaurant in

Furnival Street, Holborn, and the November issue reported the 18-year-old 'Nellie Plostchansky' as 'one of the younger comrades' who took part. She said that she was 'delighted to share in the celebration of the movement in England' and that 'the young would carry on the work of the old', and she recited revolutionary poems by Ferdinand Freiligrath and Voltairine de Cleyre. She took a similar part in several such social events during those years.

Nellie and Jimmy Dick lived for a time at Marsh House, an anarchist commune which was established in 1915 by the leading members of the Freedom Group in Mecklenburgh Street, Bloomsbury. But as the war continued the struggle became more and more difficult. In 1916 she and Jimmy married to protect him from being conscripted, and on New Year's Day 1917 they left Britain. They settled in the United States, where they made a notable contribution to the Modern School movement for more than 40 years — as is recounted by Paul Avrich in *The Modern School Movement* (Princeton, 1980). Their son, James Dick Jr, was active in the anarchist and educational movements and later became a pediatrician. Nellie and Jimmy retired in 1958 and moved to Florida. Jimmy died in 1965. Nellie still lives in Miami, engaged in her mid-nineties in work for the very active Senior Citizen's Movement.

What follows is an abridged transcript of a long telephone conversation with her in 1985. At first she was resolutely opposed to any publication, because she was concerned about various discrepancies and inaccuracies, but she has since relented. However, it should be emphasised that this is simply a record of an informal chat and does not pretend to be a properly documented and corrected account of her experiences. What shines through is the richness of her recollections and the warmth with which she remembered Rocker and the movement in the East End all those years ago.

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## Nellie Dick

*Can you tell me about your work in the Anarchist Sunday School?*

I used to go and listen to Rudolf Rocker's lectures — I was quite young, about twelve — not that I understood them, I didn't understand the language too well; but I did notice that the hall would be filled with men, and very few women: very few women, no young people at all. And it annoyed me; and I thought to myself: Well, what's going to happen when these people grow older? And I asked my father: Why are there no young people here? He says: Well, why don't you go and find out? So I asked one of the men there: Do you have a family? He said: Yes. Why don't they ever come? He said he didn't think about it. And I said: Can I come and visit? Really very bold, but I had made up my mind I must find young people to talk to. So I finally got together with people and asked them to get their children together.

It was during the time when Francisco Ferrer was killed, and we'd heard about his school and so on, so I organised these kids into a little school. At first we met in my father's house. It was a very ordinary home, but we got a few of the children together, and gradually they grew and grew. What I did was have people come, I used to read to them, we would sing and made it a sort of a social life for the children, so they would grow up together with their parents, in the atmosphere the parents had.

*Were your classes in Yiddish at the Sunday School, or in English?*

In English, of course. I didn't know any Yiddish until I was about twelve or thirteen. I had to study it and learn it. I was only about a year old, less than a year old, when I came to England from Russia.

*The children you taught, were they both Gentiles and Jews?*

They were mixed, yes, certainly.

*You told me in a letter about how Kropotkin came to the school.*

Oh yes. Well, we used-to have affairs in the Jubilee Street Club. Kropotkin would come over sometimes to lecture and talk, and we were having games, dancing, and Kropotkin would join us, join the kids in the games. And I was so afraid and scared that he would have a heart attack, you know, jumping around, dancing around with us. But he



enjoyed it. And the Jubilee Street Club was quite a club. I mean, it was a beautiful place — not in the sense of art, for everybody was poor, very poor; but it was a place where we had fun. It was such a peaceful place, it was a place that was so friendly and peaceful and quiet. It was a place where we just came in and met people and talked and played chess, those of us who knew how, and had discussions; and of course we would have our big meetings there. And later on, when we developed, the printing press was taken over there, and it was enlarged and they had quite a big printing office after a while where they printed the *Workers Friend*. We were with the *Workers Friend* (the *Arbeter Frant*), sponsored, in a way.

*Do you remember Milly Witcop and Rudolf Rocker working on the 'Arbeter Frant'?*

Yes, he became the editor of the *Arbeter Frant*. But that was way back in my young years, it must have been when I was about five years old. And the printing press was then in our house, upstairs in our house. Rocker and Milly were setting type as well as the others. I have a list, and I checked up some of the other names that I remember, you know, and there were quite a lot of them, both Jews and Gentiles. But they were all interesting people, well-educated people, and we must have absorbed a lot of their theories, even though we didn't understand their discussions.

*What sort of man was Rocker? What did he look like, and what was his personality?*

Handsome. A large, handsome man, and he had a moustache. He was a very, very good-looking man. And his voice, of course — when he lectured, when he talked, his voice was very powerful. But, I don't know, just everybody seemed to adore him, and be thrilled with him when he spoke.

*What did anarchism mean to him and his followers?*

Well, it meant working with people, being interested in people, and doing whatever you could for people. He worked with all the organised unions. The club itself and the paper itself would have articles by many people, with different views, different ideas, but we were free to express them. And we believed in freedom, in liberty. And we used to sing a song in the Sunday School which was: 'No master, high or low.' I'd say Rudolf was a man of very simple tastes.

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*Can you explain how Rocker, who was a Gentile, came to be the leader of a mainly Jewish movement?*

It was mainly Jewish because it happened, that's all. I don't know how it happened. But I do know — because my father told me — that Rocker was taught Yiddish. He used to speak in German. Jewish people usually can understand the Germans, and I could understand even Rudolf's lectures partly. How he came to be taught Yiddish I don't know. He must have got into a group, fell in love with Milly — she came from a Jewish orthodox family, and he was not — but he melted into the group. The philosophy of anarchism was, as I say, 'No master, high or low.' It was to live together. And my Sunday School — the Sunday School that I headed — was called the Anarchist Communist Sunday School, meaning that we believed in real communism, not what we have in Russia.

*In your letter, you mentioned how during the 1912 dock strike in London, you came across Milly Witcop in a park with a young docker's child.*

Yes; we took a great part in that story. I must have been about fifteen at the time, and we had to take care of the children of the dockers because there was nothing for them to eat. And so we organised and took these children and spread them out among all the comrades that we knew and among all the people that would take care of them. And they stayed with them until the strike was over and they went home. This was one way of helping.

*You told me about the tough young child that Milly had who didn't want to stay with Jews.*

He was a real toughie, a real toughie. I was coming home from the office — I worked at Toynbee Hall, in the Children's Aid Association — and coming home I met them sitting in the little park that runs through Stepney Green. And Milly was very upset, and I said: What's the matter? And she said: This little tough boy. . . . She said she'd taken him to several houses, where he could stay, and he'd run away. And so I asked him: Why didn't you stay? Oh, he wasn't going to stay with those Jews, you know. So maybe I don't look very Jewish, but I said: Would you come and stay with us? And he said: Yes, I'll stay with you. So I took him home. We already had taken care of three or four youngsters, of the dockers' children, and so he was another one. We brought him home and he stayed with us a long time. Because he sort of had a crush on me. He used to be very angry when I went off with

somebody. He walked me to the door. But he used to tell us: When I get married, if I come home and my wife hasn't got the supper ready, I'd hit her with a poker. That's the kind of kids that we had to take into our homes. But they were all right; we got along well.

*The anarchists got blamed at the time for the Houndsditch killings (December 1910) and the siege of Sidney Street (January 1911), Peter the Painter and all that. Do you remember the siege of Sidney Street?*

Oh yes, I remember that. That was the time when Churchill got involved. There was a poem about him in the papers, saying he'd got I don't know how many Scots Guards to fight these two men. You see, when people came from other countries, from Europe, if they were political refugees, the police were always very nice. They said, well, these are political refugees, we'll take them over to the Jubilee Street Club. And they'd bring them over, and then we'd take care of them. And we'd find some place for them to live, some place for them to eat and sleep. One time four of them came over. They had to leave Russia. I don't know whether they were sent out or whether they had to escape from Russia. They got to Denmark, and then a strike broke out and they were with the strikers, and so they were re-arrested and told they'd got to go back to Russia or somewhere else, but they'd have to get out of Denmark. So they came to England. And the police knew right away where to take them. Well, they were nice guys. When they came to the club there was quite a talk about what we shall do with them, where they will go, and they said: Oh, Ploschansky — which was my maiden name — Ploschansky has a big family, we'll send them there. So we, as part of our big family, we had four big, husky guys come, but they were very interesting. One of them was an author, a Russian writer.

*Were they involved in the siege of Sidney Street?*

They were not involved in the Sidney Street affair. So as I say, the police would bring people to us. Well, I don't know how these other fellows got in, but there seemed to be a group of four I think, four men. They came to the club and they would walk in — and anybody could come in and listen to lectures, listen to talks, take part. And so they came in, and they got involved with two of the girls. They got these girls to think that they were revolutionaries, and so on and — I don't know, they got together with them. I was too young to know, and too innocent really to know all about it. But I was teaching English to foreigners at the time in my spare time after the office, because I earned so little. And they asked me to teach them English. And they had a little

place. And I said: Yes, I would. Well, when I came home my mother said: Where are you going to teach them? I said: Well I'll go over there you know. Oh no you won't, she said: You have a room here and they can come here if they want to learn, but you can't go over there. These four men had an apartment of their own, a room of their own, where they lived. And it later turned out that they were not revolutionaries at all. They turned out to be a bunch of guys who were just thieves and robbers. They tried to break into a jeweller's shop. They had guns. The police in England didn't have guns at those times. And I don't know how, but one of them accidentally got shot trying to run away. The girls sent for a doctor, and that's how they were caught. But two of them hid in a house in Sidney Street, and that was a big story there, very big story. I can't tell you the whole story, but at that time I was going to work on the tram and I saw Churchill and Scots Guards marching up to Sidney Street. And there was a big shoot-out. I don't know whether those two fellows got burned or shot themselves, I don't know what they did, but that was the end of that.

*Did you know the man that was known as Peter the Painter?*

I didn't know them, because my mother wouldn't let me go over there to teach. But Peter the Painter, I'd even seen him in the club. And I think he had a lame leg. And then I think he got over to Russia. He got some seaman's papers, I don't know who gave them to him, and he went over to Russia, and I think he was the one who went into the Cheka and became head of the Cheka.

*The anarchists were blamed for the siege of Sidney Street, weren't they?*

Well, no. We really didn't have it because the police were so good. I mean my father told me that when he came over, he couldn't speak the language, he would go and show the piece of paper to a policeman, he would walk him all the way across to the next beat, the next policeman, and hand him over to the next policeman, the other one would take him as far as they could go, until they'd got him to his destination.

*Let me ask you about the big tailor's strike of 1912.*

I don't remember the big tailor's strike well.

*What was Rocker's role in that strike?*

Rocker's role in any of these things was that he was part of a group, and

he could talk and he could lecture, and he could speak on the platform. He inspired people, people thought he was just wonderful. He was a kind man, very kind man, and very attentive. They would come to him and talk to him. One story: During the First World War, he was arrested. They had conscription. First of all they took the unmarried men and then they had to fill forms out, you know, papers to say whether you were married or not. And Rudolf put married on his. Well, he wasn't legally married. And so they had him up and they said that was false information at the tribunal. And it happened while they were discussing this, a Scotland Yard man came up on the platform as a witness. And he said: I have been for a couple of years trailing Rudolf — he was put on his trail to watch him and see what happens — and I've been up to his home and I've been everywhere with him, he said, and it would be just wonderful if everybody could live such a beautiful married life as they have without the law.

*Tell me about the dances and social activities at the Jubilee Street Club. What sort of music did you have?*

Oh, sometimes piano, singing. It was very informal and very easy, as if you were meeting at home. We used to have people of our own group get up on the platform and sing. I used to do a lot of recitations. I read a poem in Yiddish about Kropotkin, making a little fun, a little skit about him. I'd learned the poem, and I'd written the first lines of each verse. I was very little, very young. And I stood up and put the paper down on the table which was on the back of the stage, so if I forgot I could look at the paper and remember. Well, they asked me to come forward to the front of the stage, my voice wasn't loud enough. And I went and got my piece of paper, you know, and came forward. And I laughed and I said: Well, I've forgotten. After me came Kropotkin's daughter, Princess Kropotkin. And she got up and recited in Russian, and she forgot too. She was a grown woman then. She forgot, and she stamped her foot and cursed because she got all upset.

*What sort of songs did you sing?*

Oh, we sang Russian songs and English songs; we sang all kinds of songs.

*And what was the role of women? Were women regarded as equal to men?*

Oh yes, if they would come, of course. We got them finally, women began to come, and we had several women in the group. But the life

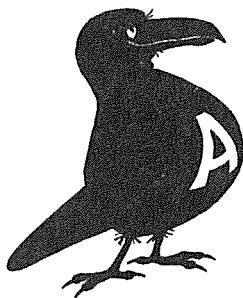
that Milly and Rocker led, it was just like a big group of friends. This went on even when he came to America, and when he went to Canada. But Rudolf, of course, was a great man really, a really great man, because — doesn't matter where he went — he was adored by everybody.

*We're talking about the London years, which is a long time ago now.*

The London years were full. They issued books, they printed the paper, and it was well read. The club was such a mixed group. Some of them were intellectuals, some were just poor simple people, but felt very deeply — about one another, I think.

*Let me ask you one last question. Looking back from all these years, are you proud of what you did in London?*

Absolutely, absolutely. I would do it again.



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## *Peter Gibson*

### **Anarchism and the Selfish Gene**

#### **A background of anarchy**

As a child and adolescent, I listened to anarchists talking about themselves and anarchism, since they were a part of my background; later I read about anarchism. What perplexed me was that anarchists appeared to be so certain about their beliefs, yet had so little to base them on. Perhaps this is because, the less evidence one has for an idea, the easier it is to believe. Also, I could see no indication that anything anarchists did had any political effect. An explanation for this, I felt, might be that the government, police and big business were part of a hidden conspiracy against anarchism in particular and the rest of society in general. Expose this conspiracy, and an anarchist revolution would take place. This explanation seemed implausible, since everyone was well aware of the conspiracy and most were a part of it. Another explanation, I thought, was that no one really understood how society worked, and that it would eventually be thrown into turmoil when a vital component collapsed or was deliberately destroyed. But I could see that the system, however it worked, clearly accommodated any change or challenge. My final explanation was that anarchism could not work.

While pondering these possibilities, I studied zoology. The subject probably chose me, since it was the one I was best at. In retrospect, zoology appears to give a useful perspective to anarchism. I will admit that when one looks closely for a long time at any two subjects one can see a connection. This simply comes from standing too near them. But zoology appears to resolve many of the problems I saw in anarchism.

#### **Significance of zoology**

The Darwinian theory of evolution unifies zoology and biology in general. It explains how complex organisms have come into being through natural selection acting on what we now know to be random mutations of their genes. In the past fifteen years the theory has been developed further by E. O. Wilson and others, under the name of

'sociobiology', to explain animal behaviour. There is a scientific belief that good theories can be recognised by their satisfying simplicity, and this is true of sociobiology. It says that genes are self-interested and that is why organisms reproduce. The survival of organisms becomes a matter of evolving successful strategies. We can see most clearly how these operate in animals other than ourselves. In humans the strategies are, in part, political.

### **Selfish genes**

Our behaviour and that of all animals can be readily explained by an unthinking interest of genes in their survival. In reality genes consist of the DNA which forms chromosomes. As a result of evolution, most of our genes are held in common with other animals. They form, as it were, a connecting thread through geological time. The organism itself is simply an expendable vehicle in which genes propagate themselves. A chicken, for example, is the means by which an egg reproduces itself. The variety of forms and behaviour of animals is the way in which genes exploit the environment as well as other organisms. The DNA has, like the organism in which it exists, a limited life. When the organism dies, the DNA is destroyed together with the body of the organism. However, if the organism has reproduced, the information held by its genes is perpetuated.

For genes to survive, they have to be self-interested. They are popularly portrayed as sinister, but in fact they are no more than short lengths of DNA. The way in which genes operate is analogous to how written words are used. Because words are useful to us they are perpetuated, and in time they are modified, and so language evolves. Words are no more thinking than genes, but like genes they are self-interested. Again, like genes, their structure, in terms of ink and paper, has a limited life. They survive because of their ability to produce ideas in our minds, just as the success of genes depend on the organisms in which they lie. Genes are a formula for producing organisms which in their turn produce more genes. Mutations in their DNA produce new types of genes, and so organisms evolve. Species consist of interbreeding individuals that have a slightly different genetical make-up. Through natural selection, some individuals of a species are fitter than others and survive to breed. What is being selected for are the genes and not the individual. The genes are the basic units of selection. They are pieces of inherited information that are held in common by related individuals. Different genes within



individuals in the same species are both competing as well as cooperating with each other for their own survival.

The genes, seen as a self-interested unit of inheritance, makes sense of much of our behaviour and that of other organisms. Sociobiology explains a whole range of biological problems. For example, it explains the existence of the filial ties found in mammals and the social behaviour of insects such as bees and ants. Some biologists are opposed to sociobiology because they feel it explains very little, if anything, of human behaviour. They claim that it fails to explain altruism which is independent of degrees of genetical relatedness. Sociobiology angers them because it is deterministic, and they believe that culture depends on our intellect and ability to make choices based on reason.

### **Culture as an epiphenomenon**

The most obvious feature that separates us from other animals is our culture. This is everything about our behaviour that is not determined by our genes. Our understanding of culture is clouded because we are far from sure which aspects of our behaviour are determined by our genes and which are not. This is the familiar 'Nature *versus* Nurture' argument. Sociobiology, however, gives us a scientific basis on which to assess the controversy. The production of artifacts, which is characteristic of our culture, is not genetically programmed but learned. However, what drives us to produce them appears to be genetically determined. For example, we are not programmed to build word-processors but we do so because we need to communicate. Through technology we have developed artifacts, but what we use them for is genetically determined. The artifacts assist us to manipulate our environment, and this is a strategy for survival. To do this more effectively, we form alliances with each other. This is characteristic of humans and, to some extent, higher primates and may be genetically controlled. However, the type of alliance is unlikely to be genetically determined. In sociobiological terms, this behaviour is 'reciprocal altruism' and is thought to depend on our intellect. Although the behaviour is altruistic for the participants, it is frequently disadvantageous to other peoples and can be Machiavellian.

### **Politics and genes**

Clearly, as individuals, we have an advantage over other people if we form alliances which are aimed at exploitation. This has been the

history of our culture and is the purpose of political organisations. In the end what we are all seeking is to maximise the reward for our efforts. By this means our genes increase their chances of survival. Sharing wealth is not, in the short term, in the interest of our genes. The political strategies used to divide wealth are, up to a point, obvious. They depend upon controlling other individuals. The types of control form a continuum, with centralised control at one extreme and individual freedom and anarchism at the other. All political systems and many types of cooperative effort require us to relinquish some of our freedom. In return we are rewarded, to varying degrees, for our support. The more centralised the political system, the greater the reward. Our personal reward makes us dependent on the system and ensures the success of the control. I believe that this dependence lies in our genes. It is an attribute of our childhood and is shown, to a lesser extent, by other animals.

### **Dependence and survival strategies**

The dependence of children on adults is characteristic of humans. When compared with the length of life of other mammals, human childhood is very protracted. There is a reasonable and recognised explanation for this. Again, it depends on strategies evolved for survival. These can be divided into two extreme forms. At one extreme is an altricial (or R) strategy which is seen, for example, in mice. These animals have a short gestation period, many helpless young are born at the same time, the life-span is short, the animals are small in size, they have small brains compared with their bodies, and social behaviour is poorly developed. At the other extreme is a precocial (or K) strategy, of which elephants are an example. These animals have a long gestation, few young are born and they are well developed, the bodies are large, the lives are long, the animals have large brains in relation to their bodies, and there is often complex social behaviour. Both strategies are suited to the niche occupied by the species and achieve the same end: the greatest chance for the survival of their genes.

### **Evolution of the human brain**

Humans and other primates belong in the precocial category. We, however, present a curious anomaly. Our young are born very helpless. Again, the explanation for this is well established. Humans are neotenuous — that is, they show many foetal characteristics. When born they are hairless, the head and brain are large in relation to the body,

the jaws are small and produce small teeth, and the axis of the skull on the spine is at the centre of the underside of the skull rather than at its back. The foetal condition seen in other apes has been retained in our evolution, and we have become reproductively precocious.

One great advantage of this evolutionary trend is that the brain has become very large and complex. However, because of the resulting large size of the head, the period of gestation has been reduced. If it were it any longer the head would have grown so large that the foetus would not be able to pass down the birth canal. As a result of this short gestation, human babies, when compared with other animals, are born in an undeveloped condition. So, unlike other precocial mammals, humans have retarded their development for the advantages gained in having a large and therefore complex brain. The evolution of the brain has accompanied a type of survival strategy which involves the ability to learn and to develop sophisticated tools. Large brains have also resulted in the development of culture, although this must be a by-product of the sophistication needed for our complex tool-using strategies. I suggest that culture could only have been brought about by behavioural retardation — that is, this behaviour has occurred along with morphological and physiological retardation. An aspect of the behaviour is our dependency on other humans throughout life and this is at the basis of our society. Also, the behaviour allows us to exploit and be exploited by one another.

### **Cultural control of behaviour**

So the two aspects of our biology — intellect gained from large brains and juvenile behaviour derived through neoteny — account for the development of culture. Our culture is therefore firmly based on our genes and the behaviour which increases their chances of survival. From the point of view of the individual, one of the most important aspects of our behaviour is the extent to which we can cooperate with each other without being exploited. In primitive societies people cooperate largely within their gene pool. That is, the extent of cooperation is directly proportional to the degree of relatedness. In complex societies, communities are no longer held by blood ties. Genetical forces, however, still operate and are simply redirected. We do not see them because we like to think that our behaviour is culturally determined. That is, we think that we use our intellect in everything and have choices. For example, we do not see ourselves today as the hunters and gatherers that we used to be in precultural times. The same genetical drives are there; only we now work for salaries and shop for

our needs. This view is strongly presented by those who have the most to gain from the 'work ethic'.

Culture and its dependent political manipulation opposes the idea that much of our behaviour is genetically based. This is because such behaviour is not readily susceptible to manipulation. Most genetically and therefore largely uncontrollable behaviour is, as a result, represented as culturally determined. Behaviour such as sex and aggression, which are very obviously genetically determined, is thought of as base and undesirable. Culture strenuously attempts to control this behaviour directly by force and indirectly through education. the main aim of education is to present society as culturally based.

All cooperation can be successfully carried out with the minimum exploitation on a simple 'tit for tat' strategy. This requires that, when cooperation between individuals breaks down because of exploitation, cooperation cannot be renewed until the offenders are conciliatory. This behaviour may be described by 'Game Theory' and can be expressed mathematically. A number of alternative strategies have been pitted against 'tit for tat' in computer tournaments and none are as successful. The theory shows that exploiting players do worse than cooperating ones. The behaviour appears in practice to work equally well for pairs of human players. Further support of the theory comes from studying ecology and predator and prey relationships. Again, there is theoretical support for what is found in nature. In a 'Doves *versus* Hawks' paradigm an equilibrium is reached and there are no winners.

### Anarchy and sociobiology

Before the rise of sociobiology there was no adequate means by which we could disentangle our genetically and culturally controlled behaviour. Sociobiology now provides a method. We can separate the two by directly observing our behaviour and by comparing it with that of other animals and higher primates in particular. Such behaviour that is not found to be genetically controlled must be produced by our culture. Anarchism will benefit from such studies. Much of anarchist propaganda has been aimed at countering political control. However, anarchists have generally failed to understand the problem they have been attacking. The mistake they have made, as I see it, is they have used culturalist arguments when they should have been using sociobiological ones. Anarchists need to show that much of what we have taken in the past as culturally derived behaviour is simply genetical. There is an advantage in seeing that we are not manipulated

in quite the way culturalists have portrayed. If we can understand exactly what controls are operating we will have gone a long way to freeing ourselves from purely political restrictions.

### Postscript

Readers may wonder about the omission in a discussion of the relevance of biology to anarchism of any reference to Peter Kropotkin's book *Mutual Aid*. In fact I didn't read the book until after writing this article, and I want only to add a short note on it.

Charles Darwin published his book *On the Origin of Species* (1859) when Kropotkin was a young man, and Kropotkin became a convinced Darwinian. But Darwin's main follower, T.H. Huxley, frequently stressed — especially in an article on 'the Struggle for Existence' in 1888 — the importance of competition between animals (including humans) in evolution. Kropotkin, who had been impressed by Karel F. Kessler's lecture on 'the Law of Mutual Aid' in St Petersburg in 1880, wrote a series of articles from 1890 to 1896 replying to Huxley, and these articles formed the basis of his book *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902).

Kropotkin's first two chapters concerning 'Mutual Aid among Animals' are particularly relevant to my argument. He acknowledged that there is a struggle for existence, but his own view of nature lay somewhere between Huxley's harsh portrayal and Rousseau's naive one. Kropotkin supported his argument for mutual aid with established facts of the biology of his day, but much of his information on animals at least is now seen to be inaccurate. Broadly speaking, his thesis is one of group selection — that is, genetically unrelated animals within a species have evolved altruism. Later evidence does not support this, and 'it is now believed that only closely related animals are in fact altruistic. Anyway, there is no sensible way in which altruism could have evolved through group selection. To be fair, there are a few prominent zoologists — the most notable being Wynne-Edwards — who do believe in group selection. But for many zoologists sociobiology is the most convincing explanation for the social behaviour of animals, including human beings.

### References

The views I have given are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of sociobiologists. The sociobiology I have referred to is largely contained in three recent books, all available in paperback: *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins (published by Paladin); *On Human Nature* by Edward O. Wilson (published by Bantam Books); *The evolution of cooperation* by Robert Axelrod (published by Basic Books). These books refer to more detailed scientific work.

## Nicolas Walter

### Carlo Cafiero on Action and Communism

Carlo Cafiero (1846-1892) played a short but significant part in the development of anarchist theory and practice.

He was born on 1 September 1846 in Barletta on the Apulian coast. His bourgeois family were rich land-owners and merchants in southern Italy with tendencies towards Liberalism and Freemasonry. He grew up during the Risorgimento — the national liberation movement which led to the reunification of Italy and the establishment of a democratic regime — and he was much influenced by the radical republican leader Carlo Pisacane (1818-1857), whose posthumous *Political Testament* emphasised the combination of liberty and association and the primacy of deeds over ideas.

He studied law at Naples university, was intended for the diplomatic service, and went to Florence to begin his career. But he became first a freethinker and then, while travelling in Western Europe, a socialist, and he devoted his considerable energy and fortune to revolutionary politics. In 1870 he joined the International in London, and was associated with the Marxists on its General Council, especially Engels. In 1871 he returned to Italy, where he took a leading part in opposing the liberal republicanism of Mazzini and advocating the revolutionary socialism of Marx.

In the growing division between Marxists and Bakuninists in the International, Cafiero first sided with the former, but soon turned to the latter and moved towards anarchism. James Guillaume described him at this time as 'a young man with a simple and modest character and studious mind' and emphasised 'his seriousness, his devotion, and his independence'. For a time he tried to reconcile the Marxists and Bakuninists in Italy, but he sided with Bakunin in the split of 1872. In May he met Bakunin, in June he broke with Engels, and in August he presided at the Rimini congress which established the Italian Federation and led the resistance to the General Council. In September he observed the Hague Congress at which the Bakuninists were expelled from the International, and then attended the St Imier congress which founded the anti-authoritarian International. In 1873 he was one of the leaders at the Bologna congress who were arrested and briefly imprisoned. For a couple of years he was closely associated with

Bakunin and financed his activities, but in 1874 he broke with him. In 1874 he married a Russian revolutionary, Olimpia Kutuzova.

In 1876 he and Malatesta led the move in the anarchist movement from collectivism to communism and also towards propaganda by deed. In October 1876 they attended the Berne Congress of the International, and immediately afterwards they advocated 'collective property of the products of labour as the necessary complement of the collectivist programme' and also argued that 'the insurrectionary deed designed to affirm socialist principles by actions, is the most effective means of propaganda' (*Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* 3 December 1876). In April 1877 they led the Benevento rising, for which they were imprisoned until August 1878 (in prison he produced an Italian digest of Marx's *Capital* which was published in Milan in 1879).

For a few more years he was active in Italy and also in France, Britain and Switzerland, being arrested in or expelled from various countries. In October 1880 he took an important part in the annual congress of the Swiss Jura Federation at La Chaux-de-Fonds, giving a speech which helped to make anarchist communism the official policy of the federation and in effect of the organised anarchist movement. In December 1880 he wrote for *Le Révolté* an anonymous front-page article on Action, which aroused much interest (and caused the expulsion from Switzerland of the paper's editor, Kropotkin). He also wrote a long essay on Revolution, part of which was published in *La Révolution Sociale* from February to July 1881, and he helped Elisée Reclus to edit the first edition of Bakunin's fragment *God and the State* which was published in 1882. His last work was the development of a theory of 'amorphia' (formlessness) as the basis of an anarchist society.

In 1881, however, he suffered a mental breakdown. He continued political activity for a time, returning to parliamentary socialism in 1882. But in 1883 he became almost completely insane, and was confined to a series of lunatic asylums. A comrade commented, 'He couldn't bend, so he had to break.' He died of tuberculosis on 17 July 1892 in Nocera Inferiore (near Naples). He was widely mourned in the anarchist press, being described by *La Révolte* as 'one of the most sympathetic and the most devoted militants of the great anarchist idea' (13/19 August 1892). Kropotkin's later verdict was that 'Cafiero was an idealist of the highest and the purest type'.

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Much information about Cafiero appears in the classic histories by James Guillaume and Max Nettlau; there have been several Italian biographies, the latest two by Franco Damiani and Pier Carlo Masini (both 1974); an anthology of his writings edited by Gianni Bosio has been published as *Rivoluzione per la rivoluzione* (1970).

## Action

There's no reason for scholars to shrug their shoulders so much, as if they had to bear the weight of the whole world: it wasn't they who invented the revolutionary idea. It was the oppressed people, who by their often unconscious attempts to shake off the yoke of their oppressors drew the attention of scholars to social morality; and it was only later that a few rare thinkers managed to find this insufficient, and later still that others agreed to find it completely false.

Yes, it is the blood spilt by the people which ends by forming ideas in scholars' heads. 'Ideals spring from deeds, and not the other way round,' said Carlo Pisacane in his political testament, and he was right. It is the people who make progress as well as revolution: the constructive and destructive aspects of the same process. It is the people who are sacrificed every day to maintain universal production, and it is the people again who feed with their blood the torch which lights up human destiny.

When a thinker who has carefully studied the book of the sufferings of mankind defines the formula of a popular aspiration, — conservatives and reactionaries of all kinds all over the world begin shouting at the top of their voices: 'It's a scandal!'

Yes, it is a scandal: and we need scandals; for it is by the force of scandal that the revolutionary idea makes its way. What a scandal was stirred up by Proudhon when he cried: 'Property is theft!' But today there is no man of sense or feeling who does not think that the capitalist is the worst scoundrel among thieves; more than that, — the only true thief. Armed with the most terrible instrument of torture, hunger, he torments his victim, not for a moment but for a lifetime: he torments not only his victim, but also the wife and children of the man he holds in his power. The thief risks liberty and often life, but the capitalist, the real thief, risks nothing, and when he steals he takes not just a part but the whole of the wealth of the worker.

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But it is not enough to find a theoretical formula. Just as the *deed* gave rise to the revolutionary *idea*, so it is the deed again which must put it into practice.

At the first Congresses of the International, there were only a few workers in the French proletariat who *accepted* the idea of collective property. It needed the light which was thrown on the whole world by the incendiaries of the Commune to bring to life and to spread the



revolutionary idea, and to bring us to the Hague Congress, which by the votes of 48 representatives of the French workers recognised *free communism* as the goal. And nevertheless we still remember that certain authoritarian dogmatists, full of seriousness and wisdom, repeated only a few years ago that the Commune had checked the socialist movement by giving rise to the most disastrous of reactions. Facts have shown the soundness of the opinions of these 'scientific socialists' (most of them knowing no science) who tried to spread among socialists the well-known 'politics of results'.

So it is action which is needed, action and action again. In taking action, we are working at the same time for theory and for practice, for it is action which gives rise to ideas, and which is also responsible for spreading them across the world.

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But what kind of action shall we take?

Should we go or send others on our behalf to Parliament, or even to municipal councils?

No, a thousand times No! We have nothing to do with the intrigues of the bourgeoisie. We have no need to get involved with the games of our oppressors, unless we wish to take part in their oppression. 'To go to Parliament is to parley; and to parley is to make peace,' said a German ex-revolutionary, who did plenty of parleying after that.

Our action must be permanent rebellion, by word, by writing, by dagger, by gun, by dynamite, sometimes even by ballot when it is a case of voting for an ineligible candidate like Blanqui or Trinquet. We are consistent, and we shall use every weapon which can be used for rebellion. Everything is right for us which is not legal.

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'But when should we begin to take our action, and open our attack?' friends sometimes ask us. 'Shouldn't we wait until our strength is organised? To attack before you are ready is to expose yourself and risk failure.'

Friends, if we go on waiting until we are strong enough before attacking, — we shall never attack, and we shall be like the good man who vowed that he wouldn't go into the sea until he had learnt to swim. It is precisely revolutionary action which develops our strength, just as exercise develops the strength of our muscles. True, at first our blows will not be deadly ones; perhaps we shall even make the serious and wise socialists laugh, but we can always reply: 'You are laughing at us

because you are as stupid as those who laugh at a child falling down when it learns to walk. Does it amuse you to call us children? All right then, we are children, for the development of our strength is still in its infancy. But by trying to walk, we show that we are trying to become men, that is to say, complete organisms, healthy and strong, able to *make* a revolution, and not scribbling editors, old before their time, constantly chewing over a science which they can never digest, and always *preparing* in infinite space and time a revolution which has disappeared into the clouds.'

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How shall we begin our action?

Just look for an opportunity, and it will soon appear. Everywhere that rebellion can be sensed and the sound of battle can be heard, that is where we must be. Don't wait to take part in a movement which appears with the label of official socialism on it. Every popular movement already carries with it the seeds of the revolutionary socialism: we must take part in it to ensure its growth. A clear and precise ideal of revolution is formulated only by an infinitesimal minority, and if we wait to take part in a struggle which appears exactly as we have imagined it in our minds, — we shall wait for ever. Don't imitate the dogmatists who ask for the formula before anything else: the people carry the living revolution in their hearts, and we must fight and die with them.

And when the supporters of legal or parliamentary action come and criticise us for not having anything to do with the people when they vote, we shall reply to them: 'Certainly, we refuse to have anything to do with the people when they are down on their knees in front of their god, their king, or their master; but we shall always be with them when they are standing upright against their powerful enemies. *For us, abstention from politics is not abstention from revolution; our refusal to take part in any parliamentary, legal or reactionary action is the measure of our devotion to a violent and anarchist revolution, to the revolution of the rabble and the poor.*'

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*L'Action* was published in *Le Révolté* on 25 December 1880. It has occasionally been reprinted in French and translated into other languages, but has generally been wrongly attributed to Kropotkin.

## Anarchy and Communism

At the Congress held in Paris by the Central Region, a speaker who was distinguished by his bitterness against anarchists said: 'Communism and anarchy *howl* to find themselves together!'

Another speaker who also spoke against anarchists, but with less violence, cried when speaking of economic liberty: 'How can liberty be violated when there is equality?'

Well, I think that these two speakers were wrong.

It is perfectly possible to have economic equality without having the least liberty. Certain religious communities are a living proof of this, since the most complete equality exists there at the same time as despotism. Complete equality, for the ruler wears the same cloth and eats at the same table as the others; he is distinguished from them only by the right which he possesses of giving orders. And the partisans of the 'Popular State'? If they encounter no obstacles of any kind, I am sure that they will end by achieving perfect equality, but at the same time the most perfect despotism, too; for, let us not forget, the despotism of their State would be equal to the despotism of the present state, increased by the economic despotism of all the capital which would pass into the hands of the State, and the whole would be multiplied by all the centralisation necessary for this new State. And it is for this reason that we, the Anarchists, friends of liberty, we intend to fight them to the end.

Thus, contrary to what has been said, it is perfectly right to fear for liberty even when there is equality; whereas there can be no fear for equality when there is real liberty — that is to say, anarchy.

So *anarchy* and *communism*, far from howling at finding themselves together, would howl at not finding themselves together, for these two terms (synonymous with *liberty* and *equality*) are the two necessary and indivisible terms of the Revolution.

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Our revolutionary ideal is very simple, as may be seen: it consists, like that of all our forerunners, of these two terms, LIBERTY and EQUALITY. Only there is one little difference. Learning from the tricks which the reactionaries of all times have played with liberty and equality, we have decided to put next to these two terms the expression of their precise value. These two precious coins have been forged so often that we now want to know all about them and to measure their precise value.

We therefore place next to these two terms, *liberty* and *equality*, two

equivalents whose clear meaning cannot allow of any ambiguity, and we say: 'We want LIBERTY, that is to say ANARCHY, and EQUALITY, that is to say COMMUNISM.'

*Anarchy*, today, is attack; it is war against every authority, every power, every State. — In the future society, Anarchy will be defence, the prevention of the re-establishment of any authority, any power, any State: Full and complete liberty of the individual who, freely and driven only by his needs, by his tastes and his sympathies, unites with other individuals in a group or association; free development of the association, which is federated with others in the commune or the district; free development of the communes which are federated in the region; — and so on: the regions in the nation; the nations in humanity.

Communism, the question which particularly concerns us today, is the second term of our revolutionary ideal.

*Communism*, at present, is still attack; it is not the destruction of authority, but it is the taking of possession, in the name of all humanity, of all the wealth existing in the world. — In the future society, Communism will be the enjoyment of all existing wealth by all men and according to the principle: FROM EACH ACCORDING TO HIS FACULTIES, TO EACH ACCORDING TO HIS NEEDS, that is to say: FROM EACH AND TO EACH ACCORDING TO HIS WILL.

It is, however, necessary to point out, — and this above all in reply to our opponents, the authoritarian communists or Statists — that the taking of possession and the enjoyment of all the existing wealth must be, according to us, the deed of the people itself. Because the people, humanity, is not the same as the individuals who managed to seize the wealth and hold it in their hands, some have tried to conclude from this, it is true, that we should for this reason establish a whole class of rulers — of representatives and trustees of the common wealth. But we do not share this opinion. No intermediaries; no representatives who always end by representing only themselves; no mediators of equality, any more than mediators of liberty; no new government, no new State, whether it is called Popular or Democratic, Revolutionary or Provisional!

Since the common wealth is spread over the whole earth, and since all of it belongs by right to the whole of humanity, those who find this wealth within their reach and are in a position to use it will use it in common. The people of some country will use the land, the machines, the workshops, the houses, &c., of the country, and they will make use of it in common. Since they are part of humanity, they will exercise here, by deed and directly, their right to a share of the human wealth. But if an inhabitant of Peking came into this country, he would have the same rights as the others: he would enjoy, in common with the

others, all the wealth of the country, in the same way that he had done in Peking.

So that speaker was quite wrong who denounced anarchists for wanting to establish corporate property. A fine business we would make if we destroyed the State and replaced it with a mass of little States! killing a monster with one head and keeping a monster with a thousand heads!

No! We have said and we shall not stop repeating it: no intermediaries, no agents and obedient servants who always end by becoming the real masters! We want all the existing wealth to be *taken directly* by the people itself, to be kept in the people's powerful hands, and the people itself to decide the best way of enjoying it, whether for production or for consumption.

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But we are asked: Is Communism practicable? Shall we have enough products to allow each person the right to take from them at will, without demanding from individuals more work than they would like to give?

We reply: Yes, it will certainly be possible to apply this principle, *from each and to each according to his will*, because in the future society production will be so abundant that there will be no need to limit consumption or to demand from men more work than they would be able or willing to give.

This immense increase in production, of which we cannot give a true impression even today, may be predicted by examining the causes which will stimulate it. These causes may be reduced to three main ones:

1. The harmony of co-operation in various branches of human activity, replacing the present struggle which arises from competition;
2. The introduction on an immense scale of machines of all kinds;
3. The considerable economy in the power of labour, the instruments of labour and raw materials, arising from the suppression of dangerous or useless production.

Competition, struggle, is one of the basic principles of capitalist production, having for its motto: *MORS TUA VITA MEA, your death is my life*. The ruin of one makes the fortune of another. And this bitter struggle spreads from nation to nation, from region to region, from individual to individual, between workers as well as between capitalists. It is war to the knife, a fight at all levels — hand to hand, in squads, in platoons, in regiments, in divisions. One worker finds work where

another loses it; one industry or several industries may prosper when another industry or industries may fail.

Well, imagine when, in the future society, this individualist principle of capitalist production, *each for himself and against all, and all against each*, will be replaced by the true principle of human sociability: EACH FOR ALL AND ALL FOR EACH, — what an enormous change will be obtained in the results of production! Imagine what the increase of production will be when each man, far from having to struggle against all the others, will be helped by them; when he will have them not as enemies but as co-operators. If the collective labour of ten men achieves results absolutely impossible to an isolated man, how great will be the results obtained by the grand co-operation of all the men who today are working in opposition against one another!

And machines? The impact of these powerful auxiliaries of labour, however great it seems to us today, is only very minimal in comparison with what it will be in the society to come.

The machine today is opposed often by the ignorance of the capitalist, but even more often by his interest. How many machines remain unused solely because they do not return an immediate profit to the capitalist! Is a coal-mining company, for example, going to put itself to the expense of safeguarding the interests of the workers and building costly apparatus to carry the miners into the pits? Is the municipality going to introduce a machine to break stones, when this terrible work provides it with the means of giving cheap relief to the hungry? How many discoveries, how many applications of science remain a dead letter solely because they don't bring the capitalist enough!

The worker himself is opposed to machines today, and with reason, since they are for him the monster which comes to drive him from the factory, to starve him, degrade him, torture him, crush him. Yet what a great interest he will have, on the contrary, in increasing their number when he will no longer be at the service of the machines and when, on the contrary, the machines will themselves be at his service, helping him and working for his benefit!

So we must take account of the immense economy which will be made by the three elements of labour — strength, instruments and materials — which are horribly wasted today, since they are used for the production of things which are absolutely useless, when they are not actually harmful to humanity.

How many workers, how many materials and how many instruments of labour are used today for the armies of land and sea, to build ships, fortresses, cannons and all the arsenals of offensive and defensive weapons! How much strength is used to produce articles of luxury which serve only to satisfy the needs of vanity and corruption!

And when all this strength, all these materials, all these instruments of labour are used in industry for the production of articles which will themselves be used for production, what a prodigious increase of production we shall see emerge!

\* \* \*

Yes, Communism is practicable: We shall indeed be able to let each take at will what he needs, since there will be enough for all; we shan't need to ask for more work than each wants to give, because there will be enough products for the morrow.

And it is thanks to this abundance that work will lose the ignoble character of enslavement and will have only the attraction of a moral and physical need, like that of study, of living with nature.

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This is not just to affirm that Communism is *possible*; we may affirm that it is *necessary*. Not only that one *can* be communist; but that one *must*, on pain of missing the goal of the revolution.

In fact, if after putting the instruments of labour and the raw materials in common, we retained the individual distribution of the products of labour, we would be forced to retain money, sharing out a greater or lesser accumulation of wealth according to the greater or lesser merit — or rather, skill — of individuals. Equality will thus have disappeared, since he who manages to acquire more wealth will already be raised by that very thing above the level of others. It will be only one step further for the counter-revolutionaries to re-establish the right of inheritance. In fact I have heard a well-known socialist, a so-called revolutionary, who supported individual distribution of products, end by declaring that he couldn't see any objection to society allowing the transfer of these products by inheritance; the matter, for him, was of little consequence. For us, who know at close hands the position which society has reached from this accumulation of wealth and its transfer by inheritance, there can be no doubt about the subject.

The individual distribution of products would re-establish not only inequality between men, but also inequality between different kinds of work. We would see the immediate reappearance of *clean* and *dirty* work, of *high* and *low* work; the former would be for the rich, the second would be the lot of the poorer. The it would not be vocation and personal taste which would decide a man to devote himself to one form of activity rather than another; it would be interest, the hope of winning more in some profession. Thus would be reborn idleness and industry,

merit and demerit, good and evil, vice and virtue; and, in consequence, *reward* on one side and *punishment* on the other: law, judge, policeman, and jail.

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There are socialists who persist in supporting this idea of individual distribution of the products of labour while making much of the sense of justice.

What a strange illusion! With collective labour imposed on us by the necessity of mass production and the application of machinery on a large scale, with this ever-increasing tendency of modern labour to make use of the labour of previous generations, how could we determine what is the share of the product of one and the share of the product of another? It is absolutely impossible, and our opponents recognise this so well themselves that they end by saying: 'Well, we shall take as a basis for distribution the hours of labour.' But at the same time they themselves admit that this would be unjust, since three hours of labour by Peter may be worth five hours of labour by Paul.

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Once we used to call ourselves *collectivists* to distinguish ourselves from the individualists and the authoritarian communists; but in reality we were quite plainly *anti-authoritarian communists* and, when we called ourselves collectivists, we were trying to express by this term our idea that EVERYTHING should be put in common, without making any distinction between instruments and materials of labour and the products of collective labour.

But one fine day we saw the rise again of a new shade of socialists who, reviving the errors of the past, began to philosophise, to distinguish, to differentiate on this question, and who will end by making themselves the apostles of the following thesis:

'There exist', they say, 'values of use and values of production. Use values are those which we use to satisfy our own personal needs: that is, the house we live in, the food we consume, clothes, books, &c.; whereas production values are those we use for production: that is, the factory, the stores, the stable, shops, machines and instruments of labour of every kind, the soil, materials of labour, &c. The former values, which are used to satisfy the needs of the individual, should be distributed individually; whereas the latter, those which are used by everyone for production, should be distributed collectively.'



Such was the new economic theory, discovered — or rather, revived — for the sake of argument.

But I ask you, you who give the charming title of production values to the coal which is used to fuel the machine, the oil used to lubricate it, the oil which lights its operation, — why deny it to the bread and meat which feed me, the oil which I dress my salad with, the gas which lights my labour, to everything which keeps alive and operating the most perfect of all machines, man, the father of all machines?

You class among production values the meadow and the stable which are used to keep cattle and horses, and you want to exclude from them houses and gardens which are used for the most noble of animals: man.

So where is your logic?

Besides, even you who make yourselves the apostles of this theory, you know perfectly well that this demarcation doesn't exist in reality and that, if it is difficult to trace today, it will completely disappear on the day when we shall all be producers at the same time as consumers.

So this theory — as may be seen — couldn't give new strength to the partisans of individual distribution of the products of labour. This theory has achieved only one result: that of unmasking the game of those socialists who wish to narrow the goal of the revolutionary idea; it has opened our eyes and shown us the necessity of quite clearly declaring ourselves to be *communists*.

★       ★       ★

But finally let us grapple with the one and only serious objection which our opponents have advanced against communism.

All are agreed that we are necessarily moving towards communism, but it is pointed out to us that at the start, since the products will not be abundant enough, we shall have to establish rationing, sharing, and that the best method of sharing the products of labour would be that based on the amount of labour which each will have done.

To this we reply that, in the future society, even when we may be obliged to have rationing, we should remain communist; that is to say, the rationing should be carried out not according to *merit* but according to *need*.

Let us take the family, that small-scale model of communism, — a communism which is authoritarian rather than anarchist, to be sure, but this doesn't alter anything in our example.

In the family the father brings, let us suppose, a hundred sous a day, the eldest son three francs, a younger boy forty sous, and the child only twenty sous a day. All bring their pay to the mother who keeps the cash and gives them food to eat. They all bring unequally; but, at mealtime,

each is served in his own way and according to his own appetite. There is no rationing. But let hard times come, and let poverty prevent the mother from continuing to allow for the appetite or taste of each in the distribution of the meal. There must be rationing; and, whether by the initiative of the mother or by the unspoken custom of all, the helpings are reduced. But look, this sharing is not done according to merit, for the younger boy and the child above all receive the largest share; and, as for the choice portion, it is kept for the old woman who brings in nothing at all. So even during famine, within the family this principle is applied of rationing according to need. Would it be otherwise in the great humanitarian family of the future?

It is obvious that I would have to say more on this subject if I were not discussing it in front of anarchists.

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One cannot be anarchist without being communist. In fact, the least idea of limitation already contains within itself the seeds of authoritarianism. It couldn't appear without immediately leading to law, judge, police.

We must be communists, for it is in communism that we shall achieve true equality.

We must be communists, because the people, who cannot understand collectivist sophisms, understand communism perfectly, as our friends Reclus and Kropotkin have already pointed out.

We must be communists because we are anarchists, because Anarchy and Communism are the two necessary terms of the Revolution.

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*Anarchie et communisme* was delivered on 9 October 1880, reported in *Le Révolté* on 17 October 1880, and later published in two instalments (*Le Révolté*, 13 and 27 November 1880). It was first published as a pamphlet with the same title by Emile Darnaud in Foix (in southern France) in 1890. It has frequently been reprinted in French and translated into other languages — especially Italian, but seldom English. When Henry Seymour's British paper *The Anarchist* adopted anarchist communism for a few months in summer 1886, an English translation was serialised from May to July but never completed.

## Review

### *Denis Pym* **The Lost Domain**

*Questioning Technology: A Critical Anthology*

Edited by John Zerzan and Alice Carnes

Freedom Press, £5 paper

Does anyone read from choice any more, except as an escape from our hyped up, press-button world, where time and space are consumed by trivia? Life as well as literature is choked by the cancer of literacy. From computer-based schooling and employment to the paperwork necessary to sustain a household, we are all victims of the very artifacts which are reckoned still to be liberating us. If the readers of *The Raven* are committed to the fight against this sub-existence and can still tackle a book, then reading this one is a must.

Zerzan and Carnes and their associates have selected their 'critical anthology' questioning technology with thought and skill from a wide range of books and articles. In a few pages they have captured some of their contributors' most powerful insights into how we contrive collectively to disable ourselves. We do this by behaving as if the origins of our inventions were concerned wholly with human ingenuity and had no connection with human frailty. So we use technology to repress and deny ourselves, and what we repress and deny in our relationship with technology returns to disable us. The situation is summarised all too well in the proverb — Chase the natural out, and it comes galloping back.

#### **Questions and Answers**

The 35 excerpts are easy to read, well arranged, varied, sometimes humorous, sometimes serious, and always thought-provoking. They are arranged in three parts — history and the future, computers and the informed individual, and the web of life (the impact and meaning of information and communication on life itself). The extracts are designed to answer the kind of question the thinking person might pose — Was there a time in history when technology came to dominate our lives?, How could this have happened?, and so on. I am not sure that this anthology focuses sufficiently on the big questions and answers —

How did we get into this mess?, and How do we get out of it? — but more of this later.

As a scene-setter, the first part is excellent. Here we find Jacques Ellul, along with Lewis Mumford the doyen of technology critics, drawing attention to the special features of technology in the industrial societies — namely, the emphasis on rationality and artificiality. Much has been made of the rational foundations of our culture, less of its artificial basis, which is particularly well examined here. In various contexts several contributors — Morris Berman, T. Fulano, Robert J. Sardello, Eugene S. Schwartz, and Langdon Winner — remind us that the preoccupation with simulating anything from flying to the workings of the human brain provides no more than the illusion of the experience.

This triumph of illusion, Sardello argues in a piece on education, is a world tailor-made for the psychopath — not the good psychopath of the unsocialised, curious child so much as the bad psychopath of the smooth political operator, unaffected by conscience or feeling, who is most 'at home' in the context of the unreal and experienceless where 'going-through-the-motions' is everything. Here important action is conceived as a ploy legitimised by those abstract parents — school, employer, and state. Public life has become a brilliant light to this psychopathic moth.

The political aspects of our relations with technique are also a recurring theme of the book. Joseph Weizenbaum's concern with the totalitarian threat of the computer is particularly poignant because he is a celebrated insider. In the extract from Mumford, distinction is made between the democratic use of tools as instruments for extending ourselves and the authoritarian ones that replace us. Within the latter, authority passes from person to artifact and technique becomes 'truly autonomous', in Ellul's words. Those who reject the tyranny of another person are seemingly content to allow television, car or job to dictate how they live, presumably because such tyrannies are objective and value-free — a belief firmly debunked in this volume.

Another central belief of industrial folk, the mastery of nature by culture, is attacked on several occasions, though more in terms of the regard of the 'carer' for nature (Stanley Diamond and Carolyn Merchant) than in the inauthentic rituals such as scientific pronouncements, government inquiries, weather forecasts, associated with confirming this belief.

Weather forecasts have always appealed to me as a fine example of a rite to sustain the myth of mastery. As is typical of religious activity, little effort is made to relate actualities to prophecies; that would be bad for business. British readers may recall that it was the forecasters and

not nature (already mastered) or the techniques (obviously blameless) which the authorities and the media held responsible for the disaster of the hurricane of October 1987. A subsequent committee of inquiry required the forecasters to do penance in the guise of going on training courses! The Manpower Services Commission (whose title says it all) is the central religious agency in declining industrial Britain. No one dares to question the vast resources which are swallowed up by its activities, because in such hard times people need religion.

However, the key issue in considering religious activities in their own terms is their authenticity. Unlike natural phenomena and daily tasks, scientific procedures and business meetings with their rational and literary basis do not lend themselves to good rites. Such activities serve to deny or transfer human anxiety and do little for the experience of social cohesion. In addition the cult of the fact banishes metaphor to the ghettos of poets and so distorts our understanding and use of illusion, creating in the process a social scene best suited to the psychopath.

The wisdom and experience of Mumford and Ellul no doubt help them to recognise the key role of social convention in either enabling or constraining the use of the products of human frailty and ingenuity. The Chinese discovered gunpowder long before the Europeans, and limited its applications to amusements, whereas the Europeans seized upon its uses in knocking hell out of each other. This awareness of the social in shaping our relationships with our artifacts is absent in this book, even in Berman's otherwise exciting extract on the prospects of the new utopia.

Values which lionise individual success and associate that success with mobility, change and the eradication of history possess a million instruments of rationality with which to subject nature to culture. Any technical advance in this milieu inevitably undermines all kinds of social exchange — our lousy relations with our tools mirror our relations with each other. It is hardly surprising that we sport a Prime Minister for whom society is no more than a collection of individuals. Again, Berman does a valuable job in detailing the suffering associated with such values.

To understand how it is that we seem to be stuck in our materially abundant insanity while more and more people starve to death, we must return to Ellul. The obsession with efficiency and the ceaseless quest for the 'one-best-way' are characteristic of industrial societies and no other. In my own studies of the adaptability of employees, belief in a 'one-best-way' proved the most useful predictor of the inability to cope with novel and ambiguous circumstances. Resource dependence is a larger problem for the financier, dealer, developer and computer expert than it is for those who struggle to live off the dole, because the former

need more resources. The piracy of the Yuppy and Thatcherite has nothing to do with enterprise or resourcefulness.

### The Problem and Its Solution

The most important contribution to this book — though hardly the most elegant — is by Russell Means. He alone sees the dominant European industrial culture from the vantage-point of an oral tradition and rejects it out of hand as *the* problem. Means equates the European disease with the authority of literacy. Capitalism, Marxism, anarchism, and all the other isms are just different verses of the same old song, he says. This is challenging stuff. The disease afflicts all the other contributors, and almost certainly all the readers of the book. Without question, this ethnocentricity is a powerful barrier to our understanding and overcoming of our problems.

Universal literacy brings with it the overwhelming prospects of materialism, centralism, corporatism, state communism, and capitalism. It lies at the heart of the abstract society, for literacy permits us to remove phenomena from their context and call them facts. It is not Plato — as Hubert L. Dreyfus suggests here — who is responsible for the reduction of all reasoning to explicit rules and the world to atomistic facts, so much as his own and our dependence on a medium of informing of which we are apparently masters but most surely slaves.

The process of writing down allows laws, rules and procedures to take on qualities which endure through time and space. More important, in matters of control, it externalises authority not in some other person but in technic. As the dominant medium in exchange, literacy nurtures the myth of immortality and our belief in the infallibility of machines. It enables, too, the conquest of experience by abstract knowledge (the illusion of knowing), the obsession with tangible measurable success, and consequently the fear of failure. Literacy imposed on play kills spontaneity, as does the programmed machine with words and numbers as its content. It raises the quest for transitory truth over the pursuit of the good; it destroys acoustic space, equates information with the abstract, and so gives rise to what Jean Baudrillard describes as 'proliferating information and shrinking sense'. In short, the authority we give to literacy in human transactions contributes critically to a range of our most pressing problems, including our attitudes to and relationships with our artifacts in general.

The use of technique, whether reading, writing, clock, or computer to programme human activities as though people were inadequate machines apparently serves the interests both of the powerful (in

sustaining their dominance and privileges) and of the powerless (in providing the illusions of security).

How else can we explain the absence of any noteworthy opposition to the retention of compulsory schooling, long after its questionable aid to learning about life had evaporated? How else can we explain the continuation of universal employment long after the contributions of people as employees to wealth had paled into insignificance? How else can we explain this hanging on to the myth of objectivity and value-free technology which authorises so much scientific activity even when that activity has contributed so much to the destruction and so little to the solution of the real problems of the planet?

Such insanities need to be explained in terms of our desire for externally reinforced mechanisms of control with their origins in our inability to live with our own frailty and the frailty of others.

The way out of this morass must be through a new oral tradition — a cultural bed for what Berman calls 'the re-enchantment of the world'. The form of this culture would be shaped by 'the natural', the local and the convivial. It would undoubtedly make use of many artifacts now available to us, but constrained in their use so as to enlarge on human dignity, resourcefulness and cooperation, on being rather than gaining. Social conventions would need to evolve to face squarely those human problems of frailty, ignorance, and insecurity which have been alternatively denied, repressed, and exploited by men through industrial institutions.

In the first instance, the emergence of this new oral tradition as a force requires the liberating of our used up space and time. This can come *only* from a disenchantment with and withdrawal from our central rituals — namely schooling and employment. I am not questioning the place of authentic rite in everyday life to articulate meaning, fashion social cohesion and contribute to the aesthetic. Rather, I observe that the rites of schooling and employment no longer sustain the values and norms of the industrial culture. The upshot is that the experience of schooling and employment is not only proliferating meaninglessness, increasing the trade in anxiety, and adding to the uglification of life, but is serving also as a prison for our thoughts and actions, to prevent the emergence of viable alternatives through people doing things together.

There are a multitude of different ways to avail ourselves of the time and space necessary to fashion different ways of relating and being. We can strive to reunite our social and economic lives by locating ourselves outside or on the margins of the institutional world. We can find such a move easier if we reject those assumptions that maintain the authority of institutions. For example, we can acknowledge that no meaningful relationship exists between what people do and the material rewards

they receive, that only the low paid with the least technology at their elbows can justify the income their employment provides. We can resurrect social debt — our indebtedness to neighbours — as an alternative to financial debt. Members of households and communities can take back to themselves the responsibilities for the teaching and care of children, and so depend less on schooling. We can remove the monopoly of teachers and children over the use of school buildings, by converting them to community centres for all. We can restore the central role of play in learning and downgrade the importance of curricula, subjects, syllabuses, and examinations — those killers of human spontaneity. And so on.

In respect of withdrawing our support from what is bad and nonsensical, we can take heart from the experience of the Blacks in South Africa and the Palestinians in Israel. Such people recognise that the defeat of the instruments of oppression rests entirely in their own hands. Like armies, institutions get their existence from us, and can claim the allegiance of those they subject only when these people act to sustain them.

The appropriate use of technology depends on the resurrection of human judgement, and the belief that man (and woman and child) personally and collectively, and not clock or money or slide-rule or alphabet or computer or institution, is the measure of all things.

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### Correction and clarification

After exchanging correspondence with Laurens Otter about Nicolas Walter's references to postwar British syndicalism in the first volume of *The Raven* (pages 178 and 359), and after checking the sources ourselves, we wish to make clear: that the Anarchist Federation of Britain became the Syndicalist Workers Federation in 1950; that, while the SWF declined during the early 1950s, it revived during the late 1950s before declining again during the late 1960s, and it continued to exist until the 1970s; that it produced *Direct Action* until 1954 (not 1959), *World Labour News* from 1960 to 1962, *Workers' Voice* during 1961, and a revived *Direct Action* from 1962, absorbing *World Labour News* in 1963.