

CATALYST

Inside

- * Women at work.
- * Clara Thalmann - a biography.
- * Plus analysis, history, comment and reviews.

Anarcho-Syndicalist Quarterly 90p No.1 Winter '87/'88

RUSSIA 1917: VANGUARD? WHAT VANGUARD?



Demolishing
the Bolshevik Myth.....page 4.

For Workers' Self-Management of Industry and the Community

CATALYST

Anarcho-syndicalist quarterly.

Printed and published by
DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT -
INTERNATIONAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION.

P.O. Box B20,
Huddersfield,
West Yorks.
HD1 1XS.

All copy, letters, subscriptions,
etc., to be sent to this address.
Please state if letters are for
publication.

Deadline for next issue:

February 31st '88

Huddersfield DAM would like to thank
for their assistance and support:

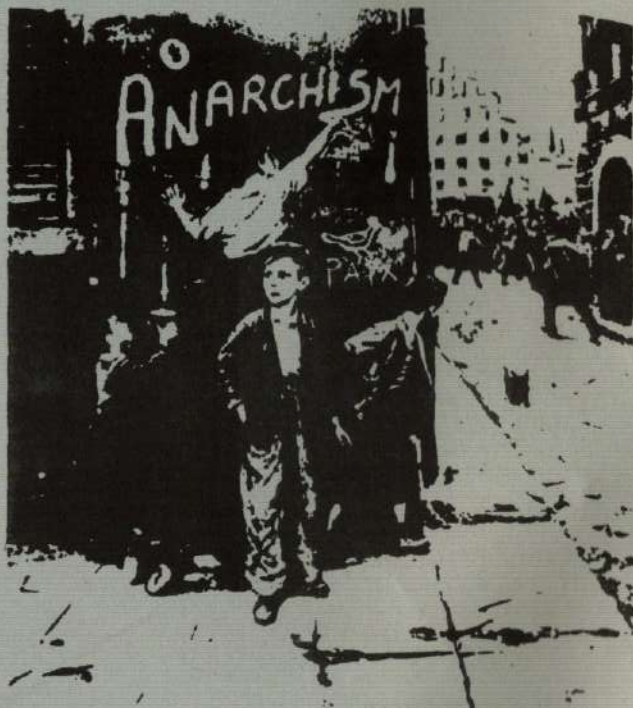
Thumbprint,
Handprint,
Leeds DAM.



CONTENTS:

PAGE...

3	Introduction.
4 - 11	The Bolsheviks role in the Russian revolution.
12 - 15	Syndicalist action in the Colne Valley.
16 - 17	Prison - a womans perspective.
18	Revolutionary strategy in the downturn.
19 - 21	Women at work - changes in employment patterns.
22	Terry the Trot.
23 - 26	Clara Thalmann - a biography.
27 - 28	All our lives - womens organisation during the Spanish revolution.
29 - 30	Reviews.
31	Subscriptions / aims and principles.



"You keep an eye on the pigs, and I'll keep
an eye out for the trots !"

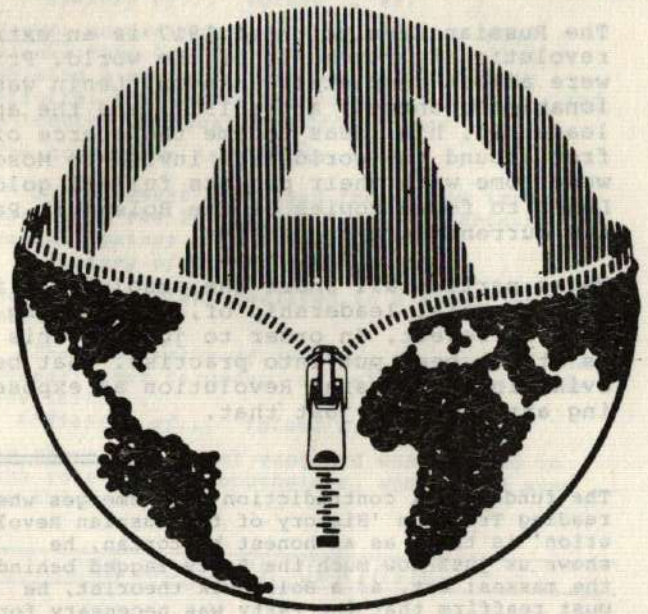
INTRODUCTION TO CATALYST.

Welcome to the first issue of 'CATALYST' - the journal of anarcho-syndicalist thought.

'CATALYST' is published by the Direct Action Movement, which is the British section of the International Workers' Association. Our aim is to produce a quarterly journal, which will provide an opportunity to publish longer, and more in-depth articles than would be suitable for our monthly paper 'DIRECT ACTION'.

The editors will consider material from any source, in the hope of encouraging debate and the clarification of issues and positions. We also hope that readers, as well as submitting articles of their own, will take the opportunity of commenting on other articles through the letters pages which we hope will appear in subsequent issues.

'CATALYST' aims to reflect our internationalist approach to politics, and we welcome articles from comrades in other countries, but we also intend to publish pieces of more local concern. Of course we are always looking for interesting photos, graphics and cartoons.



'CATALYST' seeks to provide a forum for the discussion of anarcho-syndicalist ideas, wherein theory can be developed and criticized; but more importantly we believe, we are looking for articles which attempt to apply theory to practical programmes for class struggle action in the present.

In such a publication it is always difficult to achieve the correct balance between historical pieces and more topical articles; as well as achieving a balance between theoretical writings and articles which are more down-to-earth and of more immediate practical relevance.

Of course we must study the history of political, economic and class struggle, and the development therein of ideas; indeed the history of the anarchist movement has often been badly neglected or distorted. But unless conscious efforts are made to relate what is learned from such studies to the present situation in order to develop practical programmes for action they may become little more than academic exercises.

'CATALYST', to be successful, must not merely reflect upon this process but must actually help to bring about more effective action.

Therefore we believe that contributors should strive to make their writing down-to-earth and practical wherever possible, and, particularly in their choice of words and style, remember that we are seeking the widest possible audience for our ideas. Our aim is not assist in the creation of an intellectual elite or a revolutionary vanguard, but rather to refine our ideas within the process of the class struggle, by learning as a result of collective action.

VANGUARD? WHAT VANGUARD?

The role of the Bolshevik Party in the Russian Revolution.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 is an extremely important event in the development of the revolutionary movements of the world. Prior to 1917 the works of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin were almost completely unknown. Lenin was an obscure exile from a revolutionarily 'unfashionable' country*. After 1917, and the apparent victory of the working class under his leadership, his ideas became the source of a new wave of revolutionary thought. Militants from around the world were invited to Moscow to be instructed in these 'new ideas'. They went home with their pockets full of gold and jewels, and their heads full of the word of Lenin to found copies of the Bolshevik Party. These parties are the parents of almost all the current Marxist parties.

These parties all share the absolute belief in The Party as the most advanced section, and the essential leadership of, the working class. It is a belief that anarcho-syndicalists totally reject. In order to justify this rejection it is important to examine this belief as it has been put into practise. What better way than to examine the role of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution as exposed by the famous 'leaders' themselves. The following article does just that.

The fundamental contradiction that emerges when reading Trotsky's 'History of the Russian Revolution' is that, as an honest historian, he shows us just how much the Party lagged behind the masses; but, as a Bolshevik theorist, he must reaffirm that the Party was necessary for a successful revolution. He writes:

"The soldiers lagged behind the shop committees. The committees lagged behind the masses... The Party also lagged behind the revolutionary dynamic --- an organisation which had the least right to lag, especially in a time of revolution... The most revolutionary party [sic!] which human history until this time had ever known was nevertheless caught unawares by the events of history... The masses at the turning point were a hundred times to the left of the extreme left party"

('History of the Russian Revolution', Volume 1, 403f)

This passage alone should be enough to destroy the myth of the Bolshevik Party as the revolutionary vanguard and guide of the working class.

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

The lagging behind of the party was obvious in the first revolutionary days of February 1917. The fall of the Tsar, the formation of workers' councils, were the work of the masses themselves. Trotsky quotes Mstislavsky (a leader of the left wing of the Social Revolutionaries, later a Bolshevik) to this effect when he declared:

"The [February] revolution caught us napping, the party people of those days, like the foolish virgins of the Bible"

To which he added:

"It does not matter how much they resemble the virgins, but it is true they were all fast asleep"

(Trotsky's 'History of...' Volume 1, 147)

This was as true of the Bolsheviks as all other left-wing organisations. In effect:

"Up to the very last hour, these leaders thought it was a question of a revolutionary manifestation [demonstration], one among many, and not at all an armed insurrection... The Central Committee was unable to give any directives for the coming day."

(Trotsky's 'History of...' Volume 1, 147)

THE JULY DAYS

In short, the Bolsheviks were anything but leaders of the masses in February, and subsequently they lagged behind both the action of the masses and also their revolutionary spirit. Thus in July 1917, when

"about 10,000 men assembled, to shouts of encouragement, the machine-gunners told how they had received an order to go to the front on 4 July, but they had decided not to go to the German front against the German proletariat but against their own capitalist ministers. Feeling ran high. "Let's get moving!" cried the workers. The secretary of the factory committee (a Bolshevik) objected, suggesting that they ask instructions from the party. Protests from all sides: "Down with it. Again you want to postpone things. We can't live that way any longer." Towards six o'clock came representatives from the Executive Committee, but they succeeded still less with the workers."

('History of...' Volume 2, 127)

The Bolsheviks not only played no part in this struggle but actually tried to squash it; they wanted to refer the whole matter back to Party Headquarters, and when their leaders arrived these were shouted down. A wide gulf had opened up between the Party and the 'masses' who had a dynamic of their own and, from the start set up their own soldiers' and workers' councils. It was here and nowhere else that the real decisions were taken. In the workers' soviets, each member, Bolshevik or other, could make his [sic] voice heard and hence

*'Unfashionable' because, in the minds of all the Marxists of the time (including the Bolsheviks), a revolution in that country was impossible in the foreseeable future as it was not an advanced industrial society, and so did not have a strong enough proletariat.

influence events. No political group as such had the right to decide any issues, even though the delegates were originally chosen from among Party militants (Mensheviks first, then Bolsheviks). However, these men were not picked for their political orthodoxy but for their record of active participation in the workers' struggle, and when they tried to act as dampers they were generally dismissed very quickly --- at least while Soviet democracy still existed. Trotsky has described the role of the Bolsheviks in July 1917, as follows:

'The Bolsheviks were caught up by the movement and dragged into it, looking around all the while for some justification for an action which flatly contravened the official decision of the party.'

('History of...' Volume 2, 30)

And, so as not to lose face, rank and file Bolsheviks were forced to go directly against the decisions of their leaders:

'Their Central Committee addressed an appeal to the workers and soldiers: "Unknown persons are summoning you into the streets under arms, and that proves that the summons does not come from any of the Soviet parties..." Thus the Central Committee --- both of the Party and the Soviet --- proposed, but the masses disposed.'

('History of...' Volume 2, 33)

Here we are not so much interested in whether or not the Bolsheviks had good reasons for opposing the demonstrations as in the fact that they held no sway over the masses. So, five months after the Revolution and three months before the October uprising, the masses were still governing themselves, and the Bolshevik 'vanguard' simply had to toe the line.

'Popular Bolsheviks --- Nevsky, Lashevich, Padvoisky --- speaking from the balcony, tried to send the regiments home. They were answered from below: "Go to hell! Go to hell!" Such cries the Bolshevik balcony had never yet heard from the soldiers, it was an alarming sign... What was to be done? Could the Bolsheviks possibly stand aside? The members of the Petrograd Committee and representatives from the regiments and factories, passed a resolution: To end all fruitless attempts to restrain the masses and guide the developing movement in such a way that the government crisis may be decided in the interests of the people [sic]!...'

('History of...' Volume 2 33f)

The fiction of the vanguard of the proletariat had to be maintained at any cost!

Trotsky himself added:

'The members of the Central Committee who were present sanctioned this change of tactics.'

('History of...' Volume 2, 34)

As if they had any choice in the matter! (At least before 1921, by which time the secret police and the army could be mustered against the unruly masses.)

But the Party could not just sit back and fold its arms. Speaking for the Party leadership, Kamenev said:

'We did not summon the manifestation [demonstration], the popular masses themselves came into the street...but once the masses have come out, our place is among them...Our present task is to give the movement an organised character.'

('History of...' Volume 2, 37)

So Kamenev admitted that the Party was no more at the head, that it was no longer directing

anything, and all it could do was organise after the event. How?

'The afternoon summons from the Central Committee to stop the demonstration was torn from the presses --- but too late to replace it with a new text.'

('History of...' Volume 2, 42)

Pravda accordingly appeared with one page blank. This is what the Bolsheviks call organising a movement! And despite all their efforts, the demonstration did take place, and attracted 'at least 500,000 persons'.

The conclusion is obvious:

'The movement had begun from below irrespective of the Bolsheviks --- to a certain extent against their will.'

('History of...' Volume 2, 71)

Moreover, Trotsky declared in a speech about that time:

'They accuse us of creating the mood of the masses; that is wrong, we only try to formulate it.'

('History of...' Volume 2, 77)

In short, the great vanguard was reduced to the role of mere mouthpiece, and failed even in this.

THE OCTOBER UPRISING

But, it might be argued that though the Party was sleeping in February, and though it lagged behind the masses in July, it still has the October Revolution to its credit. Nothing could be further from the truth.



Lenin: Fighting to keep the Party in tune with the masses...

From April to October, Lenin had to fight a constant battle to keep the Party leadership in tune with the masses:

'Even the victory of the insurrection in Petrograd was far from breaking everywhere the inertia of the waiting policy and the direct resistance of the right wing. The wavering of the leaders subsequently almost shipwrecked the insurrection in Moscow. In Kiev, the Committee, headed by Piatakov, which had been conducting a purely defensive policy, turned over the initiative in the long run --- and also the power --- to the Rada...The actual overturn in Voronezh...was carried out not by a committee of the party but by its active minority...In a whole series of provincial cities, the Bolsheviks formed a bloc with the Compromisers "against the counter-revolution"...In spite of the vast work that has been done in recent years towards concealing these facts...plenty of testimony has been preserved in the newspapers, memoirs and historic journals of the

time, to prove that on the eve of the overturn of the official machine even the most revolutionary party put up a big resistance.'

('History of...' Volume 3, 145f)

Early in October, Lenin could only impose his view by going over the head of his Central Committee:

'His letter to the Central Committee he not only sent to the Petrograd and Moscow Committees, but he also saw to it that copies fell into the hands of the more reliable party workers of the district locals.'

('History of...' Volume 3, 1931)

And again:

'Lenin appealed to a Petrograd party conference to speak a firm word in favour of insurrection. Upon this initiative, the conference insistently requested the Central Committee to take all measures "for the leadership of the inevitable insurrection of the workers, soldiers and peasants."

('History of...' Volume 3, 132)

Thus Lenin, aware that the glorious vanguard was again lagging behind the masses, tried desperately to preserve its prophetic role and, in so doing, had to break the very rules of democratic centralism he himself had formulated.

'In the upper circles of the party, a wavering is to be observed, a sort of dread of the struggle for power, an inclination to replace the struggle with resolutions, protests and conferences.'

And this is what Trotsky had to say about it:

'This is already almost a direct pitting of the party against the Central Committee. Lenin did not decide lightly upon such steps, but it was a question of the fate of the revolution and all other considerations fell away.'

('History of...' Volume 3, 132f)

In short, the success of the revolution called for action against the 'highest circles of the party', who, from February to October, utterly failed to play the revolutionary role they ought to have taken in theory. The masses themselves made the revolution, with or even against the party - this much at least was clear to Trotsky the historian. But far from drawing the correct conclusion, Trotsky the theorist continued to argue that the masses are incapable of making a revolution without a leader. To begin with he admits that

'Tugan-Buranovsky is right when he says that the February revolution was accomplished by workers and peasants --- the latter in the person of the soldiers. But there still remains the great question: who led the revolution, who led the workers to their feet?... It was solved most simply by the universal formula: nobody led the revolution, it happened itself.'

('History of...' Volume 1, 145)

Trotsky not only put the question very well but also gave a clear answer: the revolution was the spontaneous expression of the will of the masses - not just in theory but in actual practice. But Trotsky the theorist could not accept the obvious answer: he had to refute it since the idea of a centralized leadership is the crux of his dogma and must be upheld at all costs. Hence he quoted with approval Zavadsky's dictum that

'spontaneous conception is still more out of place in sociology than in natural science. Owing to the fact that none of the revolution-

ary leaders with a name was able to hang his [sic] label on the movement, it becomes not impersonal but merely nameless.'

('History of...' Volume 1, 151)

We wish to say no more. Anonymity is precisely what characterizes a spontaneous movement, i.e. one that disdains the tutelage of official organizations, that will have no official name. Trotsky's argument is quite different: there can be no revolution without leadership and if no leaders can be pointed out, it is simply because they are anonymous. Thus, after recalling that the 'Union of Officers of February 27', formed just after the revolution, tried to determine with a questionnaire who first led the Volynsky Regiment out, Trotsky explains:

'They received seven answers naming seven initiators of this decisive action. It is very likely, we may add, that a part of the initiative really did belong to several soldiers.'

('History of...' Volume 1, 150)

Why will he not admit that the soldiers took more than part of the initiative? Because Trotsky prefers another explanation:

'It is not impossible that the chief initiator fell in the street fighting carrying his name with him into oblivion.'

Thus Trotsky, the historian, doctors the historical evidence to introduce a mythical leader, whose existence cannot be verified because he is dead!

He goes on to say:

'Those nameless, austere statesmen of the factory and street did no fall out of the sky: they had to be educated.'

('History of...' Volume 1, 152)

The Party as such played no role in these decisive days, but those who were the real actors, 'the conscious instruments of history' needed to be educated, and by who if not the Party? In short, the past action of the Party justifies its present inactivity. There are but two alternatives for Trotsky: either people have fallen out of the sky or they must have been educated by the Party. The first hypothesis being absurd, the second is the only possible answer. But, as the Jewish father said to his son: 'My boy, whenever there are two alternatives, choose the third'. Now that alternative is simply that the workers could have managed without a Party, just as they do in their everyday life. Let us see what Trotsky himself has to say about this:

'The anaemic and pretentious intelligentsia... was burning with desire to teach the popular masses... but was absolutely incapable of understanding them and of learning anything from them. Now, failing this there can be no revolutionary politics.'

This judgement applies equally well to Trotsky himself, who was responsible for the regimentation of labour and for shooting the Kronstadt rebels. But Trotsky is not aware of this fact, and his history is so valuable precisely because he is honest, or stupid, enough to list the facts that contradict his every conclusion. Forgetting what he has written on page 151, he notes that:

'one of the factories carried this placard: "The Right to Life is Higher than the Rights of Private Property". This slogan was not suggested by the party.'

('History of...' Volume 1, 419)



Trotsky the historian: honest or stupid?

No one would wish to challenge his claim that 'the thought of the worker has become more scientific...because it was fertilized to a large extent by the methods of Marxism.' True, the use of the term 'scientific thought' is questionable, but there is no doubt that scientific Marxism has played a large part in the education of both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. It should also be added that other trends --- anarcho-syndicalist, anarchist, social revolutionary --- made their contribution too. And as Trotsky himself admits when discussing working class thought, its development was chiefly due to 'the living experience of the masses'.

It was this living experience of the masses which led to the creation of the soviets in 1905, soviets which the Bolshevik Party largely ignored, a fact for which Trotsky himself severely criticized the Party at the time. But as soon as he turned Bolshevik theorist, he had to dismiss the whole idea of workers' spontaneity. Thus while he says in Volume 2, page 72, that the masses were complaining that

'even the Bolsheviks are dawdling and holding us back'

('History of...' Volume 2, 72)

he goes on to say on page 88:

'What they [the German Spartacists] lacked was a Bolshevik party'

('History of...' Volume 2, 88)

The absurdity of his hypotheses --- all due to the fact that he cannot admit the idea of a spontaneous revolution --- becomes even clearer in the following passage:

'A careful study of the materials characterizing the party life during the war and the beginning of the revolution...reveals more clearly every day the immense intellectual backsliding of the upper stratum of the Bolsheviks during the war when the proper life of the party practically came to an end. The cause of this backsliding is twofold: isolation from the masses and isolation from abroad, that is primarily from Lenin.'

('History of...' Volume 3, 134)

This 'twofold backsliding' is nothing less than an indictment of the Bolshevik Party: by stressing the importance of Lenin in the way he does, Trotsky is, in fact, depreciating the value of the Party. And Lenin, far from being the infallible revolutionary Trotsky makes him out to be, between February and October 1917, went back on a good many positions he had earlier defended. Thus while he had stressed the importance of the soviets in

1905, in January, 1917, when he gave a lecture to Swiss workers, he merely mentioned the soviets in passing. This did not prevent him, a few months later, to the dismay of the majority of the Party, from once again adopting the anarchist slogan of: ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS! The Party, faithful and disciplined though it was, could not perform these gyrations with the same speed. The break between Lenin and the Party may prove Lenin's genius for changing the political line, but it also proves how ill-fitted an organization of the Bolshevik Party type is to deal with a revolutionary situation. Hence Trotsky's claim that

'the March leadership of Kamenev and Stalin lagged behind the gigantic historic tasks.'

('History of...' Volume 1, 403)

Indeed, Trotsky says:

'every historic task mobilizes the cadres that are adequate to it?'

('History of...' Volume 2, 219f)

Now if every historical task mobilizes the necessary cadres, it will do this for the revolution itself. Hence Trotsky should not really blame the Bolshevik leaders for the failure of the Party to rise to its 'historic task'. The reason Stalin and Kamenev found themselves at the head of the Party was because they were elected by the whole of the Party, and it is therefore the Party as such which is to blame and not this or that individual. Again, if the presence or absence of Lenin explains the success or failure of the Party, the Party reduces to Lenin and becomes superfluous.

As for the gap between the Party and the masses, it can have two causes: either the masses are too apathetic for revolution or, as happened in 1917, the masses are only too anxious to carry the revolution a step further and the Party itself is apathetic. In the second case it is not the masses who have not 'risen' to their historic task but the Party. This rupture between the Party and the masses is due to the Party's very nature: a small, closed group of professional revolutionaries, sure of being the repository of truth and incapable of adapting themselves to any independent initiative of the masses. A case in point was their attitude to the soviets, or workers' councils, which gave the atomized masses their own centres for action and collective decision making. The soviets sprang up quite spontaneously in 1905 and did not figure in any party programme. It was only in retrospect that they were analysed by various writers of the Left. Some of these --- particularly the anarchists, the extreme left Social Revolutionaries and minority groups within the Social Democratic Party, were frankly in favour of the soviets --- and so, in 1905, was Leon Trotsky. Anton Pannekoek was another and his movement for workers' control was attacked by Lenin in 'Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder'. All the Bolsheviks were frankly hostile. Those in St Petersburg were convinced that

'only a party based on class conceptions can direct the political movement of the proletariat and preserve the purity of its intentions, whereas the workers' councils are so many heterogeneous and indecisive bodies'

(Quoted by Oscar Auweiler in 'The Workers' Councils in Russia 1905-1929')

At the same time, P.Mendelev declared in the name of the Bolsheviks:

'The council of workers' deputies is a political organization and Social Democrats [the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks] must leave it because its very existence impedes the development of the social democratic movement. The workers' council may exist as a trade union or not at all.'

From this Mendeleev concluded that the Bolsheviks should use the following strategy:

'First of all we must try to get the workers' council to limit itself to trade union tasks, and secondly, in case this attempt fails, the workers' council must be made to acknowledge the leadership of the Social Democratic Party, and thirdly, this being done, it must be dissolved as quickly as possible, seeing that its parallel existence with other social democratic organisations serves no purpose.'

And this is at the time when workers were beginning to set up workers' councils in all the factories, and workers' 'parliaments' in all the major towns! The Social Democrats did not even think fit to invite the workers to participate in the Party's august deliberations, but expected them to carry out blindly what the 'proletarian vanguard' ordered from on high, and then to declare themselves redundant. That the workers' councils 'impeded' this sort of development is a truism --- they challenged the wisdom of the Party leaders in practice and not simply in theory. This was more than our professional revolutionaries were prepared to swallow. In 1907, Lenin got the Fifth Congress of the Social Democratic Workers' Party to pass a resolution whose subject was highly revealing:

'On the independent workers' organisation and the anar ho-syndicalist currents within the proletariat.'

and declared:

'The participation of Social Democratic organisations in councils composed of delegates and workers' deputies without distinction of party...or the creation of such councils, cannot be countenanced unless we can be sure that the party can benefit and that its interests are fully protected.'

(Quoted by Oscar Auweiler, 103)

In dealing with workers' organizations, the Bolsheviks had but one major concern: to strengthen their own organization. Since the Party was the sole guardian of the proletariat and the revolution, any attempt by the workers to make a revolution without the Party must clearly be wrong or indeed impossible, as Trotsky argues in his *History of the Russian Revolution*. When the workers disavow the Party in practice, then the Party simply disavows the practice of the workers.

This disdain for the working class and its capacity for self-emancipation can be heard most clearly in Lenin's *What is to be done?*, a theoretical justification of the leadership principle. In it, Lenin simply repeats the words of Karl Kautsky, whom he still admired at that time:

'The workers, we have said, still lacked a Social Democratic consciousness; it could only come to them from the outside. History in all countries attests that, on its own, the working class cannot go beyond the level of trade union consciousness, the realization that they must combine into trade unions, fight against the employers, force the government to pass such laws as benefit the condition of the workers...As for the Socialist doctrine, it

was constructed out of philosophical, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated members of the ruling class, by intellectuals. Thus Marx and Engels, the founders of modern scientific socialism, were bourgeois intellectuals: Similarly in Russia, the social democratic doctrine sprang up almost independently of the spontaneous development of the working class movement....'

Lenin summed it all up by saying:

'The workers can acquire class political consciousness only from without, that is, only outside of the economic struggle, outside of the sphere of the relation between workers and employers.'

Now this claim that class political consciousness can only reach the working class from outside, has been refuted in practice, and ought to cease being part of any socialist's stock of ideas. The history of French trade unionism before 1914 is in itself sufficient proof that the workers can go beyond what Lenin calls their 'trade union consciousness'. The Charter of Amiens adopted in 1906 makes this quite explicit:

'The CGT is affiliated to no political party, but is a union of class-conscious workers fighting for the abolition of wage-slaves and employers. The Congress pledges itself to support the workers in their class struggle against all forms of capitalist exploitation and oppression, both material and moral. Accordingly the Congress sets itself the following tasks: in the short term, trade unionists will try to improve the workers' lot by calling for such immediate reforms as increases in wages, a shorter working week, etc. But this is only one aspect of our work. The trade unions also pave the way for the complete emancipation of the working class, which cannot be achieved except by expropriation of the capitalists. To that end, they will call general strikes, so that those resisting capitalism on the wages front today may tomorrow take charge of production and distribution and so usher in a completely new era...'

This text shows clearly that the working class can rise a great deal beyond the 'trade union consciousness', and precisely in a country where the influence of the Social Democrats was extremely tenuous. Conversely it was when Social Democrats started to gain influence in France that the trade unions reverted to their role of economic intermediaries, and changed into the bureaucratic machines of today, machines that form an integral part of capitalist society. The Leninist ideology, in postulating the incapacity of the working class to make a revolution, or, as we shall see, to manage production in post-revolutionary society, is in direct conflict with the inaugural declaration of the First International:

'The emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the workers themselves.'

The fact that 'scientific socialism' was the creation of bourgeois intellectuals is undeniable, and, indeed, it bears the unmistakable marks of this: it is alien to the proletariat and perhaps it ought not to be so proud of this alienation as it obviously is. Moreover, Bolshevik organizations were born in an industrially backward country (which explains rather than justifies their own backward nature). This type of organization, and the ideology that went hand in hand with it, would, after 1917, seize upon the backwardness of Russia and also on the lack of revolutionary

spirit among the workers outside, as a pretext for bringing to fruit the counter-revolutionary germs it contained from the very beginning.

The Leninist belief that the workers cannot spontaneously go beyond the level of trade union consciousness is tantamount to beheading the proletariat, and then insinuating the Party as the head. The original aims of French trade unionism, and the creation of soviets show that Lenin was wrong, and, in fact, in Russia the Party was forced to decapitate the workers' movement with the help of the political police and the Red Army under the brilliant leadership of Trotsky and Lenin. Moreover, the decapitation was not enough, the body, too, had to be destroyed, and since this task required less finesse and revolutionary education, the honour of finishing the work so brilliantly begun by Lenin and Trotsky, fell to the uncultured Stalin.

However, in fairness to Trotsky, it must be said that, in 1902, when Lenin wrote What is to be done?, Trotsky not only opposed it violently but had the wit to foresee its worst dangers: that the Party would substitute itself for the working class, the Central Committee for the Party, the Politburo for the Central Committee, and finally the General Secretary for the Politburo. It is to be hoped that Trotsky's critique may one day be published in full, for it, better than anything else, would provide us with a critique of modern Trotskyism.

THE PARTY AND ANARCHISM

In February 1917, we have said, the Party line and dynamic was opposed to that of the masses organized in soviets. Lenin had to labour hard, not to convince the masses of the need

to seize power in the factories and towns, but to convince his own party that the masses were ready for this step. It was the party that had to rise to the level of the masses, not the other way round. Lenin had to turn 'anarchist', and to carry an incredulous party with him. October thus represents the point where the action and inspiration of the masses coincided with those of the temporarily de-Bolshevized Bolshevik Party, and this happy state persisted until the spring of 1918. The Bolshevik Party could not, moreover, behave otherwise, because it was still trying to win the support of the workers. The previous eight months (ie: February to October 1917) had brought on an extraordinary proliferation of factory and workshop committees. In April 1917 a conference of factory committees at Petrograd had declared:

'All decisions affecting the internal management of factories, such as the length of the working day, wages, hiring and dismissing of workers, etc, must come from the factory committees.'

Another conference of factory committees, held in June 1917, demanded:

'the organization of complete control by the workers of production and distribution'

and,

'a proletarian majority in all institutions wielding executive power'

Yet another congress, after the seizure of power, declared:

'The workers' control commissions must not merely be used to check production...but must prepare for the transfer of production into the hands of the workers.'

The January 1918 issue of Vestnik Metalista (Metalworkers' News) contained an article by the worker N.Filipov which said,



All-Russian Congress of Factory and Shop Committees: demanded 'the organisation of complete control by the workers of production and distribution'.

'The working class, by its very nature, must hold a central place in the productive process. In the future, all production must reflect the spirit and the will of the proletariat.'

In this truly revolutionary period, Lenin told the Third Congress of Soviets held at the beginning of 1918:

'Anarchist ideas have assumed virulent forms.'

A. Pantakrava wrote:

'On the morrow of the October Revolution, these anarchist tendencies have become prevalent, precisely because the capitalists have increased their resistance to the application of the Decree on Workers' Control and continue to oppose the workers' management of production.'

From the spring of 1918 it was the Bolshevik-Leninists themselves who opposed workers' management. Before that happened the anarcho-syndicalist Maximov could still write:

'The Bolsheviks have abandoned not only their theory of the withering away of the state, but Marxist ideology as a whole. They have become anarchists of a sort.'

However, the anarchist Voline, writing in *'Golos Truda'* ('The Voice of Labour') at the end of 1917, had this to say:

'Once their power has been consolidated and legalized, the Bolsheviks, as state socialists, that is as men who believe in centralized and authoritarian leadership --- will start running the life of the country and of the people from the top. Your soviets...will gradually become simple tools of the central government...You will soon see the inauguration of an authoritarian political apparatus that will crush all

opposition with an iron fist... "All power to the soviets" will become "all power to the leaders of the party".'

And this is precisely what happened in 1918. To achieve their ends, the Bolsheviks had to smash all opposition and the anarchists in particular. This political repression went hand in hand with the repression of the workers in the factory.

Thus Captain Jacques Sadaul wrote:

'The anarchist party [sic] is the most active and most militant and probably the most popular opposition group of all...The Bolsheviks are greatly disturbed.'

Voline confirmed this account:

'To tolerate anarchist propaganda would have been suicide for Lenin. It [the Bolshevik authority] did everything possible to impede and then forbid and repress by brute force, all manifestations of libertarian ideas.'

This repression began with a change of attitude on the question of workers' self-management. From 1918 onwards, opposition was kept within the Bolshevik Party - outside all criticism was suppressed. Looking at developments inside the Bolshevik Party we can follow the process of repression, which culminated in the silencing, even within the party, of anyone who spoke up for the crushed proletariat. The Tenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party, in March 1921 dissolved all party fractions, while outside, the Party was busy firing on the workers and sailors at Kronstadt, and on what pockets of resistance there still were in the rest of the country. In particular, the Ukrainian Makhno Movement was a force the Bolsheviks had to destroy at all costs. These events signalled the final success of the Bolshevik counter-revolution.

D.C.B. (Translated and adapted from "Tierra y Libertad", Mexico, no.458.)

SUGGESTIONS

FOR

FURTHER

READING...

Should you have any difficulty getting hold of these titles, try your local Library. If this fails, then contact HUDDERSFIELD D.A.M.
[address on page 2]

A FRESH LOOK AT LENIN, A Brown, Solidarity.

THE BOLSHEVIKS AND WORKERS' CONTROL, M Brinton. (Originally pub. Solidarity, now reprinted by and available from Bolton D.A.M.)

THE BOLSHEVIK MYTH, A Berkman, pub. Virus.

FACTORY COMMITTEES IN THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, pub. C.C.P.

FROM BOLSHEVISM TO THE BUREAUCRACY, P Carden, pub. Solidarity.

THE GUILLOTINE AT WORK, G.P. Maximoff, pub. Cienfuegos Press.

KRONSTADT UPRISING, I Mett, pub. Solidarity.

THE RUSSIAN TRAGEDY, A Berkman, pub. Phoenix Press.

THE WORKERS' OPPOSITION, A Kollantai, pub. Solidarity.

FROM THE SAMARA FEDERATION OF ANARCHISTS

—

IN VIEW OF THE "DECREE"

The enemy is impotent. The enemy is sinking ever lower and lower. And in his fall he blasphemes. In his fall he slings mud at us. He stoops to the most hideous provocatory measures.

The enemy of the oppressed—he thirsts for domination. He fears the Anarchists who have raised high the banner of freedom.

The enemy is spreading malicious calumny, insinuating that our freedom includes violence and rape. In our name he is spreading with his own soiled hands the "Decree about the Nationalization of Women."

What crude, absurd provocation!

For ages, everywhere, the Anarchists have fought against all kinds of decrees and laws no matter by what authorities these were set up. How then can they themselves issue decrees?

Enemies of all violence, how can the Anarchists demand or even allow force in the treatment of women?

How many such asses will be found who will be ready to believe the provocateurs and who will appear in the camp of these serpents?

No, never! In his attempt to set against us the ignorant masses, the enemy did not calculate correctly and only exposed his own filthy soul.

Alas! he does not yet know the power of our weapon—but he will know it!

Death to the provocateurs! No mercy for them! On the spot—without hesitation—by all means, with any weapon!

And everyone, who—secretly or openly—supports this calumny, by pretending that he is an innocent lamb who has been duped by someone, will be considered an accomplice of this black band, as a provocateur. And they will meet the same fate.

Everyone—whether he be with us or not—but who lives honestly and struggles for his living, will help us dispense justice, and will himself mete out vengeance to these venomous reptiles of reaction.

We have enough fire for this purpose!

And all means will be fair!

Samara Federation of Anarchists.

SYNDICALISM IN THE COLNE VALLEY.

Yorkshire Factory Times - June 3rd 1910

"SITUATION SERIOUS AT HUDDERSFIELD"

"The Teazers and Fettlers agitation is continuing peacefully but it is not certain when an outbreak will occur. It is past a joke to be met with the same proposal as the employers made months ago of 5¹/₂d/hr. Morley, Leeds and Dewsbury all pay more than that and the Colne, Holme and Huddersfield employers are the kings in their trade and can get better prices for their goods and less wastage and less damage than any other manufacturers in the world. Yet they coolly offer 3¹/₂d/hr. less than Morley. This offer has made the men more keen than I ever thought they would have been. It has slightly embittered them and to keep them from hasty striking has been the union's task all along. This is made more difficult now. What with the cost of living being 2s 6d a week more than it was when the agitation itself was started and what with the extra work turned out, the men's demands are modesty itself."

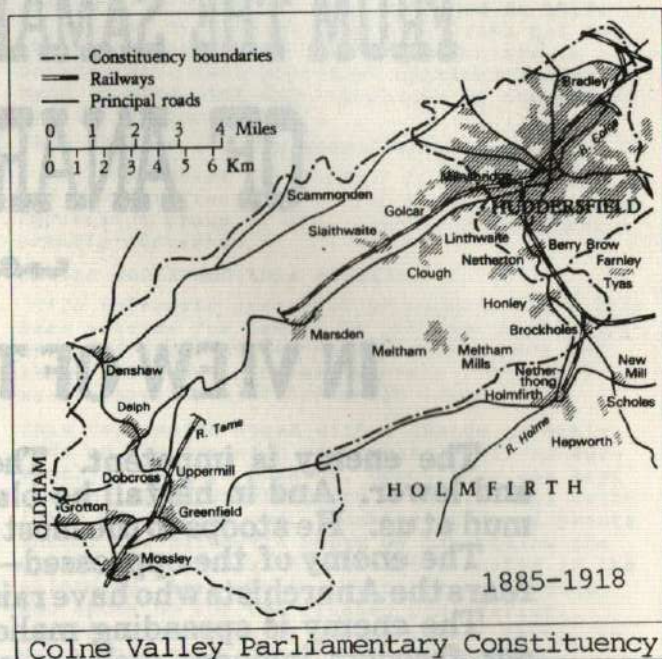
June 9th 1910

"The employers in the Colne Valley seem to have missed their mark this time and are riding for a serious trades dispute."

In fact the Teazers and Fettlers dispute was settled without a fight; the Board of Trade intervened and the original employers demands which would have split the Teazers and Fettlers Union were shelved; a 1¹/₂d advance on normal time, 1¹/₂d on overtime and a 55¹/₂ hour week were extracted from the 'Valley Tyrants'. But the anger of the unskilled teazers, who were highly unionized, was to spill over into other disputes involving less unionized workers. The local socialist newspaper, "The Worker", said, "The employers know that if the Teazers and Fettlers get a measure of justice larger sections will be emboldened to put in a plea for their rights. We might as well fight it in the beginning."

Before looking at the disputes in more detail we should consider social and economic conditions which existed at that time in the Colne Valley.

In 1907, at the time of the election of Victor Grayson, earnings in the local textile trades were known to be 10-20% higher than Lancashire or other West Yorkshire textile areas. Unionization amongst the teazers was 65%, among weavers 25%. But it was not strong unionization that gave the area its lead but its quality cloths. Plentiful overtime boosted earnings. On top of the 55¹/₂ hour week up to 12 hours overtime was worked, often paid at the same hourly rate of around 5d per hour. From 1907, Hudders-



field textile workers had pressed for uniform pay for all grades in piecework, extra holidays, including a week at the local celebration of 'Honley Feast', as well as extra rates for overtime with a view to reducing its occurrence and reducing local unemployment then running at about 9%.

The election victory of the socialist, Victor Grayson, in June 1907 had been an incomplete one. Although there was strong support in the unions, and the unions were often insurrectionary in their demands, a conscious class struggle perspective had not been put forward. Grayson's support primarily lay in the cultural organizations of the Colne Valley Socialist League rather than in the struggles of the trade unions. This fact and the 1907-1909 depression in the valleys led to earnings falling to levels below those of other textile areas. Yet no increases were conceded by the Valley Tyrants. Until 1910 there had been no general increase in wages locally for 37 years, a time in which prices had risen by 17%. Clearly an explosion was around the corner.

From 1909 on, Grayson, E.J.B. Allen, Fred Shaw and Tom Mann, among others, began to reach local people with their ideas of class struggle, Industrial Unionism and social revolution that had been lacking before, and this was welcome amid simmering discontent on wages, holidays and housing.

Housing in the Colne Valley was a disgrace and remains so to this day. Much of it was under the tutelage of the big textile manufacturers who also tried to control their workforces' lives further by organizing holidays around "Mill Treats".

Rents had been raised by the bosses two and three times in ten years from 1900-10, by up to 60%. If tenants complained at this or unsanitary housing conditions they were often forced to 'flit' by the boss or landlord.

Repairs were neglected by the landlords until they were absolutely necessary. Even then they were often followed by rent rises. On top this, when houses became vacant, applicants were "falling over each other" to get in; and usually at a higher rent than before. The only solution offered by the revolutionary socialists (as Labour were called) was to wait on council elections to start the slow task of procuring land and building up council house stock. Today these council houses suffer the same neglect and fear of eviction on complaint as any Valley Tyrant could impose.

Finally, in the wake of Grayson's election in 1907 the Worsted and Woollen Manufacturer's Association had put it's house in order. 80% of Valley firms were in this organisation, which had a fund to aid it's member firms in strikes, and blacklisted any firms that broke the common front against strikers. It was generally in favour of tariff reform. While the parliamentary socialists' support based on religious and cultural organisations (in clubs, churches, educational, musical and social events), immediately the election was over, the manufacturers began to show that their strength was in determined class struggle. A wave of victimization against known socialists swept the Valley, continuing until 1910 when 'speed ups' were added to the offensive. Around two hundred socialists were forced to move to other areas for jobs. The bigger manufacturers like Crowther's sponsored the Northern Union Football League against the Football Association (a more democratic organisation) in an attempt to secure control over working class sport and leisure.

In 1910 boom returned to the Valley's textile industry, and with it the opportunity to get back at the Valley Tyrants in October of that year.

"French leave" was one of the actions of sabotage pioneered by workers in the French syndicalist C.G.T. union. It amounted to leaving work often en-mass to take holidays the employers otherwise would not have granted. In October 1910 Honley Feast, a carnival at which association football was played, together with the Fartown football matches, brought 42 summonses against workers for French leave. The summonses were to show to the police why the workers should not pay fines for absenting themselves from work without permission.

French leave was described like this by "the Worker": "As a result of the belated but beautiful fine summer weather at Honley Feast aided by attractive football fixtures at Fartown the servitude in the compounds was more than usually uninviting and hundreds of operatives



VICTOR GRAYSON.

took French leave. In some cases they asked permission, and hinted at taking it if it was not granted but in cases where they were certain of refusal they just disappeared."

French leave was in fact an old customary right that the manufacturers were trying to stamp out. Fifty summonses two years previously had failed to do the trick and now in the wake of direct action for more holidays (one week was demanded for Honley Feast) the Fine Cloth Manufacturers Association summonsed the textile union officials to negotiate for 13 days a year holiday. However, there was also some talk of a lockout in the employers' association.

In passing it must be noted that the Socialist Party paper editorial condemned the leave as an out of date custom, irresponsible and disorganising to the social machine.

Typical of another charge was that it was divisive of the working class. This charge was to be levelled again against the stormy October unrest of the unorganised textile workers.

Syndicalist action II. The unrest.

Four mills in the Colne Valley were on strike. The strikers were unorganised and sectional but evoked widespread support throughout the rest of the valley.

Spinners and piecers at C. and J. Hurst of Sunny Bank Mills, Longwood came out for an extra 2 and 5 shillings a week, their previous wages being 23 and 25 shillings a week. "The Worker" put it like this: "There is nothing to be said against an attempt to improve on such paltry pay for skilled work, done in greasy, heated rooms with artificial

light when humans should be abed: but the blame lies in the fact that while the employers are in a strong union, not a single one of the men is."

Of these men, 24 were sacked and subsequently blacklisted by the employers' association whose members each sent two men to replace those sacked.

Warpers near town "threw down work" in early October 1910. All "The Worker" could say about them was:

"These sentimental spasms are not exhibitions of strength but of foolishness."

At another mill a section of overtime workers wanted the 1½d. increase of the Teazers and Fettlers, but said "The Worker", they should "go about it in the same way as them", that is through the union officials.

At Linthwaite organized piecers picketed outside Blackrock Mills against speedup and redundancies. These men in a union were protesting against the redundancies as wrongful dismissal of half their number. All the men were sacked outright.

It turned out that between three and four hundred men and women had taken French leave at Honley Feast. The local labour paper slammed these people when it should have been supporting them. 42 of them were fined 12 shillings each, more than half a week's wages, by the magistrates. In "The Worker" it said, "They knew that two sections of workers had handed in notices, thereby tempting the employers' association into a general lockout which would have left the workforce without public sympathy or support." Even in the heyday of Labour "public opinion" told. Some of the men who had tendered notices played football against a wall in full view of their bosses. This was described as "provoking".

Most of the French leave and several of the strikes were against Crowthers of Milnsbridge, the biggest employer in the area with three mills. This was one of the best paying firms. "The Worker" had this to say about the rank and file strikes of 1910: "Rescuing the submerged employees from the swamp [like those in the Colne Valley] is infinitely superior to pinpricks for the employers, and the union should seek to encourage one and to vehemently stamp out the other."

And yet French leave had brought the holiday question to prominence and together with the Teazers and Fettlers' dispute brought the Valley to near lockout in which all workers would have been involved.

What was the employers' view of the unrest? A liberal employer in the Woollen Manufacturers' Association wrote to "The Worker" pleading for trades unionism and trade union officials to control the outbreaks. However, he did point out that in the case of the initial occurrence of the strikes that they were purely sectional. He thereafter noted that the Employers' Association had adopted the attitude

of "hit one, hit all." The valley was on the brink of a general social war. The weavers were likely to come out and provoke the lock-out. The employees further said that the best employers were in favour of bringing the lowest wages up to the highest in their firms obviously to put the worst firms out of business. Finally he went on to say that strikes of the management themselves trying to raise their wages to other's levels were irresponsible in the same way as the socialist party paper had said. If trade unions could not control the workers the officials should be replaced with those who could. So much then for the employers. The unrest of 1910 petered out with 10-15% rises all round and negotiations for 13 days of holiday including Honley Feast. The strikes had been successful.

The Syndicalists.

There were four major syndicalist activists in the Colne Valley area; William Thompson of Marsden who wrote for "The Worker", wrote two biographies of Victor Grayson, then moved off with Grayson to edit a South Wales socialist newspaper; Fred Shaw of Lindley who was secretary of the Huddersfield Industrialist League and later joined the Communist Party; Victor Grayson, himself M.P. for Colne Valley, began moving towards anarcho-syndicalism from 1909; and E.J.B. Allen whom I will concentrate on as he was the most prominent of the local syndicalists of the time. Tom Mann will also be mentioned as he was in regular contact with the area.

Allen was originally a member of the British Advocates of Industrial Unionism in 1907 and was editor of their paper, the "Industrial Unionist". He was pragmatically anti-parliamentary, holding that, "Unity should come in the workshops first." In 1908 he was expelled from the BAIU for his stance on parliamentarianism. In the split he took six London branches, the Tredegar branch and a number of contacts with him. He promptly set up the Industrialist League, himself becoming national organiser and the "Industrialist" newspaper was launched. The "Industrialist" was printed by the shop assistants' union. In December-January 1908-9 he moved to Honley in the Colne Valley constituency. His contact, with whom he appears to have stayed, was Tom Carter, a Labour councillor. Both Carter and Allen became prominent Graysonites, turning Honley into the centre of support for Grayson's class struggle parliamentary movement. Allen joined the local socialist club and was given space in "The Worker" to explain syndicalist ideas. In October and November 1908 he spoke in Chicago with Malatesta and Rocker at the Charlotte Street Club at the Haymarket commemoration.

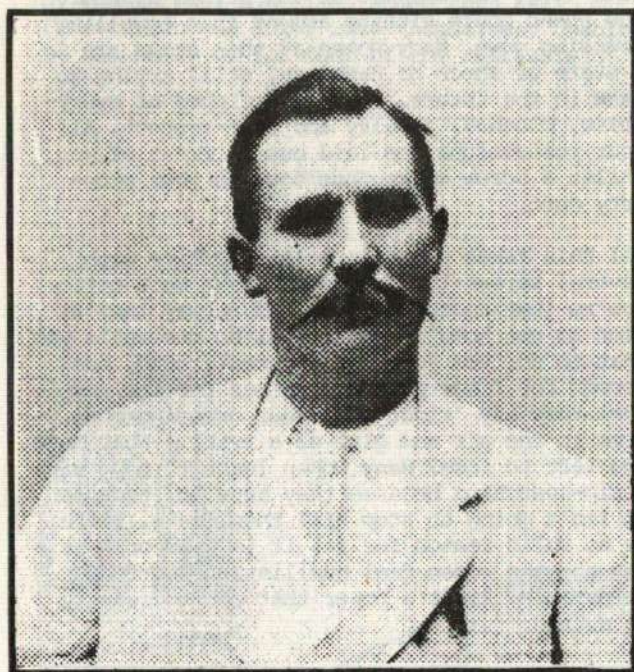
There was indeed a strong anarchist tendency in the Industrialist League which Allen was part of. Immediately in the Huddersfield area he began his agitation. In October 1909 he took on a seven day tour of the area speaking on "Anti-Patriotism" and the role of violence in revolution and social change. He spoke to crowds of up to 400 and was described as "a full-blooded extremist reminiscent of Tom Mann." He

lived in Honley, until April 1912, a prominent writer, publicist, and organiser though expelled from the Industrialist League in 1910 for his part in helping Victor Grayson's election campaign. He continued to write and and speak for "The Worker," the "Industrialist," and the "Industrial Syndicalist." In April 1912 the third of a series of his articles did not appear in "The Worker" and Allen disappeared. The key to his disappearance may be the second article which ended with a clarion call for revolution in the middle of the 1912 national miners' strike when there were perhaps 100,000 syndicalists in Britain. It went: "We shall wipe out all vestiges of the institutions of class domination. We are making a class revolution. By the direct and forcible expropriation of the capitalist and landlord class, and the various institutions that they have built up to safeguard their interests, we shall have established social; political; and economic equality."

"Freedom we shall take. Equality be assured. Fraternity made possible."

"Freedom is for he (sic) who takes it, it cannot be a gift!"

This is an open declaration of war made in the mounting unrest of 1910-15. It is not too meek to say that it was premature and may have cost him his life to the secret services. E.J.B. Allen was one of the foremost theorists in the world anarchist movement. It is one of the continued mysteries of the movement that no-one has resolved let alone interpreted his disappearance from the scene of the syndicalist unrest.



TOM MANN.

At the time of the Valley unrest of October 1910, Tom Mann came back to the constituency where he had been a Parliamentary candidate in the 1890's. He came preaching social revolution. The valleys were in "turmoil" he said. Never had the workers had such a chance to increase their wage above the widespread poverty level of 30 shillings a week and prepare themselves for the coming showdown. He talked of capitalist combines such as the Woollen Manufacturers' Association which were organised to a tee against the workers. The workers must organise themselves to the same degree of perfection and join trade unions.

Up to 1000 workers took direct action in 1910, recovering from the spate of victimizations which had followed the 1907 Grayson victory. Holidays, hours, and wages were fought over and favourable agreements won. Action spread throughout the various grades of millworkers although many still wanted to maintain wage differentials. The need for a general union to match the employers' organization came out of the 1910 unrest and the Textile Union began to grow with the need for unified action. Syndicalist action triumphed and its ideas began to spread through the Huddersfield area. In 1914 the Graet Labourers' Strike broke out, only to be cut short by the war of 1914-18. The poorest of the workers in the Colne Valley had begun to direct action for themselves, and to build the general union.

As in many areas of the country the labour unrest of 1910-14 was clearly heading for a showdown with the capitalists, and had not the war intervened there was the real possibility of a general strike in which syndicalist ideas and tactics may have been predominant.

E. Hepworth.

FOOTNOTE.

This is the first article in what we hope will be an occasional series reclaiming the history of working-class struggle in various localities. We hope groups or individuals will be able to research and document such activities in their areas and we look forward to publishing their accounts.

Of course, an essential aspect of history is that we not only reclaim and give prominence to many obscured events and people, but that we draw relevant conclusions and lessons provided by that history and experience.

Hopefully, Catalyst can provide these important perspectives, and we can learn and adjust to the theory and practice derived from the class struggle over time. Maybe, at the same time, we can re-emphasise another anarchist tradition—that of self-education and accessible theory.

PRISON - A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE.

At any one time there are approximately 1600 women in prison. They are largely out-of-the-way and hidden from the rest of society, in places enshrined in secrecy. No persons can work within a prison without first signing the Official Secrets Act and no health officers, fire officers or safety officers are allowed to inspect inside or regulate conditions.

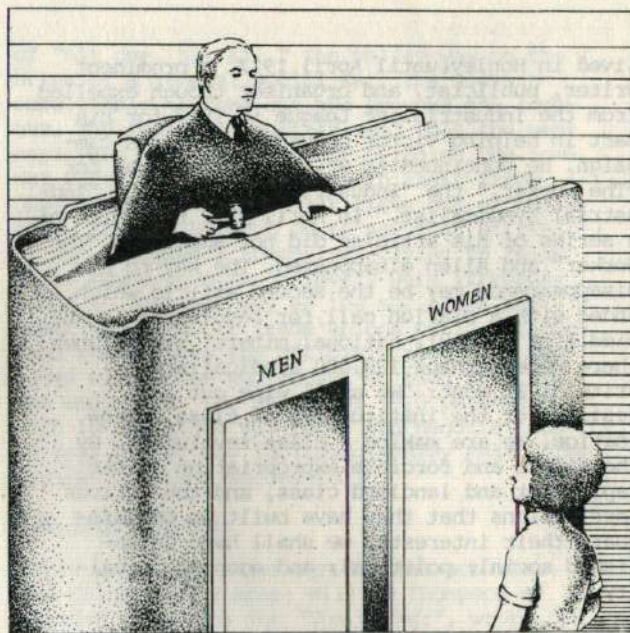
Male prisoners suffer under the same conditions, the same rules and regulations, mainly as a direct result of class and racist prejudice. Women suffer further because of prevailing sexist views.

Race, class and gender are the basis of myths put about as an answer as to why women turn to crime, and extends into the courts, more women being remanded for medical reports and a greater number of women being imprisoned for minor offences than men.*

The various myths as to why women become criminals are not only blatantly sexist but also amusing; women being failures in their supposedly natural female role; or a biblically based superstition that women are a source of evil; women in a bid to gain liberation inevitably turn to crime; or, simply, they are mentally ill. The blame is placed with individual women, it is them that should change rather than society with its restrictive and exploitative roles.

These theories could easily be dismissed if it weren't for the sad fact that they are often reiterated in the misogynous minds of judges, magistrates and the administration of women's prisons. Although women who break the law come from many different backgrounds, like their male counterparts it is primarily women from working-class backgrounds that end up in prison. There is no typical woman prisoner and there is no typical response to imprisonment - mine is only one.

Prisons are not caring places for the gentle reform of their residents. The female prison regime is more rigid than in a men's prison due to the view that most women are maladjusted, childlike and need strict discipline and constant surveillance. Prison officers can wield great power as interpreting rules and regulations is left very much in their hands. Prison officers predominantly hold views which distin-



guish between people because of gender, class or race.

Once in prison, you are made to feel totally powerless. You are without the structures that outside would steer your life. Instead there is a tangle of petty rules and regulations, of which many serve no further purpose than to make people feel frustrated and angry. Women suffer the agony of children left outside, yet at the same time are made to feel guilty of their 'neglect.'

The first sights of prison will be the reception wing, the epitome of the prison system. You spend hours sitting around in a towelling dressing gown. Many women at this stage are in a state of shock or numbness, still trying to take in the future. You are stripped of everything, clothes, jewelry and self-respect. All your possessions are laid out in front of you, whilst a screw marks them down on your property card.

All this takes place in a large office with several screws in. They don't take much notice, you're just another number and anyway they're keen to get home to their tea. No one tells you what to do, you just get shunted around, one corner for fingerprints, another for the nurse. Then they say 'right drop your dressing-gown, arms in the air and give us a twirl.' What have you left to lose? Many women learn to cope with strip-searching because they have to, because it isn't going to stop till they leave. There is no valid reason for it, it is used only as a way to make women feel humiliation, to feel vulnerable. It is a power that can too easily be abused.

Getting through a sentence depends greatly on how a person reacts to the various situations; the feeling of total isolation, the wind-ups

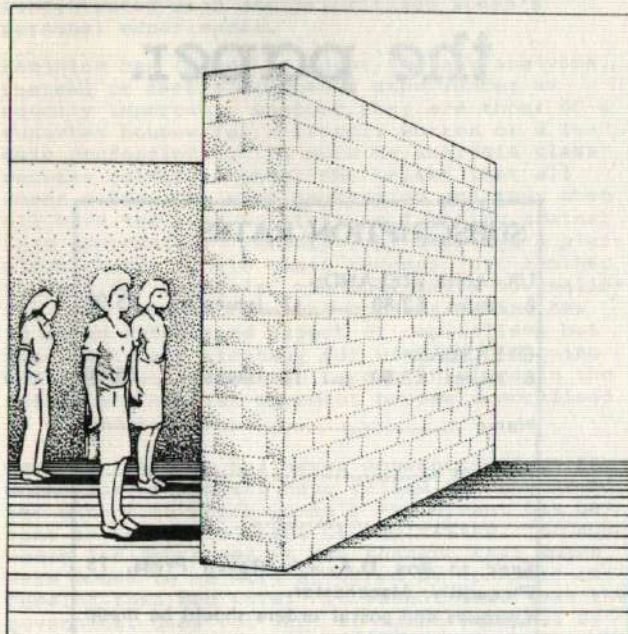
and provocation by screws, the boredom and even the institutionalisation.

Prison can feel so lonely. Often, conversations don't get past the 'How are you doing' stage. It takes a while to build up a trusting friendship- you hear so much bullshit inside. But again prison has a way of stopping too much friendship. L.A. (Lesbian Activities) is a reportable offence, another way to ensure women stay within their socially defined heterosexual role.

So often women feel anger and frustration many times in response to the attitudes and comments of screws. Screws telling you what's in a letter before you've had the opportunity to read it. Comments on the clothes you wear. Comments on the friends, family who come to visit. They seem to enjoy their position of power over women's lives that have been laid open for inspection.

Women in closed prisons will spend on average 22 hours each day in their cell. Each day there is the same routine- the same endless scrubbing floors, scrubbing away the non-existent dirt. But you do adapt to a routine, you learn to pass the time. For some women, such an unequal society outside can mean that prison will provide the only psychological and physical shelter where they have any credit or positive identity. Institutionalisation is not a passive process but something that is actively done to the prisoner.

Women's closed prisons are often thought of as sedate boarding-school type places. This is a myth. Violence plays its part often as the result of the high degree of tension or wind-ups by the screws. Sometimes women turn this frustration and anger onto themselves. Unable to hit back, or for fear of the reprisals,



women will 'cut-up.' Using anything at hand from pins to the edge of beds to cause the most horrific mutilations. They don't receive much sympathy. Holloway's C1, the psychiatric wing, is used as a constant threat to those women who 'misbehave.' For women who fight back and express their anger, it is not uncommon for them to spend a few days sampling C1. This wing, referred to as the 'muppet wing', is the place where women are taken who are considered too violent for psychiatric hospitals. It is a soul-destroying place, but for the visiting inmate it is a none too subtle reminder of the vulnerability of her mental health. Perhaps this possible madness is the excuse for her animal behaviour?

When threats don't work to keep an inmate conforming, then drugs will do, from forcibly given injections, to easily prescribed anti-depressants or sleeping-pills. So many women take something to blot out what's around, or to make life more interesting. It's yet another way of controlling women.

For too long people in prison, especially women, have been ignored. No news is ever published of riots in Holloway, nor do the incidents of injury, self-inflicted or other, appear in the media. People don't want to accept that women can be criminals too.

We should not adopt an out-of-sight-out-of-mind attitude. Whilst prisons exist we should be supporting and helping the women inside who are paying the price for the inequality that prevails outside.

V.S.

Two books from which this article has mainly been compiled:

Breaking the Silence. A full, excellent report with personal experiences and recommendations available free from

Women's Equality Group,
London Strategic Policy Unit,
Room 401,
Middlesex House,
20, Vauxhall Bridge Road,
London, SW1V 2SB.

Criminal Women by Pat Carlen, Jenny Hicks, Josie O'Dwyer, Diana Christina, Chris Tchaikovsky, pub. Polity Press.

Personal experiences of women involved in crime and their experiences of prison.

* A recent report by NACRO found that imprisoned women have fewer previous convictions than men. 13% of those sent to gaol had previously clean criminal records, and another 20% had only one or two previous convictions. Only 40% of women remanded in custody are later gaoled compared to 63% of males. They also found that the proportionate use of imprisonment for women had more than doubled in the past 10 years.

Revolutionary strategy in the downturn- the bankruptcy of the Socialist Workers Party.

In the recent general election the SWP's Alex Callinicos asserted, 'The only way out is to break with electoralism altogether, to cease to make votes a criterion of success, and instead to focus on the consciousness and combativity of workers themselves' (International Socialism, Winter 1987). Infact, however, this (correct) statement totally contradicts the SWP's pathetic 'vote labour, but....' call and its entire strategy during the last five years.

In 1982 the SWP disbanded its National Rank and File Movement, Callinicos arguing (I.S. Autumn 1982) that the SWP had been substitutionist in its attempts to maintain it. This pinpoints the SWP's ideological weakness. If you recognise yourself as part of the working class then to attempt to hold together some sort of rank and file base in the face of adversity is not 'substitutionist' but a necessity as long as it is done with full recognition of the reality of the situation. What is substitutionist is the ideology that says 'the party' is the brain of the class - therefore it must be preserved until the upturn comes.

To insulate ourselves from the struggle in the present period of difficulty will ensure nothing but our irrelevance to the class. The SWP can

offer workers in struggle nothing but an explanation of why they will lose. They thus contribute to the 'downturn' - as the only way to reverse this is to increase workers' self confidence. This can only be done by the example that it is possible to fight and through the winning of victories, which means fighting now whatever the odds. We must fight without illusions and explain strategies for victory - but nevertheless stand with that minority of the class who are prepared to fight now - whatever the consequences.

The SWP repeat endlessly the need to take economics onto the political plain. Anarcho-syndicalism is the only revolutionary ideology which effectively does this, because it also takes politics onto the economic plain. The strength of anarcho-syndicalism lies in the duality of ideology and practice - not a blurring of the two but a conscious marriage. Ideology must flow out of practice, and then be used as the strategy for further activity (thus constantly testing it) rather than enshrining it as correct but nevertheless useless. We will not fool workers about their chances of victory in the present period, but we will not contribute to their demoralisation. Only honest solidarity will get us anywhere.

Chris, SW London.

Direct Action

IN THIS ISSUE
★ Special Supplement ★
**THE RUSSIAN
REVOLUTION**

The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism

Nº44

November 1987 25p

Abortion. Maternity Rights. Low Pay..

ATTACKS ON WOMEN



ARE ATTACKS ON OUR CLASS

see pg

Part of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association

DIRECT ACTION- the paper.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UK AND IRELAND:-

6 Issues £2.80 12 Issues £5.00

OVERSEAS:-

6 Issues £3.80 12 Issues £6.60

Name

Address

Send to Box D.A, c/o Raven Press, 75
Piccadilly, Manchester.

Cheques and postal orders should be made
payable to DAM.

WOMEN AT WORK

CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

In 1979, when Margaret Thatcher came to power, many feminists predicted that this would result in women being driven back into the home, and that this would be a major factor in worsening women's lives. For example, in 1983, in "Marxism Today" it was predicted that the government's plan for job sharing would severely affect women's employment opportunities. What this approach failed to realize was the extent to which women's employment patterns already fitted the needs of capital.

More and more women have actually joined the labour force in recent years. 60% of women in Britain now work. In September 1986 women constituted 45% of the total workforce, while men's share of the job market declined between 1979 and 1986 by 3%, a drop of 1.5 million jobs. (1) A recent Manpower Services Commission report shows that 40% of new jobs in the year ending March 1987 went to female part-time workers, 110,000 jobs being filled by women part-timers, and only 22,000 going to men. (2)

Despite all this evidence, feminists still depict women primarily as housewives whose major role is the servicing of men and the production of children; they have ignored the massive impact that paid working has made on women's lives. This inability to adequately access reality is not mere coincidence - the failure of feminism to adapt to these fundamental employment developments is in fact a direct result of the theoretical basis of reformist feminism. It has not attempted to analyse the interrelation between women's oppression, the family and employment; instead feminists have concentrated upon and prioritised women's personal experiences.

Feminism has failed to adopt a class analysis, instead it sees all women's experiences as equally important, whether they are those of a suburban housewife, a factory worker or a female professional. In such an analysis class becomes submerged under the belief that all women suffer the same oppression and thus that all have the same interest in fighting against this oppression. Feminism, by adopting a pluralist theory, where class becomes just another vehicle for struggle, not only fails to realise the true nature of women's oppression and how it is an integrated aspect of capitalism, but also lacks any strategy for winning. Genuine working class women who become involved in the reformist feminist movement become demoralised as a result.

Because feminism has never concentrated on the workplace, feminists have failed to understand the extent to which women's employment has become an integrated part of capitalism. Because women are oppressed it was thought that women were bound to be more affected by economic recession than men were. It wasn't seen that the government does not want to upset business by forcing one of its most pliant workforces back

into the home.

Women now provide capitalism with a cheap and flexible source of labour. For several reasons women are adaptable to the specific needs of capitalism; particularly they are suited to part-time working because of their child-rearing duties, and part-time workers now constitutes 25% of the total workforce. (3). As far as the state is concerned the growth in the number of women working has not created any additional demands on state services as the majority of working class women rely on their family to do the child care.

The type of work which women tend to do is mainly in the service sector (74% of women who work, work in this sector (4)) which has seen an 8% growth between 1979 and 1986. Work in service industries tends to be un-unionised, difficult to organise, and therefore conditions tend to be poor and wages are kept low.

So 60% of women now work (5), but the type of work women do is very much restricted. In a survey in 1983 it was revealed that 60% of female manual workers were confined to hairdressing, cleaning and catering, whilst 64% of non-manual female workers were restricted to sales or clerical work. (6)

The effect that employment has had on women's lives cannot be overlooked by anyone who is serious about analysing women's oppression. As women have again become a seemingly permanent part of the workforce, ideas about women working have changed. Women's attitudes are altered substantially by whether or not they work. A housewife is much more likely to believe that a woman's place is in the home than would a woman worker. Men too are likely to have a less reactionary attitude about women working if their partners work. Capitalism put women into the workforce for its own ends but in so doing it has stimulated a trend which undermines social structures and ideologies which





have been used to weaken the working class. A fact directly related to this is the varying amount of housework women do depending on whether or not they work outside the home. Husbands or partners are more likely to share in the housework if their partners work. While women still bear the brunt of privatized reproduction in the family, and are still seen as responsible for housework, even if their partners 'help' them, women's traditional role in the family is being partially negated as women's newer role as workers causes some of the load of housework to be redistributed to other members of the family.

The type of work and the times that women are able to work is tied totally to whether or not a woman has children. Part-time work accounts for 44% of all the work that women do. (7). Nurseries, when available are geared for the most part to women only working part-time hours. If women work then they must find work that fits in around their childcare duties.

The repercussions of women being restricted to certain types of work are substantial. Even with equal pay legislation women have never received higher than 75% of the male

average wage (8). The key factor which ensures women's inferior income is that women are ghettoised in low paid jobs. This phenomenon is as true in the age of high-tech science as it was in the days of their mass employment in the cotton mills. 58% of women who work, work solely with other women; 84% of men who work, work only with other men. Women are paid less per hour than men because they predominate in low paid work; and it is not only in the hourly rate that women suffer. Frequently women work where there is no holiday pay, no sick pay, no pensions, no access to bonus systems, overtime or shift pay, and this is especially true of part-time work.

Part-timers rarely have the same legal employment rights as full-timers. Part-timers who work between 8 and 16 hours a week only get full legal employment rights when they have worked continuously for the same employer for more than five years. This obviously discriminates against women who take time off to have children. The recent repeal of legislation requiring employers to re-employ women after maternity leave, and the abolition of the maternity grant, are also attacks on women's rights at work. These attacks must be seen in the context of the state's strategy to create an un-unionised, mobile and cheap workforce; high unemployment and anti-trade union legislation are other aspects of this strategy.

Feminists were correct when they predicted that a Tory government would attack women at work; this they have done, but the motive was not to drive women back into the home, but rather to weaken their economic position as workers, helping to create a more compliant workforce. Women have been the specific target of certain attacks. The way that cuts in the NHS has affected women is a good example of this. Not only do women make up 80% of the workforce in the health service and thus are going to be directly affected by cuts and privatisation plans, but women are more affected by the drive towards 'care in the community'. Patients who were once the responsibility of the state, for example the elderly, are being sent back into the community. This puts the burden of care back into the family and ultimately on women.

Women are also greatly affected by the state's offensive on the welfare benefits system. Many women, especially single parents, are forced to rely on supplementary benefit, etc; benefits cuts are forcing more and more women into poverty traps.

Women's conditions at work and the wages they are likely to receive are directly related to workers militancy. Wages and conditions have only ever been improved by workers fighting to improve them. Very often women work in areas where it is difficult for them to organise and be militant. A good example of this is in the health service, where nurses are portrayed not as workers but as caring professionals - the Florence Nightingale syndrome. Because of this nurses tend not to be militant, are not prepared to take effective strike action, and therefore their wages stay low.

The trade unions have begun to realize the changes which are taking place in employment patterns: the growth in part-time work, the increasing number of jobs in the service sector, and the increasing importance of women

to employers. In the battle to recruit new members (necessary since TUC membership has fallen from 11.5 million in 1979 to 9.5 million in 1985 (10).) NUPE has reduced subscription rates for part-timers. At the TUC conference in 1987, attracting new members, especially in growth areas, was high up on the agenda, and a motion by the TGWU stressing the need for recruitment in these areas was passed unanimously. Of course these areas where employment growth has taken place are not necessarily areas where union organisation is likely. Employers in fast food joints and hairdressers for instance are often notoriously anti-union. Another problem is the high staff turnover rate in such areas. In hotel and catering work for example, less than one-third of workers stay in a job for even one year. Because workers in the private service sector tend to work in scattered units under direct management supervision union organisation is made very difficult.

As we have seen many areas where women work are un-unionised and difficult to organise, but even in jobs where there is an established union, women who want to become active find that they have many problems. In many union branches sexist attitudes prevail which can dissuade women from becoming involved. Coupled with this is the fact that many union meetings are held outside of working hours, and no childcare facilities are provided; it is nearly impossible for many women to participate.

Of course there are no easy solutions to any of these problems. A revolutionary analysis of women's oppression sees that women's oppression can only be destroyed by smashing its material base - which is capitalism. But at the same time revolutionaries must be active in fighting reactionary attitudes in the here and now. Where women are prevented from becoming active in the class struggle, whether it be because of lack of childcare facilities or because of the sexist attitudes of male activists, revolutionaries have a very clear role. We must be in the forefront of fighting for conditions which positively encourage women to become active.

As revolutionaries we must be able to draw the correct conclusions from the changes that have taken place concerning women's employment. The majority of women in Britain today are not merely housewives; the majority now work and this has clearly affected women's lives. To ignore these fundamental changes is madness. It is a trap that the feminist movement has fallen into and one that revolutionaries must avoid. The classic feminist critique of working class politics - that a male-dominated working class cannot liberate women through revolutionary struggle because women are not truly part of that class - can be swept aside by the evidence that women are now a crucial sector of the workforce. The phenomenon of women being isolated in the home away from production, is disappearing with these shifts in employment patterns. All this should put us in a far stronger position to argue with reformist feminists, when they stress the need for a pluralist strategy. By realizing our strengths, by readily analysing change, by being in the forefront of fighting sexism, we can encourage more women into the revolutionary struggle.

D.D.
SWLDAM.

Notes.

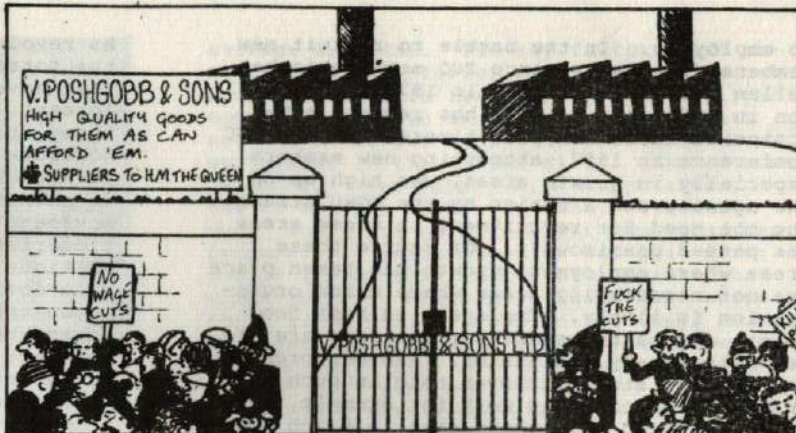
- (1) Employment Gazette, Historical Supplement No. 1, Feb., 1987.
- (2) Manpower Services Annual Report, 1987
- (3) Socialist Worker, Sept. 1987.
- (4) Confrontation, No. 2.
- (5) Equal Opportunities Commission, Annual Report, 1985.
- (6) Confrontation, No. 2.
- (7) International Socialism 32.
- (8) Equal Opportunities Commission.
- (9) Confrontation, No. 2.
- (10) TUC, Conference Report.
- (11) Confrontation, No. 2.



The Adventures of

TERRY THE TROT

Episode One



BIOGRAPHY

"I am going to make the revolution in the 'sky'"

On the 27th January 1987, after a long illness, the Swiss revolutionary Clara Thalmann died at her home on the outskirts of Nice in the south of France.

Clara Thalmann (née Ensner) was born at Basel, Switzerland, in 1910. She was one of ten children from a working class family. Her father was German and had emigrated to Switzerland because, as a socialist and an internationalist, he opposed conscription for the German war against France in 1870.

Clara grew up in atmosphere of committed socialist activity. Early in life, influenced by the betrayal of social democracy with its pro-war attitude, and the success of the October revolution in Russia in 1917, Clara was attracted to communism. In the 1920's when she was a young working woman she joined the communist party and worked on the French communist paper 'Humanite'. Soon after Lenin's death in 1924, however, the internal struggles within the communist movement began to be apparent. The new party leader in Russia, Joseph Stalin, systematically strengthened the bureaucratic apparatus at the expense of the influence of the few remaining revolutionaries within the party. Stalin's campaign also affected the French communist party. It meant that committed activists like Clara could no longer carry out their political work where and how they saw fit, but rather had to follow instructions from party functionaries. A vivacious and passionate character like Clara could not stand it, and disillusioned, she returned to Switzerland in 1928. She immediately joined the

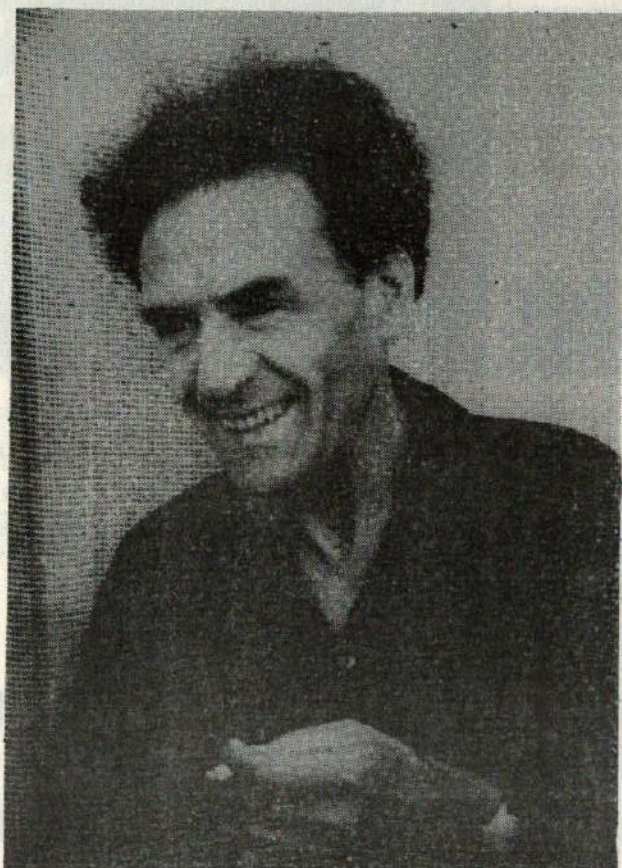
Swiss communist party, but did so in order to fight against Stalinist policies. It brought her close to the disciples of Leon Trotsky, the former leader of the Red Army, now branded by Stalin as a "dangerous agent of the anti-Soviet counter-revolution".

The night that Clara returned from Paris she met a young worker from her home town of Basel who had returned that same day from Moscow where he had spent four years as a student at the Workers University. He too was very disillusioned with



Clara Thalmann, 1953.

Stalinism. His name was Paul ('Pavel') Thalmann and it was the start of a life-long relationship. They were soon expelled from the party, but continued to make anti-Stalinist propaganda, cooperating with Trotskyites and left-wing communists from Germany.



Pavel Thalmann, 1953.

In 1936 the German Nazis arranged the big propaganda show which was the Berlin Olympic Games. In response, the international revolutionary movement had organized a workers' olympics at Barcelona in Spain. Clara hitch-hiked south to take part. She went as a swimmer and as a Swiss working woman delegate. But the International Workers' Olympic Games never took place.

On July 17th 1936 the military coup d'etat against the Spanish republic led to the outbreak of the civil war which was to last until 1939. When Clara arrived at the Spanish border the anti-fascists had already defeated the militarist conspirators in much of the country. She witnessed the enormous social revolution which was occurring. The Spanish anarchist movement, the biggest working class organization in Spain at that time, at once confiscated large estates and factories, transforming them into

collectives run by the workers themselves. Soon almost two-thirds of the land and industry under the control of Republican forces was collectivised and organized by the anarchists of the CNT and the FAI. Revolutionary committees and militias, rather than the state, controlled politics and the economy as well as the anti-fascist military struggle.

Inspired by these events, Clara at once joined the anarchist militias of the famous Durruti columns to fight as a militia-woman at the Aragon front. Pavel also came down to fight for the revolution and joined her.

But all did not go well with the revolution. Clara and Pavel were among the first to warn of anti-revolutionary developments inside the Republican camp. Because of their previous experience of Stalinist politics they at once realized the dangers posed to the social revolution by the Communist Party of Spain (PCE). Together with the liberal-bourgeois parties like the Republican Left (IR), the Left Republican Party of Catalonia (ERC), and the middle class tenant farmers' union (the UDR), the communist PCE defended private property and the existing legal system. During the "short summer of anarchy" in 1936, when the social revolution was overwhelmingly successful and powerful, the Spanish communists did not dare to attack the revolution openly. Nevertheless the Thalmanns noticed their dangerous intentions and constantly warned their anarchist comrades. As they report in their autobiographical "Revolution for Freedom"* the Stalinists' tactic to compromise the anarchist trend of the revolution was obvious to them. Under the influence of the Russians, the Spanish communists demanded that the anarchists had to join the government. They had two reasons: firstly they calculated correctly when they thought the anarchists would then be more controllable, having to carry responsibility for things which the whole government had decided. Secondly, the communists, well aware of anarchist

theory, thought that by persuading anarchists to join a government they would sow the seeds of a split within the anarchist movement. The resulting split in many of the committees enabled the communists to gain more control. They gained further influence once the Soviet Union began to supply quantities of arms to the Republican forces. The PCE demanded the dissolution of the militias and the reintroduction of a conventional hierarchical "People's Army" in place of the rank and file organization of the militias.

The anarchists, seeking to gain access to badly needed Soviet arms supplies, finally agreed to disbanding the militias, but things continued to get worse. In the spring of 1937 the Stalinists turned to direct military aggression against the revolution.

In May 1937 in Barcelona, communist provocation led to fighting between petit-bourgeois parties allied with the Stalinists on the one side and anarchists, POUM and UGT people on the other. The fighting left at least 500 dead and 1,000 injured. Subsequently the anarchists and their revolutionary comrades suffered a decisive loss of political power. Clara and Pavel were fighting with the Anarchist group "Amigos de Durruti" (friends of Durruti). At that time Clara met and got to know George Orwell ("He did not know what was going on....and his eyes expressed amazement, he had a terrified look.") who was sitting with his gun on a roof close to her barricade.

Because of their pro-revolutionary participation in the Barcelona "May Days", Clara and Pavel had to go underground in order to escape persecution by the S.I.M., the newly formed secret police organisation of the PCE. They decided to leave Spain and, some time later, were about to board a ship at Barcelona when they were recognised, arrested and taken to one of the SIM's private prisons. They spent several months in Stalinist jails, while friends in Switzerland launched a campaign to get them out. Finally, after the

intervention of a leading member of the Spanish socialist party, they were released. They immediately left Spain and travelled to Paris.

During the Nazi occupation of France in the second World War, Clara and Pavel built up a small, independent, revolutionary resistance group in Paris. Their home soon became a safe-house for Jewish and revolutionary refugees trying to escape. They were never caught and were able to help many people in this way.

After the liberation from German Fascism, Clara and Pavel grew tired of life in Paris and eventually moved to the south of France to found an agricultural commune called 'La Sérène' on the northern outskirts of Nice. 'La Sérène' soon became a meeting place for revolutionaries from all over the world.

Pavel died there in 1981, and in 1984, thirty years after its foundation, I went down there to visit Clara, together with a friend of mine. We were interested in talking to an eyewitness to the Spanish Revolution, one who was actively involved in struggle, but were also most interested in what she thought of present social and political movements.



Clara and Pavel, 1977.

The week we shared with her and the other comrades at 'La Sérénité' was a time in which we not only got to know Clara Thalmann the popular revolutionary, but also got to know her in her everyday life. Her openminded and lively manner conquered our hearts. It was great when we spent a second week together at the international anarchist conference at Venice in September 1984. We had long and interesting discussions on lots of subjects including: rank & file/ self-management, structures of the anti-nuclear movement, social and political changes in the working class, imperialist oppression in Northern Ireland and the so-called Third World, the (then) Miners' Strike in Britain, etc. Clara took a deep interest in everything. As for the urban guerrilla struggles in Western Europe, she was frankly sceptical of their usefulness. She always maintained that a guerrilla has to act in connection with a social revolutionary mass movement --- militarily and politically. For her a guerrilla war only made sense if a revolutionary mass movement already existed. Otherwise the guerrillas were in danger of developing policies which the people could not understand and were also likely to become authoritarian and elitist.

On the other hand she saw very clearly the need for determined direct action, even if it is carried out by small groups. However, such action must be the actual expression of how the people feel and think.

Clara's main hope for future social and political change rested with the young. Their increasing contempt for official policy and their readiness to get up and revolt seemed the main-spring of her political optimism. She never lost her belief in the revolution.

She won't be forgotten. "Salud compañera!"

* Clara and Paul Thalmann:
 "Revolution für die Freiheit"
 Hamburg, 1977.
 (Only available in French and German editions)

WHO IS COLOURED ?

WHEN I WAS BORN

I WAS BORN BLACK

WHEN I GREW UP

I WAS BLACK

WHEN I GET HOT

I AM BLACK

WHEN I AM SICK

I AM BLACK

WHEN I DIE

I AM BLACK

WHEN YOU ARE BORN

YOU ARE PINK

WHEN YOU GROW UP

YOU ARE WHITE

WHEN YOU GET HOT

YOU GO RED

WHEN YOU GET COLD

YOU GO BLUE

WHEN YOU GET SICK

YOU GO PURPLE

WHEN YOU DIE

YOU GO GREEN

BUT YOU HAVE THE CHEEK TO
 CALL ME COLOURED !

Donna Davis.

**WHY NOT
 SUBSCRIBE?**
 SUBSCRIBE*SUBSCRIBE*SUBSCRIBE*
 SUBSCRIBE*SUBSCRIBE*SUBSCRIBE*
 SEE INSIDE BACK PAGE.

ALL OUR LIVES.

Of the masses of material that has emerged about the Spanish Revolution, precious little of any substance has emerged about the role of the women. De Toda La Vida (All our lives), having just done the rounds in a national D.A.M. video tour, is a video documentary that attempts to lay down some information on the role of the Mujeres Libres (FREE WOMEN). The video centers around the recollections of four active members of the M.L. at the time of its inception leading up to and during the Spanish Revolution. At its height the M.L. could claim up to thirty thousand members. Such a movement, has been just one in a long line of insignificant non-events as far as the history books are concerned. Yet it's crucial not just as the impact of an event of the past, but as overwhelmingly significant to our organisation of present and future. To put us in the picture, a brief outline of the M.L. is needed.

Anarchist theoretical frameworks demanded, that a serious revolutionary movement had to challenge all forms of hierarchy and subordination. This meant tackling, for example sexual, as well as economic problems. The Spanish anarchist movement was no exception and as early as 1872 had set the overcoming of womens subordination as a goal of the movement. Mercedes Comaposada, asked to give education classes at a C.N.T. union centre had this impression of the men she came across: "They wanted me to teach, but it was impossible, because of the attitude of some of the 'companeros'. They didn't take women seriously, they thought all women needed to know was how to cook and sew, women barely spoke in that context."

The need for women to organise could not have been more obvious. The actual practical moves to form an anarchist womens organisation began in late 1933. The enthusiasm and response was massive described as almost beyond belief taking the initiators completely by surprise the organisation grew and took on the name suggested by the Madrid group - Mujeres Libres while the M.L. worked closely within the anarcho-syndicalist movement, they managed to construct an autonomous organisation, that provided the self-organisation and ability to struggle against male resistance to womens oppression. The M.L. became, at it's height a federalist, de-centralised organisation of around 150 local groups.

Their achievements, in many ways, happened at an astounding pace. They attempted to tackle what they saw as the main components of womens

oppression, and to this end they organised extensively to educate women, not only in intellectual skills, but practical skills such as electronics, plumbing etc. They organised childcare on a massive scale, enabling women to find much less restriction in their daily lives. They provided information and advice on health care and sexual matters, and they attempted to challenge the economic dependency of women. The activity and energy of the women was ceaseless. In many areas they organised weakly meetings, one woman activist describes them - "It's almost like a school for activists, we didn't indoctrinate women, but we did more than just technical training, we encouraged women to pay attention, to become active." These meetings and the activity of the M.L. provided the opportunity for women to mix more, gain self confidence and develop political activity. Whilst most of this activity was going on in the rearguard of the civil war, many women did join the militias and fight at the front. Here women also came across problems. In many militias, training took place well away from the male members, who often mocked and jeered the women. Here there was a prevailing attitude that women should remain in the rearguard, providing assistance in the form of factory work etc. Traditional attitudes of 'womens place' was being used once again to restrict womens choice.

As a documentary account All Our Lives does its job quite well. There are criticisms to be had of this video, but they shouldn't be dwelt on too much. Considering the little in existence on the M.L. this has an important part to play. If you can struggle through the rough sound mixing and often irritating music,



Militiawoman in the Spanish Revolution

then there's some valuable experience on offer. That it should come from the expression of those involved, adds a lot to the film. When it was shown during the D.A.M. video tour, i heard people describe it as 'moving', and it really does manage to put over the feelings of those involved quite well.

It's interesting when examining the M.L. to gain some insight into their motives and development. In many respects what the M.L. created has gone unsurpassed. Spanish anarchism was suffering the same old problems of male dominance and a shameful neglect to even recognise women's oppression. A lot of anarchists agreed only theoretically with the goal of women's emancipation. Most men were typical of the sexist patterns that existed within Spanish society. The M.L. worked to redress this imbalance, aiming for what they called 'empowerment'. They considered that to change people's consciousness of themselves and their positions within society, was a crucial step towards revolutionary change. Much of their activity took the form of what would best be described as 'consciousness raising'. This often meant encouraging women to take a higher profile in society, by getting them more involved in discussion groups and educationals, giving women the confidence to participate in many male-dominated situations. It is often said that the M.L. rejected the term feminist, rightly equating a lot of feminist thought as middle-class, aiming at women's access to power and success and not women's complete economic and social emancipation. They went beyond these individualistic and inward looking notions and reflected instead on their collective experiences as working-class women. They sought to destroy the traditional positions of men and women under capitalism, recognising the overall context in which women's oppression was perpetuated.

There tended to be a notion of 'automatic emancipation', whereby with the advent of an anarchist society, women's inequality would be swept away alongside all other inequality. This had massive shortcomings, as any challenging of sexism was shoved to one side. Quite simply, many men refused to acknowledge or change their own oppressive attitudes. The M.L. advocated a strategy to carry through that struggle, at all levels, at all times. They sought to challenge the internal contradiction that too often existed.

We know we can learn so many invaluable lessons from history, and we shouldn't under-estimate the experiences of the Spanish women. They provide us with valuable indication of the ideas and action we need to employ in the here and now. In advocating a revolutionary class analysis to the question of women's oppression, we should acknowledge the work that

needs to be done constantly in our own organisation. We need to fight for an end to the whole economic and social conditions that contribute to the restriction and oppression women face. It should be a current running through the whole movement, with the clear understanding that it's the only way to create a libertarian equality that makes the inferiority of women a non-existence.

I can't really offer many suggestions for further reading, but try getting hold of *Vision On Fire* (Emma Goldman on the Spanish revolution), for a relatively brief but informative section on women in the revolution and the M.L. Also *Quiet Rumours* (anarcha-feminist anthology, Dark Star Press) contains some interesting anarcha-feminist positions and thought.

C.C.



REVIEWS

WATCHERS & SEEKERS: creative writing by black women in Britain.

A recent release from the Womens Press, attempts to document some of the marked increase in writing & performance by black women in Britain. The main bulk of the book takes the form of poetry or prose, but also includes short stories & an auto-biography. As the introduction states, what this book is about is to contain & explore the voices of past & present black communities. Whether that be through the emotional & material inter-dependance of black women, the harsh realities of motherhood, sexuality or the overt & covert racism of present day society. This writing takes an amazingly diverse form, touching on a host of social & political issues. It seems as if there's hardly a stone unturned, in terms of black experience & political commentary. Read 'Guess Who !' by Sista Roots for a scathing attack on those who profit from Apartheid South Africa.

From its intimacy to its humour, the subject matter & style is captivating. What grabbed me most about this book, was its insight & range. It had a 'personal touch' that I hadn't found in anything I'd read for some time. It had above all - feeling. It manages to capture the disgust at consumerism & manipulation and different reflections on female relationships. It has the ability to provoke & prod at a mass of different emotions. I can't be entirely sure as to the exact aims of the compilers of this book, but those aims as I've interpreted them, have been achieved. For an anthology that manages to capture black creativity & experience & contains that distinct literary style, you could do no better than get this book.

ANARCHY: A GRAPHIC GUIDE. C.HARPER (CAMDEN PRESS)

If you've ever read the Writers and Readers series of 'For Beginners...' books, then you'll know what you're letting yourself in for when you come across this book. If you've ever wanted to know the various different trains of anarchist thought, then this is the book for you. This book will provide you with, just about, all the information you need. Many of you will be familiar with the graphic work of Clifford Harper, it is a very distinctive style. And this book manages to maintain his usual high standard of graphic work.

This book is aimed, essentially at the person who's never come across anarchism before. If you're familiar to any extent with anarchism, then it's doubtful this book could tell you very much, that you didn't already know. It follows a very simplistic pattern - through the early anarchist writers, to the first anarchist movements, through Kronstadt and Spain, carefully trying to cover just about all anarchist history, figures and theory you could think of. That this leads to some dubious inclusions, is no surprise. That he avoids anything other than the basics, is at times annoying, but probably inevitable in a book such as this. For example the brief section, an anarcho-syndicalism is inadequate, and so are many other pieces. And the section dealing with punk is incredibly cringey !

C.H. manages to draw some good connections between anarchism as mutual aid and solidarity and its often unconscious practice by (his example) people during the Mexican earthquake disaster. It seemed to sum up the main point C.H. wanted to leave us with - that people can and will, do it themselves !

C.C.



REVIEW

The Radical Tradition. Richard Gombin.

This book is subtitled 'A Study In Modern Revolutionary Thought', and takes as a starting point a study of the 'workers' council', with particular reference to the ones emerging in various countries after World War One. Whilst the overall conclusions of this book veer towards some questionable perspectives, there is a great deal here that will be of interest to anarcho-syndicalists.

In a section entitled 'The soviet state - myths and realities', Gombin examines some of the prime issues raised by the Russian Revolution, in particular that of workers control. I found that Gombin provided an excellent critique of the Bolsheviks taking of state power. Gombin examines this route from the basis of an examination of Bolshevik organisation in relation to the class. Whilst a central feature of Bolshevik ideology was that of workers control, the precise meaning of that was not as apparent. Their concept was this - state production linked to a decision making centre at the top of the pyramid. The transference of power from the capitalist to the 'workers' state', meant the Bolsheviks presided over exercising (in their view) the 'single will' of the proletariat - hence workers control, in a roundabout sense. The flaws in this are pointed out, not only from the point of view of the workers being divorced from the actual direct exercising of power, but from the point of view of the complete impossibility of such a 'single will' to exist.

In fact Lenin had a constantly changing and opportunist attitude towards what role the soviets and factory committees should play. After an initial dismissal then distrust of the soviets that emerged during 1905, Lenin began to clearly understand the importance of these forms of proletarian organisation. In this sense they did have an important part to play. Gombin explains;

'Just as Lenin very early on saw in the soviets an institution charged with enormous revolutionary potential, so workers own management and the institutions which expressed it were seen as a worthy means of furthering the end.'

It is then clear the role the soviets were to play if the Bolsheviks were to achieve state power - that of a stepping stone to power. This was in sharp contrast to massive sections of workers, who saw in the soviets the basis of whole new economic and social relations. Numerous examples are to be had of workers making political initiatives, not merely confining organisation to an economic level. This points to the central issue of the time - who was to exercise power, and by what means?

Gombin's conclusions point towards the development of 'council communism' as opposed to a 'party communism'. And this is another reason why this book merits some attention, in piecing together an understanding of the 'unorthodox left'. This book, though it may seem a little academic, is in fact very easy to read, not too many mind boggling ideas or concepts appear.

I'd recommend this book first and foremost as a valuable contribution towards an accurate picture of the events of revolutionary Russia. Examining this and Marxist-Leninism in practice, must clearly outline the bureaucratic stranglehold, inherent in authoritarian socialism, upon genuine methods of workers organisation. For anarcho-syndicalism the emphasis must be clear - that of direct workers self management, and the dispersal of power to ensure direct control of all social and economic relations.

C.C.



OK! Hands up -
Who wants a
Subscription?



SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Please send me 4 issues of CATALYST.

Name

Address

I enclose a cheque/ PO for
£4.50 (waged)/ £3.50 (unwaged).
Delete as appropriate.

Send to CATALYST, P.O. Box B20,
Huddersfield, West Yorks., HD1 1XS.

Aims & Principles of the Direct Action Movement.

- (1) The Direct Action Movement is a working class organisation.
- (2) Our aim is the creation of a free and classless society.
- (3) We are fighting to abolish the state, capitalism and wage slavery in all their forms and replace them by self managed production for need not profit.
- (4) In order to bring about the new social order, the workers must take over the means of production and distribution. We are the sworn enemies of those who would take over on behalf of the workers.
- (5) We believe that the only way for the working class to achieve this is for independent organisation in the workplace and community and federation with others in the same industry and locality, independent of, and opposed to all political parties and trade union bureaucracies. All such workers organisations should be controlled by workers themselves and must unite rather than divide the workers movement. Any and all delegates of such workers organisations must be subject to instant recall by the workers.
- (6) We are opposed to all states and state institutions. The working class has no country. The class struggle is worldwide and recognises no artificial boundaries. The armies and police of all states do not exist to protect the workers of those states, they act only as the repressive arm of the ruling class.
- (7) We oppose racism, sexism, militarism and all attitudes and institutions that stand in the way of equality and the right of all people everywhere to control their own lives and the environment.
- (8) The Direct Action Movement is a federation of groups and individuals who believe in the principles of anarcho-syndicalism; a system where the workers alone control industry and the community without the dictates of politicians, bureaucrats, bosses and so-called experts.

I would like more information about the
Direct Action Movement - International
Workers' Association.

Name

Address

Send to Box DA, c/o Raven Press,
75 Piccadilly, Manchester.

Don't lose your

1 Address

No. of flat
bedsit or floor
(where applicable)

No. of house
(or name if
not numbered)

et, road, etc. follow

our right to vote



If no one in household
is eligible to
register, please
tick here

If you have written in box 2

Please tick here
to be sure that other people
living at the property
are added to the register.

Names

ed by remainde

Postcode



MOISTEN THIS STRIP AND REFOLD TO

REGISTER OF ELECTORS
1988

You are required by law to complete this form

Please read these notes
then fill in 1 to 3, 5 and 6 (or 1, 4, 5 and 6) below.

Write in Box 1 your full address in BLOCK LETTERS

Write in Box 2 the names of all those living in your household on 10 October 1987 who are aged 16 or over and are British citizens, Irish citizens or Commonwealth or Irish Citizens. Please include all those who are living with you, even if they are not on the electoral register.



REGISTER OF ELECTORS
1988

You are required by law to complete this form

The Occupier

Complete this form
where indicated so that return address is to view

When please fold
address panel
and seal the flap down.

of HM Forces, Crown servants
in Council staff serving abroad.
Islands of members of HM
have made a service declaration
not cancelled.
of Crown servants and
serving abroad* if living
or husbands or wives.
are made for

First, please check that
the form, to be
Moisten

How to return address is to view
you have read

6 Declaration

It is an offence to give false information.
To the best of my knowledge and belief the particulars
whose names are entered are British citizens,
citizens of the Irish Republic.

Signature

For office use

THE VOTE CHANGES NOTHING...