

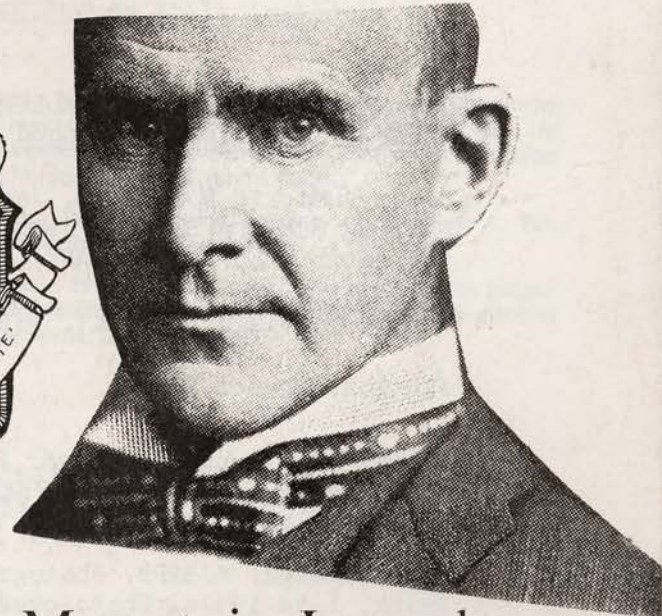
# THE ORIGINS OF LEFT CULTURE IN THE U.S.: 1880-1940

\$2.50



"For me, the First of May was always a great event in the first years. When you opened a door and walked into the court, you would think it really was a world holiday. All our children were out early in the court, dressed beautifully, waiting for the time to leave and join the demonstration. Such excitement!

I can say that was the only holiday when you really felt a holiday spirit, all through the halls and courts."



Cultural Correspondence/Green Mountain Irregulars

§ CONTENTS §

Lee Baxandall for <u>GMI</u> .....	2
Introductory Note, by P.B. ....	3
SECTION I: THE EARLY YEARS	
German-American Socialist Culture, by Carol Poore.....	13
Yiddish Socialism: The Early Years, by P.B. ....	21
"Debsian" Socialism, by P.B. ....	32
SECTION II: "NEW IMMIGRANTS," the I.W.W., the AVANT-GARDE	
The Finns, by Sirkka Tuomi Lee .....	41
Ukranian Radicals and Women, by Maria Woroby.....	50
South Slav Socialists, by Joseph Stipanovich.....	56
SECTION III: A STORY OF AMERICAN COMMUNISM	
The Twenties, by P.B. ....	78
A Reminiscence, by Peggy Dennis.....	82
"Sports and the Left," interview with A.B. Magil and Max Gordon.....	88
Lester Rodney Remembers.....	93
"The Utopia We Knew": The Coops.....	95
The Fraternal Groups: Interview with Ernie Reymer.....	98
REVIEWS.....	103

Cartoons: AN ART YOUNG GALLERY and drawings by assorted hands from Groysser  
Kundes, Lapa-Tossu, and Good Morning

Poetry: Morris ROSENFELD, Joseph BOVSHOVER, G.A. EDGERTON, Walter HURT, J.T.  
CUMBIE, Mukolia BOZHUK, Iatsko HARMATIUK, Ivan MOLEK, Anna KRASNA, Mary JUGG,  
Covington HALL, Laura TANE, H. LEIVICK, Marcus GRAHAM, and Arturo GIOVANNITTI

Humor: Morris WINCHEVSKY, T-BONE SLIM, W.E. REYNOLDS and others

Fiction: Chaver PAVER

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anonymous many

Cover Design: MJB&PB. Photograph: Anti-Fascist shoe-shine on Allerton Ave.,  
Bronx, late 1930s. Photo credit: Harry Kulkowitz. Photo and quotation  
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Generous acknowledgment is made for the research aid given by Mark Naison, Lee Baxandall, Neil Basen, Morris U. Schappes and others; and to the financial aid from a variety of veteran and youthful comrades. The library staffs at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Tamiment Library, and Immigration History Research Center were also a great help.

## Cultural Correspondence

### Notes

This issue has taken a considerable period of time and great effort to bring together. In the process, CC has abandoned any regular schedule. We hope now to get onto a quarterly basis but that depends upon how much energy we can gather from our readers as well as generate ourselves. We are now actively seeking material on a number of subjects, letters, crank complaints, joyful outbursts (if any), etc. With #8 we will institute a regular comix page and a joke section. Comrades, sharpen your pencils!

All those interested should get in touch.



### >> Back Issues Still Available

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>>LEE BAXANDALL FOR GMI

Green Mountain Editions is proud to take part with Cultural Correspondence in co-publishing this unique selection of materials from the early years of what we might call "radical popular culture" in the New World. Along with the commentaries on the documents and the personal memoirs, these materials seem to mark the beginning of more serious and effective treatment of a major, essential, and very neglected area of one of today's burgeoning scholarly enterprises: that of Popular Culture generally.

Should the culture of the socialist Left--in particular, the poems, plays, drawings, either by workers or for worker readers of the Left press and designed to inspire and sustain a vision of America's future different from that fostered by the capitalist press--be regarded as another branch of popular culture? The argument might be made that the socialist cultural initiatives were designed to combat the essence of everything that appeared in the commercial newspapers and magazines. However, there can be no doubt that the Finnish, German, Italian, Yiddish and other radical press both provided the core informational and imaginative sustenance of its readership, and hoped to be a model of the socialist alternatives that might someday replace the capitalist model. In this sense, the feuilleton material that appeared in such publications as the New Yorker Volkszeitung and its many counterparts across the land was meant to be hegemonial. It did more than resist; it was meant to perform the same kind of everyday function--amusing, inspiring, informing, orienting--as the counterparts in the capitalist press, but more humanly, more fully. That the attempts

were not usually as well realized as those much better financed in the commercial press isn't the point. The alternative cultural values in the industrial era of America are best exemplified here. They have remained alive, these communitarian, visionary values, in changed form, into the present. And to understand the more mercenary, ignorant, often bigoted, and symptomatic popular culture which best drew the bucks of publishers in the same era, one has also to know the alternatives which persisted despite every obstacle, and which have in part transformed our commercial culture as of today.

Hopefully this collection may help, then, to put an end to the endless fascination only with commercial popular culture or its elite alternatives--the syndrome visible in Adorno's thunderings against "culture industry" and reverence for avant-garde arts, without a concern for the more popular alternatives to both.

The weakness of much of the material here presented will be evident. But the study of its scope and its significance for American workers, crushed by endless labor and unable to participate in elite avant-gardism, yet resistant to the dominant cultural hegemony, has yet to be elicited. The distant vision of the New World as the land of freedom was transformed, in the industrial harshness for those who built the great enterprises, into this culture of socialism. Its thematic patterns remain to be specified; the known but neglected poems of major authors such as Arturo Giovannitti remain to be properly appreciated; the much work of significance remains to be ferreted out of its obscure places of publication. We are certain that work will proceed in the next few years. ■

◀○▶



## Introductory Note

The origins of Left-Culture in the U.S., 1880-1940 is the story of how different peoples, over several generations, seek to create out of their own resources a better, more cooperative and personally fulfilling society. One could focus on other "Socialist cultures" in nations with large and healthy Socialist or Communist parties, or those in the throes of actual revolution. But it is perhaps in the United States where the possibility of a cooperative order has been called most seriously into question, and where the threads of better society have been almost completely forgotten. The "land of the dollar" (as Eastern European immigrants commonly call the U.S.) has raised to a new level in civilization the prerogatives of private life. Families, some neighborhoods, the more fortunate racial and ethnic groups, have in the twentieth century experienced real benefits of American economic growth, the relative freedoms that a prosperous society can permit, and the margin of autonomy that home life potentially provides -- a kind of surcease against the political and social disappointments of our time. A pessimistic radical might be tempted to reverse the old formulation that the mass of people (i.e., the working class in its variegated occupations) was to move from a "class in itself" to a "class

for itself", into a more pessimistic conclusion that the "class in itself", living out its private life, had become the final, achievable aim.

At least such is the image that Americans present to the world. And the much-discussed "Failure of Socialism" is appendage to that view. According to some of the more perceptive cultural analysts, the degree of private life and material freedom allowed in the United States has served as a kind of "Surrogate Socialism". Why bother with the Real Thing when the substitute is so readily available and so much less dangerous? Perhaps we as individuals within the civilization are able to respond intelligently to that query only in the 1960's-70's, when America's world power slowly began to crumble, and the centripetal forces operating against family and social ties seemingly accelerate a social drift toward all-against-all, where our very material success poisons the environment around us and casual violence stalks the streets of the popular mind. We are in a better position than any generation since the late nineteenth century, perhaps, to repose the question -- cooperation or disaster?

Social theorists and well-intended activists are searching under every rock for a way out: from Community Economic Development Corporations to new progressive political formations, from professional discussions among architects, ecologists and sociologists to reorganization planning by government employee and teachers' unions. Artists and students of history have their own special contributions to make. New studies of historic utopian colonies have begun to

appear in greater number, while scholarship on radicals' sporadic efforts to guide the labor movement toward socialist ends, have gained a new maturity and stature. Progressives in the communications fields have raced ahead with "software" plans, outlining new potentially democratic uses of the media, while community theater troupes, artists cooperatives, local cultural groups of all kinds continued to develop.

The most outstanding negative characteristic of all this activity is the lack of any comprehensive vision. Can the institutions planned or actually begun replace the existing power centers? Or will even the best efforts trail off into marginality, used to rationalize some corner of an irrational system or be broken against the barriers to systematic humane relations in a cruel world? The very word "Socialism" has seemed to have become the possession of certain governments and organizations, rather than (as

it used to be) a description of a definite stage of human development. We shy away from the implications of Big Government and observe the failures of its best-known advocates, in power and out. Likewise, reformers of all kinds have pulled back from the definitions once held so firmly about the key actors in the drama -- the working people, the racial and ethnic minorities, and the poor and obscure. The complexities of class development, the bitter rivalries among sectors of the blue-collar communities, above all the continuous pattern of immigration, rural and urban shifts which shatters any final continuity between gen-

erations of labor -- all these warn against reverting to slogans when answers are required.

The solutions to the problems of so much as envisioning a cooperative order seem at times hopelessly outside our view. But perhaps we have missed some obvious segment of our own, multi-cultured "American" past. The careful reader of this issue should find hints of a richer, more cooperative way of life that a set of encyclopedias could not fully document, and an army of scholars could not exhaust as a subject for further inquiry. Hidden in the lives of those millions of ordinary people attracted to Socialism and Communism in the U.S., we

have a harvest of possible suggestions for reconstituting "Socialism" (or whatever one chooses to call it) on a different and broader basis.

The rank-and-file of the Left failed to transform American society over three generations -- from the radicals' appearance as in industrial influence to the beginning of its dissolution in traditions forms, amidst the breakup of blue collar neighborhoods at the end of the Second World War -- but not because they lacked the vision of a better world. The purity of their aims derived, in part, from the naive internationalism and faith in brotherhood inherited from the Enlightenment rationalism of intellectuals, and even more from the day-to-day experiences of ordinary working people. They did not foresee the problems of nationalism, imperialism, race conflicts and the like would raise

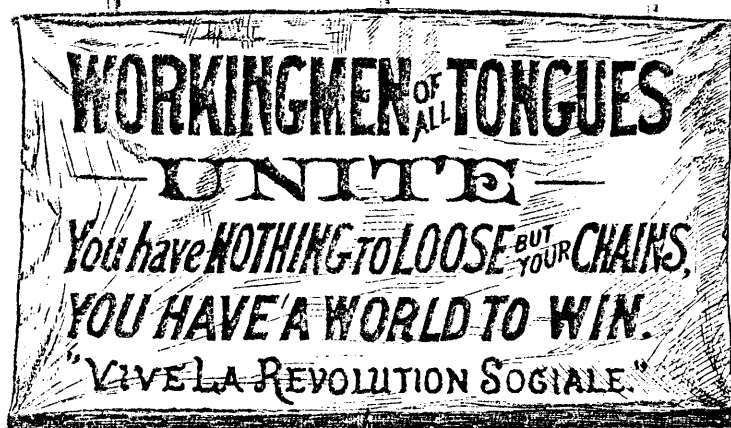
against the accomplishment of a world-wide cooperative community. But they found in their own resources gathered in relationships to shop-mates, family members, fellow idealists with whom they had contact, grounds for believing they could make humanity's dream a social reality. They did not have to invent noble traits for working people and the poor; they were, in a large majority, from those classes.

The inner strength they developed was enormous, and should provoke admiration from us today. They did not need a Ford Foundation research grant or H.E.W. funds to publish their newspapers, establish their community organizations, and spread the word of their expectations. Neither did they need experts' blueprints for the impressive cooperative experiments they carried out within their communities. They assuredly had leaders, who were far from perfect, but "Socialism" as a goal provided them ways to grasp at the details of daily practice. No doubt they failed often to live up to their best ideals -- particularly in regard to full equality for women. But without any particular self-consciousness, they encompassed the activities of the whole family, emphatically including children, into every avenue of their political life.

Family, neighborhood, class. For an historical moment, in certain areas and among certain groups, the radicals shaped these in a cooperative direction. In an important study of South Slav Socialists in the U.S., Joseph Stipanovich concludes

that radicals actually imparted a specific character to ethnic self-identity and to their particular roads towards integration into the American social order. The "Old Immigrant" Socialists had less influence, but in a small Kansas town, among a group of Missouri railroad workers

or North Dakota farm laborers, they might exert a shaping influence. Thousands of "bindlestiffs", extractive and agricultural laborers, drew their music and jokes, hopes and dreams from the Industrial Workers of the World. Hundreds of thousands of "Americanized" unionists in the 1930's looked proudly to the "Red" leadership of their CIO locals. And so it has been, here and there. In the long run, the radicals were overpowered. But not before they had given a glimpse of what they were and what they could do, how they could contribute to ordinary folks' reconstruction of society, when and if the opportunity arose.





"Poetry restores men and women to a truer sense of themselves by restoring to them the oracular voice and a fuller consciousness of their infinite capacities to act on the world, to change life." ~Franklin Rosemont

Any number of approaches could be taken to understand these radical communitarians. Much historical ground work needs to be laid before we can grasp the distinctive social conditions which faced each of their respective cultural strategies. But we can seek to perceive the universals. Whatever their differences, they shared a vision of momentous change somewhere ahead, and their loving participation in community activities provided a concrete contribution toward making that vision real. We have tried to offer a few hints about the internal culture life of various groups, and to give the vision the fullest documentation.

The reader may nevertheless legitimately ask -- why so much poetry and literature in general? Why so much humor? Before television, before radio, before even the success of the "yellow journalism" daily newspapers, when the printed word was a comparatively new thing to the great mass of whole national peoples, this word possessed a power upon the mass mind that it has likely lost since. Poetry, for instance, could be a

Popular Culture staple, a little like song-lyrics today but less ephemeral, more emotive. The radicals' fondness for poetry had a deeper impulse than its

popular culture value. Since the dawn of recorded history, humanity has fashioned epic poems in more or less collective fashion, posing and reposing the greatest questions facing humans -- the meaning of life, the consequences of death, the presence of a Higher Authority -- in a lyric that could be universally shared. Only gradually did poetry become the product of a distinct caste of intellectuals, to be read primarily by other intellectuals for introspective purposes. Socialists perhaps more than any other group revived the prospect of a collective, "holy" poetry even before Marx and his followers had stamped their names and concepts upon the movement. Poets sprung from every corner in the nineteenth century labor coalescence. Few aspired to Great Art (or being World-famous artists) but thousands upon thousands anticipated changing the language as they contributed to changing the world. Reaching back into the common pasts of the soil-tillers and artisans, they sought to force a view of the unnecessarily cruel, present reality upon the reader, and at the same time offer glimpses of an almost unearthly beauty

ahead in what Socialist society would bring. One could only imagine what real Socialism might be like, but imagination itself provided one of the roads to its coming. The struggle itself, uplifting and ennobling human relations among the oppressed, constituted a veritable apotheosis of human virtues in inspiration to the last leap into freedom up ahead.

No aesthetician or political theorist has adequately explained why revolutionary politics and revolutionary Art have, since the late nineteenth century, traveled mostly along different roads. "Socialist Realism" in its most stultifying forms existed long before the Russian Revolution; revolutionary fantasy had planted its flag well before the appearance of the Surrealists in the 1920's. We all know by now that much politically-motivated Left work is very literal, very often repetitive, predictable in its methods and themes, not even convincing to those proletarians it is supposed to convince. And likewise, the experimental art forms that radicals (especially intellectuals) so often like, in the theater or films or novels, are eons from the popular culture plots that have sustained mass audiences throughout the twentieth century. Somewhere there has been a

frightening disjuncture.

Doubtless the re-stabilization of Capitalism in the last decades of the nineteenth century fixed the "Socialist culture" in an increasingly static framework, and at the same time ignited an artists' rebellion with far-reaching consequences. Octavio Paz may be right when he says in Children of the Mire that "the opposition between the poetic and the revolutionary spirit is part of the larger contradiction, that of linear time of the modern age as opposed to the rhythmic time of the poem." Socialists,

Communists, Anarchists, and non-descript radicals have thus sought to complete the historic commitment of the West since Christianity; rebellious artists have tried impatiently to go beyond History which has in any case proved so disappointing. And yet the paths of artistic and political radicals continue to cross, since the truest spirits of both oppose the bourgeois rule. Bohemians walk the line between the two fields generation after generation, contributing a poem here and a political deed there. Perhaps they are our conscience, reminding us that world Socialism (if it ever arrives) will presumably uproot the present notion of Time and

progress, collapse stages of history into each other and resurrect the experiences and traits that humanity has devised at every point in its odyssey.

Humor seems to be the best response to our civilized ills, and irony its dialectical weapon. Umor, what used to be called "black humor" or dark revelation, stems from our perception of the sheer stupidity the level of human relations has reached, when the simple needs of people for shelter, food and love remain so obviously fulfillable. And perhaps as well, humor helps to soothe us to the hard reality that one individual life cannot reach far in promoting or even understanding the age-old struggle for freedom.

Good Morning



INFANT: "Is this where I check my brains?"

The essay by Carol Poore provides a basic outline of Socialist and Communist fraternal activities among Old World groups maintained, in some instances, up to this very day. She suggests the political-atheistic inheritance from the Old World, kept alive in America to maintain the best qualities of an ethnic culture and to build a revolutionary "popular culture" within the fibre of community and family.

The following essays and documents do not so much replicate this analysis for other groups, as to set off the differences prompted by the distinct character of the various movements, and the changes forced by the larger society. The

English-language Socialist movement, stemming from a wholly different social basis, naturally placed its emphasis upon other aspects of the revolutionary promise. If Germans were "scientific", Americans were unashamedly utopian, their dreamy hopes for a larger-than-life shift in human consciousness, their rage and dry wit at the collapse of American democracy's self-image utterly distinct from the Germans' (or other foreign groups') hard-minded class analysis and detachment from all "bourgeois illusions". The Jews, inheritors from the Germans of the foreign-language Socialism's leadership, took yet another tack. Developing a Socialist culture richer and deeper



than any other ethnic segment could boast, they merged Socialist expression with both "Americanization" and resistance against it, literary flowering of Yiddish with the uprising of a vast and intense Socialist movement.

The Jewish example, with all its complexities, proved that the German dream

of a working class Socialist culture separate from and opposed to the evolving mass culture could not succeed. No Socialist culture could consolidate itself comprehensively in the swirl of new immigration, World War, the breakdown of International Socialism, and the "revolution in the Arts" which established a new relationship between creator and viewer. At best the Socialists or Communists might take up some aspects of these larger developments, pull a corner toward themselves, and make do. Always sporadic, constantly interrupted by historic events and changes in political lines, these attempts often proved quite extraordinary. When the world refused to bend to radicalism, the radicals slowly, painfully but very perceptively, adapted their cultural prognosis to the world.

Thus, for instance, we find the situation of Socialists among Italians, the South Slavs, and most especially among the Finns. None had the opportunities of Socialists in German and Jewish culture, to dominate the dynamic tendencies in a large ethnic community

and thereby exert a major force upon the outside society. Some built islands of radicalism within the community, on the German model. Others, notably the Italians, pressed an insurrectionary vision because the elements for a political and cultural coherence around Left objectives could not be assembled. All lived (like the Germans and Jews in their later evolutions) with the reality of a society that would finally swallow up their culture. How could they survive as a group, what were the principles of a Socialist diversity? The impressions recorded in this issue speak only indirectly to the questions, but perhaps eloquently nevertheless. The Industrial Workers of the World, more than any other American organization before the Communist Party, sought to render the footloose New Immigrant worker a counterpart to the itinerant native-born proletarian and establish their commonality in labor organization, in poetry and song. The literary counterparts to the I.W.W., one might say, was the avant-garde, lyrical in its promise of a cultural revolution to accompany the proletarian uprising, eager to find traces of sentiment in the throbbing, changing, popular culture which might be adapted to revolutionary ends.

In the disappointments that followed, radicals almost abandoned hope that anything in American social life could be refashioned for revolutionary purposes.

At the end of another cycle, by the close of the 1930's, they found on the contrary

much they could accept, even more upon which they hoped to build. In between lie some of the most painful and confusing years of American radicalism, mitigated always by the sustaining strength of the foreign-born rank-and-file at the bottom of the movement.

Something as apparently minor as the adaptation of the Daily Worker sports page to the great struggles for Black entry into baseball suggests a remarkable change had taken place through the coming-to-age of a new generation. The adaptation of the ethnic groups themselves to the changing awareness of ethnicity within the broader American culture proves that the Left did not make this turn in a vacuum, but in response to deeper tendencies. In this issue, we have not had the space (or the reprint rights) to document the drift in Left "High Culture" (the New Masses, Partisan Review, etc.) nor is the analysis available sufficient to place the entire drift of Left Culture into the context of American society at large. But perhaps the most important point can be made in the space of this issue. From the German origins to the late 'thirties conclusion, "Culture" is a real revolutionary phenomenon only when it takes in the life of ordinary folk who sustain the movement, helps provide them with the protection they need against a bitter outside world, and aids them in their struggle

to make it better.

#### Ommissions

Any collection of this kind is going to leave out a great deal. Selection of some materials, inaccessibility of others and sheer ignorance of large areas of the cultural tradition have necessarily given the product a patchwork look. Most notably in the post-1920 period, we have leaned away from the "Literary Wars" of famous writers, occupying so much attention at the time and so much intellectual history since, in favor of a more mundane approach to the popular Left newspaper press of the time and its reflection of directly blue-collar issues like sports. The interviews with Midwestern Left writers add another element just below the surface of the best-known controversies, seen from a different perspective. Likewise we have chosen not to document the tributes to the Soviet Union, defense of the Moscow Trials and other materials that need a separate, serious evaluation in their own light as a particular kind of cultural category.

With less excuse, we have failed to carry through the early German-American Socialist involvement with the theater, or for that matter the workers' choirs. Our knowledge is too slight and the material too vast and complex for consideration here. And we have wholly excluded, or substantially slighted various ethnic groups -- the Hungarian-

Americans come to mind --  
for lack of contacts with  
people having these language  
skills.

More has doubtless been  
left aside. There is no  
pretention to the last word  
on the subject. We will  
have a segment in later  
issues of Cultural Correspondence  
for further discussion  
and documentation.

#### OTHER OMISSIONS

As we go to press, we have had  
to abandon other material for  
lack of space. We had several in-  
terviews with 1930s writers, in-  
cluding Martin Birnbaum and Tom  
McGrath, which will now be pub-  
lished in a special section of  
the next CC on "Left Literature."  
We likewise had to drop a sec-  
tion on Italian-American poetry,  
of which only Arturo Giovannitti's  
final verse remains. And materials  
on Black music, and... But we have  
included all that we could. More  
later!



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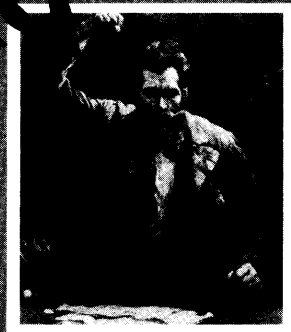
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§ Good Morning



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# The Early Years

## INTRODUCTION

The scattered origins of American Socialist movements, and their culture, lay in the variegated attempts to resist the intrusion of industrial capitalist values into the older societies. At first glimpse, the new system seems so chaotic that it could not persist, and only some drastically different order for society (i.e., Socialism) could reorganize social relations from within. In their different visions of that Co-operative Commonwealth, Germans, Jews and Old Immigration "Americans" looked back over their shoulders to an idealized version of the societies they left behind.

## German-American Socialist Culture

~Carol Poore

"Party Comrades! Workers of Berlin! We are leaving you to go into exile, and we do not yet know how far away we will be driven

by the outbreak of persecution. But rest assured, that wherever we may stay, we will always remain faithful to our common cause; we will always hold high the flag of the proletariat."

In perhaps no other country in the world has the consciousness of radical history and tradition been more thoroughly obliterated than in the United States. The prevailing image of 19th century German immigrants is no exception. There is the model of Carl Schurz, revolutionary turned model statesman; there is the German Lutheran Church; there are those large numbers of Germans who rabidly supported Bismarck during the Franco-Prussian War; there are the Milwaukee breweries and the opponents of temperance legislation. So go the clichés. However, there is another group of German-Americans whose history has been destroyed in part or hidden away in archives. They are the socialists and anarchists, who are known only to a few scholars and who survive only in the memories of those people whose families participated in these political and cultural groups.

It is primarily labor historians who have recognized the crucial political role German immigrants played in introducing socialist theory to the United States; founding this country's first enduring socialist party, the Socialist Labor Party (SLP, 1877); and helping to organize the American labor movement after the Civil War. However, the literary efforts and cultural organ-

izations of these socialist immigrants and the relationship between their political and cultural activities have been almost totally overlooked. Not only did they produce a large body of original literature (poetry, drama, fiction), but they also established a flourishing network of newspapers, theaters, schools, and other organizations aimed at the large number of German-speaking workers in United States cities. While their literature strove to encourage class solidarity through naturalistic depictions of proletarian misery, exhortations to unity, and promises of the classless utopia to come, the socialists' organizations were meant to provide an alternative in reality to "bourgeois" education, entertainment, and political life. The 1880's mark the high point of this socialist subculture, which then diminished in extent and importance after the last decade of the 19th century due to the Americanization of the socialist movement, the decrease in the number of German immigrants and their assimilation into the English-speaking world around them, and anti-German attitudes brought on by the First World War.

The German-language Socialists were frequently blamed (by Marx and Engels among others) for their failure to "Americanize" their movement. While correct in part, this harsh judgement overlooks two important factors in the political scene. First, native-born Americans were not the American working

class; but rather, we find the unique situation of an immigrant working class com-

posed of many different nationalities and language groups. And there was even a division of labor which grew up along these lines, with certain nationalities dominating in particular trades or with the older, more established Northern European groups controlling the better-paying, skilled trades and the Slavs, Southern Europeans, and Asians providing a large, cheap supply of unskilled labor. Thus, especially in its early stages, the concentration of trade union or socialist organizing on particular language groups was unavoidable to an extent; and it was a necessary first step towards building organizations with a wider basis encompassing workers of many different nationalities.

Also, the influence of the German-American socialists cannot be measured only according to their failures at electoral politics; but should also be viewed in the context of their more general propagandistic, literary, and cultural activities. Often, the Socialist Labor Party even termed itself a "propaganda" party, exhorting its members to carry their ideas into workers' societies, to fight for socialist demands in the labor press, and to bring their political goals before the public at every opportunity. Thus, the socialists sponsored or participated prominently in demonstrations and festivals which drew the attention of tens of thousands of urban workers of all languages. They formed large, long-last-



ing social service and mutual aid societies which provided security to workers in times of unemployment and sickness, and during strikes. They participated in smaller groups, such as the socialist schools for children, workers' educational societies, and workers' theaters and singing societies. And they established a political forum with their German-language newspapers which acquainted readers with basic works of scientific socialism, provided information and support for local labor struggles, and spread the poetry and prose of revolution in their literary supplements.

#### The Literature of the Class Struggle

The poetry, songs, and short prose pieces which were printed in the socialist press expressed the sufferings of the proletarians and their utopian mission in a hortatory, often moralistic way. The poverty of the virtuous, dependable laborer is contrasted with the easy, luxurious life of the corrupt Vampire Capital; and the workers were urged to claim what is rightfully theirs by uniting to destroy the lazy drones who devour the products of their labor.

Of particular agitational importance are the songs addressed to workers which were sung at demonstrations and meetings; while many of the most popular songs were brought over from the European workers' movement, quite a number were written by socialists (rarely workers themselves) for specific events or organizations in the United States.

#### Servitude (Anonymous)

In toil and agony I  
hasten through the day,  
With dreams of despair  
through the nights.  
Longing is dead, resis-  
tance is dead,  
I hardly know how  
miserable I am.

My body is for sale, my  
spirit is enslaved,  
Is enslaved to a hostile  
master,  
And only faintly, like  
lost justice,  
Does a star of hope for  
the future gleam!

Workers' catechisms, commandments, and creeds were used to make succinct political statements and to counter religious teaching and upbringing.

#### Newest Workers' Catechism

Question: What is blind faith?

Answer: If a worker believes he will find work every day.

Q: Why does this belief bring you salvation?

A: Because the believer soon dies of hunger and thus is eternally saved.

Q: What is a false belief?

A: To believe that the former high wages will ever return to America again.

Q: What is a miracle?

A: To believe that it is possible to feed a large family on \$5 per week and save money at the same time.

Q: What is the greatest evil?

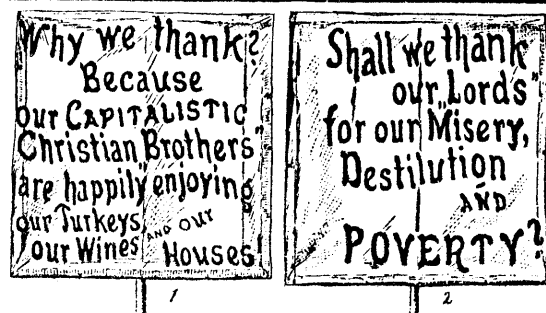
A: Ignorance, when it rules a whole people.

Q: Why are heavenly rewards preferable to earthly ones?

- A: Because the former can be had for nothing and the latter have to be paid for.
- Q: How many holidays does the bourgeoisie have in a year?
- A: 365.
- Q: Who oppresses us all?
- A: At present, Almighty Capital.
- Q: Who is the most certain of reaching the kingdom of heaven?
- A: The communist agitators, because their life on earth is made as uncomfortable as hell and therefore a reward -- that is, heaven -- is surely coming to them.

### Demonstrations, Festivals, Commemorations

The socialists reached their greatest degree of public visibility through their participation in mass meetings, which were often connected with large



labor organizations such as the Central Labor Unions of New York City and Chicago and which served several purposes. There were demonstrations in support of particular demands, especially the eight-hour day. Festivals were held to commemorate important events in the international working-class movement, such as the Paris Commune, the 1848 revolution, Lassalle's birth and death (around which a real cult was created), the assassination of Czar Alexander II, and the execution of the Haymarket martyrs. There were also festivals to counteract and provide alternatives to "bourgeois" holidays such as the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas; and finally, local sections of the SLP often sponsored smaller events -- primarily for their German-speaking members -- such as amateur theater and programs of musical entertainment.

Most of these mass activities shared common features: speeches by party or trade union officials in several languages, declamations of revolutionary poems (Heine, Herwegh and Freiligrath being the favorites), labor songs sung by choruses of workers, and sometimes a play performed by a local party section or a "living picture" showing a scene from the Paris Commune, the sufferings of humanity under Mammon, or perhaps the life of the proletariat in the past, present, and future. Thus, these meetings were clearly entertaining and recreational, but they also had the purpose of "reminding the people of their heroic deeds, spurring them on to new achievements, and strength-

ening their feeling of solidarity with all the disinherited and oppressed".

A Workers' Fourth of July Festival  
in Chicago, 1876

This festival, attended by over 10,000 people, was conceived as an anti-centennial celebration. The living picture, or tableau, presented there is a typical example for the socialists' vision of the future of free labor and family happiness. (Women's ideal place is almost always seen as the home; there is some discussion among the German-American socialists of equal rights for women, but the movement is fundamentally directed at and dominated by men.) The Chicago Arbeiter-Zeitung reported:

The Declaration of Independence, which is now 100 years old, proclaimed the rights of man; but today these are trod underfoot by the pack of exploiters who are celebrating their independence. Should we workers celebrate the independence of the exploiters? (...)  
We have no cause to rejoice at the centennial of the republic of the well-fed bourgeoisie; for it was not a republic for us, not a father-

land. For us, it was only the lackey of Mr. Moneybags against us; the strong arm which supported the exploiters in their damned business of plundering the people!

And so let us celebrate in our own way, in the spirit of liberty, equality, and fraternity! (...)

The high point of the festival will be (...) the living picture which (...) will be illuminated on a revolving platform 28 feet high. It will depict the old and the new world; the present condition of exploitation of man by man; and, in contrast, the goal of our efforts, the free people's state with its institutions which promote happiness for all.

On one side, with splendid costumes, the old world is portrayed in the following way: On the first step, enslaved labor: workers of all ages, some breaking their chains, some in chains as they longingly gaze across the sea at the approaching ship (socialism) with two sailors holding a transparency: Justice and Equality. On the second step, 7 feet higher, poverty and misery, an emaciated woman and child (poverty), and a woman (misery) imploring an exploiter, who is setting a dog on the pitiful figures. On the third step, again 7 feet higher, the rule of money and the church. Two exploiters sitting on their moneybags and above them, giving his blessing to their despicable business, a priest.

On the other side, separated from the old world by a wall, the new world, the future of labor. On the first step, agriculture (farmer with plow and horse) and family happiness: the family life of liberated human-

ity, beaming with happiness and content, free from want and worry. On the second step, 7 feet higher, industry, science, and art, as the common property of liberated humanity, portrayed by three beautiful women in Grecian robes. On the third step, again 7 feet higher, as the greatest good of humanity and the basic principle of the new world, justice and freedom, portrayed by two women. Justice holds the scales and the sword; Freedom holds the red flag and the Jacobin Cap.

Friends, that is a radiant picture which expresses all your hopes and all your longings; and which makes you rejoice with renewed hope for the coming spring of humanity, for the happiness of all human beings.



### Workers' Singing Societies

Mass meetings would have been thought incomplete without the participation of one or more

socialist singing societies (usually male, but sometimes mixed). Although these groups were associated with the movement from its beginnings, it was only in 1892 that a national organization was formed, the Federation of Workers' Singing Societies of the United States (Arbeiter-Sangerbund der Vereinigten Staaten), with northeastern, mid-northern (Detroit), and northwestern branches. Approximately every three years, until the Second World War, each region held a singers' festival which could attract 3-4000 participants and a much larger audience. The content of these concerts, consisting before World War I almost solely of the songs of German Social Democracy, drew more and more from the standard choral repertoire with time: Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner. But what was the purpose of this Federation when it was first formed, and what did it hope to achieve? Here are two statements from the 1906 festival newspaper, and an excerpt from the constitution of the Northwest Federation.

### On Singing Societies.

Adolph Hepner of St. Louis, who was tried for high treason along with August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht in Leipzig in 1872, explains here why the socialist workers left the societies of the petty bourgeoisie and the non-socialist workers:

"The main cause of the split is that the socialists could no longer bear the atrocious philistinism of the petty bourgeois singing clubs. I do not mean 'philistinism' in the sense of Puritanism,

but rather as indifference towards earth-shaking questions, as lack of interest in progressive ideas. The socialists (...) wanted (...) to introduce songs of freedom into their programs which lie beyond the horizon of the average singer and do not conform to his taste."

Knowledge Is Power;  
Power Is Knowledge!

Through workers' educational societies, "Sunday schools" for children, debating clubs, and small libraries, German-American socialists attempted to provide free or cheap educational opportunities unavailable to workers elsewhere and to counteract the domination of the public school system by the "rich" and the "clerics", whom they accused of systematically spreading ignorance among the people. In large cities such as New York, Brooklyn and Philadelphia, labor lyceums were founded as centers for educational and cultural programs: for example, the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum, founded in 1882, established a Kindergarten, evening, and Sunday schools for workers' children, and evening school for adults, a library with reading rooms, an archive for historical documents and mementoes from the international workers' movement, and a museum for art works by workers; and planned to promote and distribute theoretical literature on the labor movement. Self-education (only the proletariat can free itself) was the rule; and so these activities often took the form of

debating clubs where a member or invited guest -- perhaps from the party or the socialist press -- would speak on an important topical question and then initiate a general discussion.

From the reports available, it seems certain that few women participated in these educational societies, although discussions and lectures on politics and economics were also held in the small number of women's branches of the SLP.

These women's branches took the initiative in establishing and staffing socialist schools for children. In New York, the Free German School of the East Side was founded in 1880 by the Women's Section of the SLP and had 255 pupils in 1885. An article in the Volkszeitung urged readers to send their children to this school by stating: "It is really time for the people to take even the schools into their own hands, in order that our children may be brought up to be thinking, independent citizens. (...) Everyone who send his child to this school is helping to build a society based on liberty, equality, and fraternity."

What sort of instruction was carried out in these schools? Volkszeitung editor Adolf Douai, who had published a pamphlet, The Kindergarten and the Elementary School as Social-Democratic Institutions in 1876, explained their purpose in an article on "Free Sunday Schools":

"Here, the children should learn to understand and speak German as well as English, and

some of the best literature and folk songs of both languages. Here, through simple discussions, they should learn to think about the most understandable facts and truths of the present, and they should develop aspirations. Their strengths should be developed; their pleasure in continuing to educate themselves should be awakened. They should learn to treasure and love the party which is striving to make them more human."

These goals were continued and developed further in the educational societies for adults.

The rediscovery of the many strains in the radical tradition in the United States will be of little use if it is carried out merely in the spirit of antiquarianism, of collecting quaint artifacts from the past. On the other hand, the visions of 19th-century socialists, and their cultural and political forms of organization, cannot serve us as models in late capitalists society, in an age of mass media and communications. The importance of the progressive political and cultural heritage of immigrant groups such as the Germans or of "native" American radicalism is perhaps most evident when looked at from a negative perspective: our knowledge of it has always been suppressed, and socialist and working-class culture has

been denigrated and trivialized as inferior to so-called "high culture". The history of progress entails the history of repression. We have seen that the publications of the German-American socialists were banned in Germany during the period of the Anti-Socialist Law, but they were constantly smuggled in by the political exiles despite official surveillance. Until 1972, Haymarket Square was marked by a statue of a Chicago policeman commanding "peace in the name of the people" rather than by a memorial to those who died in the struggle for an eight-hour day. In the wake of growing repression in the Federal

Republic of Germany, a historical documentation entitled 1886, Haymarket was confiscated in Bavaria in 1976; a court case was necessary before it could be sold in bookstores again. These particular examples reflect a general policy of neglect: the history of radicalism and the labor movement is never taught in schools and seldom even at universities. And it is not only the events of the distant past which are covered up and kept from us: the state of Ohio would like to erase our memory of the student movement with a gymnasium. The struggle which continues over the preservation and dissemination of the radical tradition, over a reinterpretation of the forgotten part of the German-American legacy, is in fact a struggle for the power of a sense of historical development and progress which we can win from the past.

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# Yiddish Socialism: The Early Years

~Paul Buhle

No body of literature, no cultural movement in the United States has been so infused with Socialist idealism and the desires to reconcile revolutionary social aims with cultural innovations, as in the Yiddish-speaking community from the 1890s to roughly the 1920s. The attainments, problems and importance of this community's cultural tendencies have remained unknown save to the devotees of Yiddishkeit (literally, "Yiddishness"): mainstream and Left wing journalists, social, cultural, and literary historians have written as if the subject did not exist. For decades, a small band of Jewish radicals kept the memory alive. Irving Howe's anthologies of Yiddish literature and his monumentally popular World of Our Fathers have opened up a new world of discussion. But only part-way. At this late date, the travails and small victories of Immigrant-Jewish culture seem destined to reach us only by way of nostalgia for naive ideals and for a people too ready to make revolution in an unrevolutionary land. The truth is deeper, more complex, and more serious for the problems of culture today.

Thus it is vital, and not only for the Jewish tradition, that a more dynamic portrait be offered. Within the limited con-

text of the Yiddish-speaking community and the labor-political movements it nourished, a Socialist culture grew up that could without embarrassment be compared with any in the capitalist world. This culture existed moreover not in the outlying areas (as with the nearest counterpart in proportionate strength and influence, the Finns) but in the metropolitan centers of modern civilization; and for that reason it found the mediation with American life at large crucial, sometimes tragically so, but always a matter for confrontation. No movement, no minority society could possibly survive the pervasive spread of "Americanization" -- public schools, popular culture, the careers offered to those who stepped out of the ghetto. But a perceptive cultural movement could measure its influence, and continually re-evaluated the implications for Socialism in the larger sense, not only as a political goal, but a way of life inside the old society.

The literature of Yiddishkeit offers an extraordinary insight into the broader culture. The entire development of Yiddish as a modern literary language was, for social and political reasons, compressed into little more than a half-century in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. The language of an impoverished people with no professional literateurs, Yiddish became a supreme instrument for raising the cultural level of the masses, for secularization and modernization. Its readers

plunged into the midst of metropolitan centers, Yiddish became no less a language of leisure reading, "popular culture". And yet it retained roots in the ancient traditions of Jews, its various functions always somehow connected to the Messianic promise of deliverance from oppression. Even so, some of its greatest literary talents refused to be confined to mere uplifting, and broke away from the limiting "social responsibility". In these divisions, and their implications, one can find an entire history of Left culture in its first crucial stages.

Any grappling with Yiddish literature requires a brief trip to the shtetl past. As Immanuel Wallerstein has shown, the isolation of Jews in the Eastern European commercial cities and villages presupposed the advancement of Western Europe into the center of commerce and culture, the colonization of the East as a backward reservoir of agriculture and peoples. With their distinctive history and Messianic faith, Jews adapted ambivalently -- unable and unwilling to assimilate, they developed simultaneously a rich community life among themselves, and increasingly (albeit often at a geographical distance) came in touch with the developments in metropolitan, gentile culture. Yiddish was derived from the outside world, principally Middle German, and evolved as a street-language below the dignity of the religious tongue (Hebrew), distinctively influenced nevertheless by Hebrew (from which its alphabet is taken) and a variety of other sources. From the High Middle Ages until nearly

the end of the nineteenth century, Yiddish occupied a curious status. Considered a vulgar tongue, it was utilized for the lowest literary purposes, as in the T'sena U'rena, a massively popular biblical exegesis which could be termed a "Woman's Bible" since it was believed women's only possible printed access to the Word. Jewish advocates of the Enlightenment determined to rid the community of its backwardness, including this "jargon", but ironically found Yiddish the only possible route to provide a modernizing mass education. Thus evolved a remarkable conception, Yiddish as a naturally deformed language, suited for farce, satire, malapropisms aimed at the Old Ways, destined ultimately to eliminate itself through what one scholar calls an "aesthetic of ugliness". Yiddish thereby emerged from the shtetl the very epitome of Popular Culture -- the vulgarian, the clown fit best to encompass mass life. If one believes in "deep meanings" for languages, none was better suited to the tasks of socialism.

Theories often give away more than the thinker recognizes. The ironic sense set so deeply in Jewish culture -- "God's Chosen People" seemingly always on the wrong side of History -- had in fact found a perfect instrument in the unpretentious Yiddish diction, its matter-of-fact tone and adaptability to the other cultures (languages) at hand. The early Jewish Socialists, who determined to ease Jewish assimilation into a "better" language, could hardly grasp the real possibilities. The literary language was created by popular demand, against the

orthodox religionists, the assimilationists and all those who doubted the existence of a Yiddishkeit, a people's culture which would not be "uplifted" out of self-identity but would retain its basic elements in the face of all opposition. The perceptive literary critic Baruch Rivkin called Yiddish a literary substitute for the geographic national identity denied Jews (until Israel); one might better say that Yiddish offered a linguistic world in which the mixture of ideological Messianism, material poverty and persecution might be reconciled, always aware that this reconciliation presented a possible illusion and offered a prophetic vision that might never be fulfilled. Perhaps no other language as Yiddish demanded, under the existing historical conditions, the success of Socialism as a precondition for its continued existence; none that I know express the problematic qualities of this hope in such ironic terms.

Early on, modern Yiddish writing took on a folkish quality and a realistic tone that it maintained almost throughout its history. Mendele Mokher Sforim ("Mendele the Bookseller", a pseudonym like most Yiddish authors' names) and Y.L. Peretz, in Russia of the 1870s-80s, captured public attention by writing short stories, really literary sketches which expressed perfectly the continuities and tensions of shtetl life. These tales were hardly one step removed from the semi-spontaneous, always improvised story-telling. The authors seem in constant dialogue with their listeners, laughing with their sufferings

as a fellow-member of their persecuted ranks, cajoling them about the unnecessary cruelties of their lives, holding up their potential accomplishments through common effort against the narrowness of their current status. Here, the detached observer might have seen a potentially

great literature at its formative stage, authors able to reach straight into and out of the vernacular, delivering the heaviest spiritual messages without losing the immediacy of day-to-day language or the sophistication of their developing craft. Yiddish writers were swept along by the contemporary Realism and Naturalism in Europe, drawn naturally to the sense of social commitment in literature. But their writing nevertheless contained in general an element of fancy, as if the social experience of author and audience could not permit a complete commitment to the appearances of Reality.

The vast migration of Eastern European Jews to American shores offered new possibilities for Yiddish culture and afforded, through the popular media of the mass press, a way for literature to retain its folkish quality yet increase its circulation many-fold.

The millions who streamed to the New World found cause for bitter disillusionment about America and deep nostalgia for what they had left behind. Plunged into ethnic ghettos, confined to the garment trades and the lowest echelons of business and the professions, they experienced high mortality rates, tuberculosis ("the shop disease"),

suicides and family disorders -- both grinding poverty and the steady disintegration of ancient connective cultural elements. Within a few years of the mass migration, the center of the community (especially in New York's Lower East Side) tilted toward labor activity and radicalism. Despite the initial misgivings of intellectuals (who still hoped to convert the masses to "cultured" Russian or German), writers and activists touched a nerve with their direct Yiddish appeals. A Yiddish Socialist press appeared in the early 1890's, and gathering some of the outstanding talents in the ghetto, became a staple for a rapidly-growing audience. Here, culture had an established audience, but one that demanded its edification in doses that could be easily swallowed.

The effusion that followed had no precedent in Jewish or Socialist culture. When Eastern European Jews began, almost from their first day in the new land, to organize unions, constitute mutual benefit societies, and join radical parties, they learned much politically from the precisely organized German-American Socialists. But while radical Germans carried over to the United States a ready-made cultural perspective established by generations of literary and political experience, the Jews were formulating their culture in the heat of their struggle. A mass Yiddish Socialist propaganda and literary flowering that had been judged impossible in 1885 was fact ten years later. One could cite, for instance, the modest wedding bard Eliakum Zunser, whose lyrics

were so popular as to be considered folk-verse, "anonymous" among the ordinary people. As Edward King's contemporary novel Joseph Zalmonah describes a Zunser-like figure, the "people's poet" offers songs to a mass audience of workers in a desperate strike. Hungry and ragged, the workers are stirred to new sacrifices by the poetry, as a Greek audience might have been in antiquity. Every Socialist and Anarchist newspaper editor could tell the same story. Political poems by now-famous ghetto writers helped to launch the papers, called the workers to consciousness, brought new inspiration in moments of crisis. For an historic moment in the 1890's, the writers had all but recapitulated the ancient functions of poetry with the substitution of labor (or Socialist) victory instead of clan triumph, the mysterious force of the mass instead of God.

The writers' very success stirred the first rebellion against suffocating political orthodoxy, foreshadowing all those uprisings by Left writers against their political masters in the following generations. Whereas struggles over style and the autonomy of literature had been practically unknown among the German-American Socialists, the assertion of artistic autonomy and the formation of new extra-party journals and magazines punctuated the Jewish cultural 1890's. Morris Winchevsky, the zeyde (grandfather) of Socialist writers, editor of the first Yiddish

## ◆ IN THE FACTORY

ALL day in the shop the machines roar so wildly  
That often I sink and am lost in the din;  
Sunken and lost in the terrible tumult,  
The soul in me ceases. . . . I am a machine.  
I work and I work and I work without reckoning,  
Making, creating—endless the task!  
For what? And for whom? I know not, I ask not;  
Machine cannot answer, machine cannot ask.

No, here is no feeling, no judgment, no reason;  
This labor, the bloody, the endless, suppressed  
The noblest and finest, the truest and richest,  
The highest, the purest, the humanly best.  
The minutes, the hours, the days and the seasons,  
They vanish, swift-fleeting like straws in a gale.  
I drive the wheel madly as though to overtake them,  
I chase without wisdom, or wit, or avail.

The clock in the workshop, it rests not a moment;  
It points on, and ticks on: Eternity—Time.  
And once someone told me the clock has a meaning—  
Its pointing and ticking has reason and rhyme.  
And this too he told me—or had I been dreaming?—  
The clock wakens life in us, forces unseen;  
And something besides. . . . I forget what; oh, ask not!  
I know not, I know not, I am a machine.

At times, when I listen, I hear the clock plainly;  
The reason of old—the old meaning—is gone.  
The maddening pendulum urges me forward  
To labor and labor and still labor on.  
The tick of the clock is the voice of my master;  
The face of the clock is the face of my foe.  
The clock—I can hear, I can hear, how it drives me!  
It calls me "Machine!" and it cries to me "Sew!"

At noon, when about me the wild tumult ceases,  
And gone is the master, and I sit apart,  
And dawn in my brain is beginning to glimmer,  
The wound comes agape at the core of my heart;  
And tears, bitter tears flow; tears that are scalding;  
They moisten my dry, meagre dinner—my bread;  
They choke me—I cannot! my bread lies uneaten;  
Oh, heavy the labor! Oh, bitter the need!

The workshop at mid-day—it is not a workshop:  
A battlefield—bloody; a lull on the plain.  
Around and about me the corpses are lying,  
And out of the earth cries the blood of the slain.  
A moment—and listen! The signal is sounded:  
The dead rise again, and renewed is the fight.  
They struggle, these corpses; for strangers, for strangers!  
They struggle, they fall, and they sink into night.

I gaze on the battlefield; wrath flames within me,  
And Vengeance and Pain stir their fires in me.  
The clock—now I hear it aright!—it is crying:  
"An end to the bondage! Arise, and be free!"  
It quickens my feeling, it quickens my reason;  
It points to the moments, the precious, that fly.  
Oh, worthless am I if I longer am silent,  
And lost am I, lost! if in silence I die.

The man in me sleeping begins to awaken;  
The thing that was slave into slumber has passed:  
Now, up with the man in me! Up and be doing!  
No misery more! Here is freedom at last!

When sudden: A whistle!—the boss—an alarm!—  
I sink in the slime of the stagnant routine;  
There's tumult . . . they struggle. . . . Oh, lost is my ego—  
I know not, I care not, I am a machine! . . .

—Morris Rosenfeld  
(1862—1923)

English version by Rose Pastor Stokes

Socialist newspaper in  
London during the 1880's and  
early 1890's, demonstrated  
in his career the earnest  
striving to balance politi-  
tical commitments and artistic  
integrity.

A cosmopolite, Winchevsky  
had drawn from the German poets  
a rich sense of continental  
Socialist culture -- the  
workers' hymns, the call to  
class war, the sentimental  
dirges over the proletarian  
victims -- but also a sense  
of the paradox in the role  
of the revolutionary artist.  
Among his greatest influences  
in London was William Morris,  
whose dreamy prose and a  
devotion to handicraft  
could never be fitted neatly  
into contemporary Socialist  
categories. Through obser-  
vation of Morris and others,  
Winchevsky wrote bitter-  
sweet short stories of revo-  
lutionaries' tragic lives  
and loves, and on his ven-  
turing to the United States  
in 1894, commenced a  
newspaper column signed the  
"Crazy Philosopher" (Me-  
shugina Filosofo) -- obser-  
vations on the absurdity  
and sadness of contemporary  
life, as well as the neces-  
sity for a Socialist solution.  
In his own Socialist cultural  
newspaper in America, the  
Emes (The Truth), he declared,  
"The Party is more important  
than our newspaper, but  
Socialism is more important  
than the Party, and the  
truth is more important than  
everything else." This could  
only be political heresy.  
Winchevsky soon played a key  
role in the Jewish Social-

ists' revolt against the narrow and sectarian leadership of the Socialist Labor Party.

More than any other metropolitan group, they hailed the alliance of immigrants with the grassroots Socialists -- indigenous, folksy, and sentimental -- led by Eugene Debs. The writers found freedom by locating the "folk" forces closest to themselves.

This liberation coincided with the formation

of a daily Yiddish press destined to reach beyond the Socialist followers to the Jewish masses sympathetic to labor's cause, and beyond any kind of orthodoxy in style and content to the most remarkably popular radical daily papers that America had yet seen. The Jewish Daily Forward, directed by Abe Cahan for half a century, uniquely among Socialist newspapers outdistanced its rivals (both ethnic and English-speaking) in circulation and influence, competing successfully with the bourgeois Yiddish press

§from the Big Stick (Groysser Kundes), c.1914. Professor "Art" proposes to divide the Forward (Abe Cahan) from Madame "Shund," trashy art. Cahan protests: don't cut, the two cannot live apart for a minute.

## דער "סיאמעזשער צווילינג"

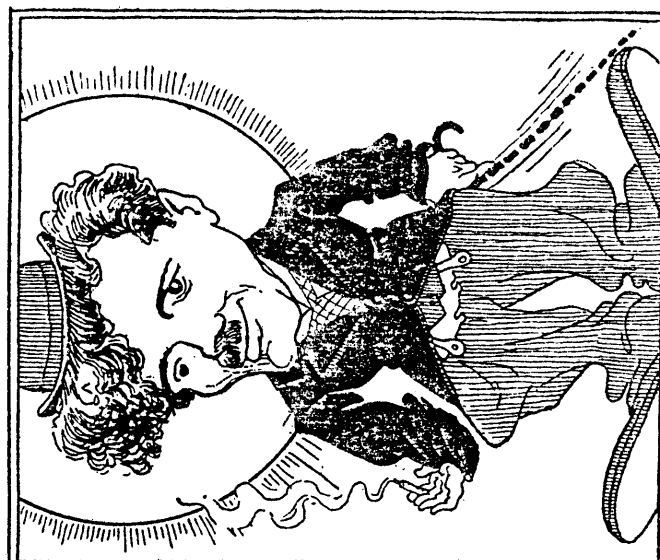


פראפעסאר "קונדס": ס'איז נא יוז טאקינג, באיעלע, מע'ס מוזען שניידען!  
 "פארוענט": פליעז, פראפעסאר'ל "קונדס", שניידט ניט! זי און איך זיינען איינס. און איהר קען איך  
 ניט לעבען א מינוט'עלע.

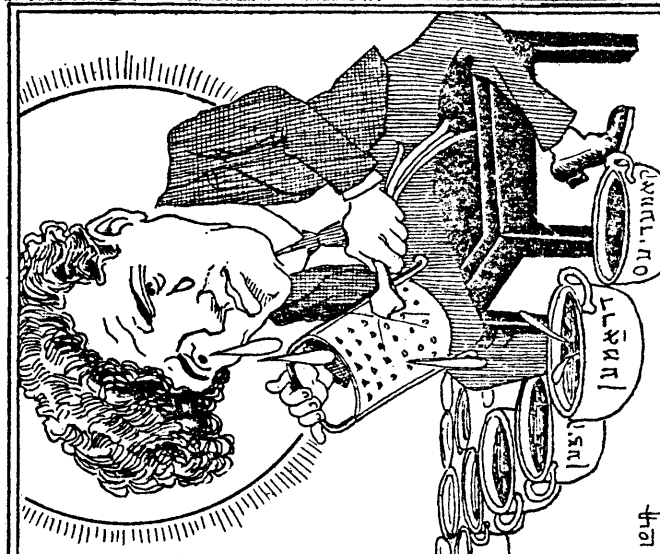


by adapting many of the mainstream techniques.

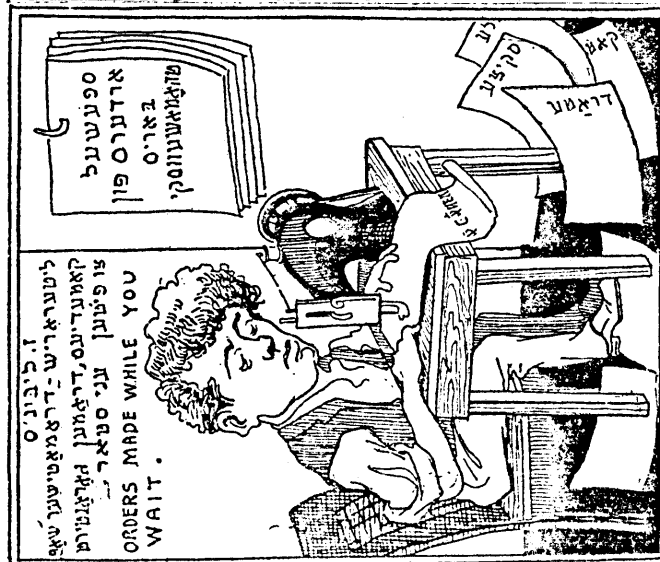
Cahan and others were quick to see newspapers as the only reading matter the great mass of proletarians would ever read, and to adapt literary styles accordingly. The first Yiddish Socialist papers established the story-length of a single column, just enough for the attention-span of the barely literate worker, perhaps, or for the distraction of the trolley (and later subway) ride. To creat a whole story within that length required the will, and ability, to speak directly to the reader's experience. Thus a writer like Z. Libin, a cap-maker by trade, who better than any other author exemplified the proletarian relating the misery of shop-and home-life. His weeping at his own lost child, his hours spent over a sewing machine, his observations of daily sorrows all suffuse his work. His writing, dedicated to making Socialists of his readers, became, as B. Rivkin says, a kind of Red Soap Opera.



זיינע פריינד האלטען אים פאר'ן גרעסטן אידישען קאמיקער, א רעזעלער שטאט יאנגמאן.



זיינע שונאים זאגען, אז ער טויט אויף א לאנגען.



דער אמת איז, אז ער איז א האראפאסטער אידישער יאנגמאן.

Caricature of S. Libin, as seen by his friends, his enemies, and as he really is.

§ Groysser Kundes, 1912.

(Read Right to Left)

So, too, the writings of the "Sweatshop Poets", known as the "Teardrop Millionaires" because of their wealth of sorrow. More than any other, Norris Rosenfeld apotheosized the sentimental potentialities in slum life and fashioned them into a tapestry of suffering and hope.

This literary unfolding would have been remarkable enough in any Socialist newspaper. But Cahan placed alongside these writers translations from all the popular writers of the day, Socialist or not -- Arthur Conan Doyle along with Hugo, Poe, and Mark Twain, "High" and "Low" culture indiscriminately. The German-American Socialist press had never really seriously aspired to popular culture. The Forward was infused in popular life looking in at Socialists while at the same time a Socialist beacon was looking out over the masses. The weekend Forward, with its literary supplement, might better be compared with the popular literature magazines in the mainstream, like McClure's, Munsey's and Colliers, in the midst of a technological price-cutting revolution to offer literature for popular prices.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this contact between "Socialist" and "popular" culture. If Jewish Socialists could maintain the momentum of their movement, they might shape that culture, clarify the aims of popular life as identical to Socialism (at least among the Jews). The backwardness of American Socialism relative to its European counterpart, due in no small part to the lack

of a traditional, stable working class culture, might conceivably be reversed through the mechanisms of the system itself. Why shouldn't the masses seize up the opportunity of popular learning and turn it to their advantage against the exploiters?

This hope had two great flaws. The Jewish community's rebellious spirit ran ahead of the organized labor movement. After defeats and bitter disappointments, the Jewish Socialists went into decline, not to rise again until after the strike waves of 1907-1909. With the defeat, an inner flaw of Jewish adaptation became apparent. While Socialist veterans complained of their isolation, the Forward trained its sights on appealing to a public politically indifferent, seeking entertainment of the kind afforded by "yellow journalism". Just when (and whether, for that matter) Abe Cahan made a conscious decision to feature shund (trash), why he came to abuse, tyrannize and alienate the most creative Socialist writers in the community, may never be known. One thing is clear. In the absence of a revolutionary political continuity, a leading element in Yiddish Socialist culture drifted rightward, into acceptance of American bourgeois society and the norms it fostered, as a virtual finality. Rebellious youth began to seek ideals rather than an assimilated Socialism.

No one had anticipated the threat of a stultifying new orthodoxy as clearly as the Anarchists. Unlike the

Socialists, they had warned that the creation of institutions might become another layer of defense around the system; Socialism, enshrined in community values, could well serve as an agency to placate workers with sweet words, easing the Americanization of the ambitious worker into the "all rightnik" lawyer or small businessman. A leading anarchist poet (and sometimes editor of the popular anarchist weekly, Freie Arbeiter Shtimme), I. Bovshover, symptomized this opposition on political and aesthetic grounds. A fur-worker by trade, Bovshover has been called the first bohemian of Yiddish-American literature: writing fierce tirades against Capitalism, he held part of himself back from the collective struggle of the day, searching in Whitman and the study of poetics some greater principle above and beyond the prospects of the immediate class conflict. Bovshover himself did not survive this plunge into so many different areas of contradictions. He went mad and died in a mental institution decades later.

### ◆ REVOLUTION

I COME like a comet ablaze, like the sun when the dawn is awaking.  
I come like tumultuous tempest, when thunder and lightning are breaking;  
I come like the lava that rushes from the mighty volcanoes in motion;

I come like the storm from the north that arouses and angers the ocean.

I come because tyrants have put up their thrones in place of the nations;  
I come because rulers are foddering peace with their war preparations;  
I come because ties that bound people together are now disconnected;  
I come because fools think that progress will stay in the bounds they erected.

I come because out in the wastes made by rulers I arose to existence;  
I come because despots have roused me to anger and armed resistance;  
I come because life is too real to be murdered by foolish endeavor;  
I come because freedom can nowhere be chained and ensnaked forever.

I led the downtrodden and tyrannized peoples of past generations;  
I helped them to throw off enslavement, and gain their complete liberations;

I marched with the spirit of progress, and aided its every endeavor;  
And I shall march on with the peoples, until I shall free them forever.

You money-bag saints, you crowned cut-throats, anointed with strife and contentions;

I come to destroy you, your laws, and your lies and your foolish conventions;

Your hearts that are thirsting for blood, I shall pierce till the life in them ceases;

Your crown and your sceptres, your little gold toys I shall break into pieces.

And pluck off your purples and tear them to rags, and then hurl to damnation;

The baubles which people bow down to like fools with their loud jubilation;

The glittering pride of your false frozen world I shall melt till it vanish,

Like snow when the sun breathes upon it, like night that the day comes to banish.

And I shall destroy all your spider-web morals, the lies you determine;  
Your priests with their darkness and falsehoods I come to root out like the vermin;

Your heavens and hells, and your saviors and prophets, your gods and your devils,

I come to destroy them, to free all the earth and air from their evils.

So hang me or shoot me, your efforts are futile—a waste of endeavor;  
I fear neither prisons nor tortures, nor scaffolds nor awe whatsoever.  
Anew I shall rise from the earth, and its surface with weapons shall cover,

Until you sink down in your graves, till your power for evil is over.

~ Basil Dabl (*Joseph Bovshover*)  
(1872—1916)

English version by J. Leftvich  
from Graham

§

### But Bovshover's point

was not lost. His successors were younger men who emigrated after the turn of the century, influenced on the one hand by the Russian pogroms against Jews, on the other by L'Art pour Art, the search for inner meaning beyond political definitions of poetry and fiction. They found in their Jewishness, in the European identity they retained even while in the midst of American culture, a voice that the literal propagandists like Z. Libin and Morris Rosenfeld could not have expressed.

They shunned the "rhyiming departments" of the labor and Socialist movements as too constraining. And yet they were themselves proletarians -- paperhangers, waiters, fur-workers, housepainters, and so forth -- experiencing the sorrows and expectations of the community. As later novels suggest, they wandered through the ghetto social life, feeling half-friend and half-stranger, drawn by Socialist idealism and at the same time repelled by the concessions made to existing conditions. They were the first generation of American proletarian writers who experienced the dread possibilities of popular culture (even Socialist popular culture) and drew back, taking the pilgrim's role instead.

In the decade after 1909, all the political and cultural contradictions came together. The Jewish working class, now joined in struggle with other ethnic groups, fought

bitter and ultimately successful struggles for union recognition in the garment trades and associated industries. Cahan, defending his property in a paper whose circulation ran above 100,000 daily, sought social peace to continue his trade. The garment workers' march on the Forward office marked another turning point in Jewish political and cultural life. Cahan, hell-bent on assimilation, still wrote of the eventual elimination of Yiddish that he had done so much to establish, and obviously planned the integration of Jewish labor into a stable "system". Revolutionaries looked elsewhere.

The failure of world Socialism in the first great war, the Red Scare and the defeat of most unions in the United States, then consolidation of the Russian Revolution foreclosed one set of possibilities and opened others. While the community matured, and faced threats of nativism and anti-semitism, revolutionary sentiment turned sharply inward. By an historical conjunction, Communism appealed both to Russian homeland nostalgia and to Jewish messianism, to the rejection of American culture as it existed and to the determination to find an honorable destiny for Jewish idealism in the United States.

Even in the revolutionary optimism of the Third International's opening year, the prospect of immediate, Russian-style Revolution in the United States demanded considerable credulity. Left to their own devices, most Jewish radicals might have chosen a heterodox Communism -- support of Russia and self-definition of Jewish responsibility. The Morgen Freiheit, launched in 1922, was first thought to be the newer organ of popular Left thought and culture that the Forward should have been without the political opportunism and assimilationism of Cahan. But the choices had already been narrowed by the failure of World Revolution. And Russian-led Communism could appeal to fundamental sentiments. An element in Jewish culture denied now as before any easy acceptance of indi-


vidualistic prosperity that material advancement through

assimilation could bring; and the shadows of a cultural obliteration darkened the hopes of people who recalled the Old World simplicity and piety.

Out of these sentiments, the last great literary genre emerged. On the one hand, writers of all kinds increasingly gave their best work to depicting the "Old Days" in the homeland. One could almost believe in reading their work that the miserable

shtetls were real and American life an illusion, a chaos to rend up any coherent image for the writer's pen. On the other hand, success in America smelled of corruption, bringing spiritual unhappiness in its wake.

Abe Cahan of all people drew in his novel, The Rise of David Levinsky, a veritable archetype of his own "all rightnik" tendencies: the prospering clothes manufacturer suffers from unexplainable melancholy, and wonders if religious life might have been a better road to follow. Through the 1910's and 1920's, such literature continues. David Pinski's The Generations of Noah Edon is perhaps the ultimate statement: the children of the rich but pious Noah have no values, no character to speak of, and end their lives in horror and meaninglessness. ■



❖ YIDDISH SOCIALIST HUMOR, 1890s ❖

Heikl and Michael are two characters, Yiddish-speaking immigrants, whom Morris Winchevsky created and through whom he made some of his pointed comments on the American scene. The selections below, except for the last, appeared in various issues of the Emes (Boston) §

Heikl: Have you ever seen an honest word in an American newspaper?

Michael: See them every day.

Heikl: Namely?

Michael: The date and the price.

\*\*\*

Heikl: How much does a policeman get in America?

Michael: As much as he can take.

\*\*\*

Heikl: How come the cantor of your synagogue doesn't have a voice anymore?

Michael: Last November he sold his voice.

\*\*\*

Heikl: Where does the word "Sheeny" come from?

Michael: From Gentile mouths.

\*\*\*

Heikl: It seems in America they are always boasting of their dead heroes.

Michael: They don't have any current ones.

\*\*\*

Heikl: Who among us made the rule that a rabbi, a widower, must not remain without a wife?

Michael: The rabbis.

\*\*\*

Heikl: Everyone yells things are bad in America, still no one returns to the old country.

Michael: Fools, most of them don't have the means to return.

❖ Translation and Intro by Sid Resnick.

# "Debsian" Socialism

~Paul Buhle



The significance of Anglo-American radicalism as a facet of late nineteenth and early twentieth century American civilization remains little understood. The reasons are not hard to detect. The movement grew out of a confidence in American democracy, a faith in the Anglo-Saxon political heritage and legal traditions, and a transcendental expectation of some grander spiritual destiny for America -- ideas we have learned to mistrust down to our bones. And yet the movement touched an authentic radical chord in the American character, evoking quasi-religious and political sentiments that remain alive even today.

The cultural values and institutions of the Protestant Socialists can be viewed two ways. First in themselves, a fragment of the larger society in the throes of (unwilling ) recognition that a class system had become a finality; and second, in relation to the movements of immigrant Socialists, who continually measured the American people and American radicalism against European conditions and European Socialism.

If we break in upon the first crisis of democratic confidence, in the late 1860's, we find the extraordinary optimism that Americans can somehow bypass class conflict, linked to a supra-real vision of utter transcendence. Probably no Socialist movement elsewhere in the world could have found among its

indigenous leaders a queer Spiritualism, preaching not only the solidarity of labor and progressive forces, but of the living and the dead. What kind of radical culture could rend up such visions? Lafcadio Hearn, a favorite among radical Spiritualists, called American literature of the time fundamentally "ghostly", a term that could be applied to the radical stirrings, too. "Spiritualism...tends to save what would otherwise be cast aside as rubbish, and shows that nothing that has entered the heart or imagination of man that has not abiding relations in the spirit world...The human spirit reaches not in vain in any direction for its support and affinities", according to the Banner of



Light, which the same year proclaimed Socialist-Feminist Victoria Woodhull President of their American Spiritualist Association. Spiritualism faded along with the first English-language Socialist movement in the Reconstruction debacle and loss of reform hopes. But elements remained. Accounts of spiritual visitations can be found in the most orthodox labor-radical papers in the 1880's, and reprints from the Spritualist classics decorate the columns of the pioneer popularizing Socialist newspapers of the 1890's. Even as the faith in American greatness wavers, the weirdness remains.

When English-language Socialism came around again in the 1880's-90's, it possessed a new desperation and Protestant discipline. If the culture of Jewish Socialism law in the New Immigrant worker, the culture of Anglo Socialism resided in the eclipse of the lower class American's purported birthright to enjoy freedoms unknown to the poor elsewhere in the world. Both utopianism (the consideration of utopia as a solution in hundreds of novels, and the dozens of efforts to found colonies) and class consciousness possessed a biblical underpinning. As Darko Suvin says, the laicized pulpit style of Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward, in its time the best-seller next to Uncle Tom's Cabin, presented clear moral lessons that the guilt-ridden reader could easily appreciate. Bellamy's Fatherhood of God offered the moral authority

that an increasingly individualistic and acquisitive society obviously lacked. Anyone who suggests that this was a "middle class" message purely has to confront the testimony of hundreds of plain workers and farmers introduced to Socialism through Bellamy; that was a version of Socialism Americans could grasp.

One could artificially select out several definite elements from this mixture.

No segment argues so consistently the necessity to restrain the capitalist rapacity as the feminists who came over to Socialism. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, a favorite poet of the English-language Socialists, expressed perfectly the connection that the various grievances of reform-minded women in her opulently sentimental novel of 1896, The Ambitious Man. Her heroine writes in a book of Impressions: "There are two things about which the world at large never asks any questions, namely: How a rich man made his money, and how an erring woman came to fall. It is enough for the world to know he is rich -- that fact alone opens all doors to him, as the fact that the woman has erred, closes them to her." Could a society that so constricted women, and punished them for misdeeds it elicited, take credit for a material prosperity through which women along with the poor were increasingly subordinated to the whims of the wealthy and powerful? Many protesting women came from families with memories reaching back to Abolitionism,

the Civil War, and the other "causes" of earlier decades: they had seen the best efforts of their ancestors eroded, even reversed, in their own lifetimes. Others included schoolteachers, physicians, lawyers, and similar pioneering female professionals who shared a sense of injustice and of determination to establish their own lives

despite it. A genteel group by and large, they believed in a woman's culture transcending class lines, and sought to verify that belief through restating and broadening female prerogatives to change the direction of society.

The male equivalent of this tendency contained as much dread as expectation. Even before Populism went down, and the last agrarian restraints were thrown off advancing Capitalism, a number of outstanding radical-culture figures preached a Gospel of Doom. Ignatius Donnelly's Caesar's Column, another best-seller which remained a Socialist favorite into the second decade of the twentieth century renewed the dire predictions Ricardian Socialist-novelist George Lippard had set out as early as the 1840's: such gross wickedness could not be permitted to continue, and a Heavenly Wrath would fall upon a befouled nation. In Donnelly's scenario, the bloated Capitalists and their retainers would drive the mass of humanity down to a state of barbarism, ultimately provoking an unprecedented, all-destroying boodbath. If Donnelly's hundreds of thousands of readers did not necessarily envision

this as a likely outcome, they nonetheless felt the sting of the Republic's moral decline -- the more strongly one believed in the work of the Founding Fathers, renewed by Lincoln, the more strongly one felt that it was impossible to accept the actual outcome. This sentiment, too, had an important function in preparing the way for Socialism.

#### ◆ THE PENALTY

We are mad--grown mad in the race  
for gold.

We are drunk with the wine of gain;  
The truths our fathers proclaimed of old  
We spurn with a high disdain.  
But while the conqueror's race we run  
Our rulers should not forget  
That the God who reigned over Babylon  
Is the God who is reigning yet...

The laws of right are eternal laws,  
The judgments of truth are true;  
My greed-blind masters, I bid you pause  
And look on the work you do.

You bind with shackles your fellow  
man

Your hands with his blood are wet.  
And the God who reigned over Babylon  
Is the God who is reigning yet.

§G.A. Edgerton, in Coming Nation, 1912

The culture of American class conflict is yet another strain. One can find it in the newspapers and magazines of many craft unions, losing their control over production step-by-step and frequently impelled to the Left. The membership's love of mechanical aptitude, their sense of how their factory, mill or mine might really run without su-

pervision, underlay their protest against the destruction of a way of life. In the West, especially, they are like pioneers at the end of a trail, driven to wage-labor, now exploited in new ways by railroads and mine owners, in response bending their autodidact tradition of literature and lore toward a Socialist interpretation. In the Eastern and midwestern industrial towns, craftsmen drew close to the foreign-born Socialists, adapting the European versions of labor's destiny to their own understanding.

Eugene V. Debs, symbol for the confluence of these tendencies, united them all in sentiment. The hundreds of poems written about him, from his leadership of the Pullman Strike in 1894 to his imprisonment during the First World War and his death in the 1920's, help suggest why this was so.

❖ "MORNIN', 'GENE!"

BY WALTER HURT

When a chap has lost his grip,  
An' Fate has 'im on the hip,  
Er he's trekked the trails o' sin  
Till his feet are tangled in  
Tribbclation's toughest webs,  
What he needs is Eugene Debs  
To reorganize 'im, fer  
'Gene's the champy in comferter.  
At sich times, ef he should meet  
Debs a-comin' down the street,  
Then the clouds o' trouble roll  
From his over-shaddered soul,  
An' the skies are all serene  
As he murmurs, "Mornin', 'Gene!"

As a docter fer our grief,  
'Gene is prompt to give relief.  
An' he allus, when a pore  
Feller's spirit's worn an' sore,  
Diagnoses double-quick  
That his heart is shorely sick;

An' he has the kindest way,  
While the things that he will say  
Are the gentlest ever heard,  
An' there's healin' in each word  
As it hits the ailin' place,  
Like a dose o' savin' grace,  
Till yer pain's fergotten clean  
An' ye holler, "Mornin', 'Gene!"

When yer lips fergit to smile,  
'Gene kin fully rickoncile  
Feelin's that are torture-tost;  
All yer sorrers then are lost  
In the grasp o' that great hand  
Whose impulse we understand,  
Reached frum love's unfathomed pit—  
An' the uttermost of it.  
Fer his greetin's plant perfume  
Till a garden seems to bloom  
In Life's desert of despair,  
Spreadin' sweetness ever'where,  
An' we glimpse oases green  
While we answer, "Mornin', 'Gene!"

In the hearts of other men  
It is ALLUS mornin' when  
Debs kin cheer 'em on their way  
With a lovin' hand, an' lay  
All his hopes before their feet  
Like a path o' promise, sweet  
With the flowers o' faith an' strength  
Blossomin' along its length  
Though the journey leads 'em soon  
To life's fadin' afternoon.  
An' I hope at heaven's gate,  
Should I reach it ruther late,  
As I peep the bars between,  
Thus to greet 'im, "Mornin', 'Gene!"

§from Debs and the Poets(1925)

Again, the Christian metaphor was present -- Debs, champion of the lowly; Debs, friend of little children; Debs, the martyr whose martyrdom will redeem humankind. His incarceration in 1894 can be seen as the incident for coalescing an English-language Socialist movement, and in the poetry of the time a full-blown Socialist Sentimentalism is already evident. As he was

marched off to prison, Victor Shearer sang, "He is coming! He is coming! Like a Prisoner to his doom/ Came the toiler's friend from the partial court to the prison tomb. A beam of light/fell o'er him like a glory round the shriven/ and he walked the dusty pavement as it were a pass to heaven...." Debs showed that American labor need not be ashamed of class struggle, or of the internationalism inherent in World Socialism. His power would have been far less than it was, however, if he had done only this. A crucial shift in popular religious interpretation which took place during the nineteenth century allowed the so-called "feminization of religion" which posited Christ as a figure with definite female characteristics, too tender for man's counting-house existence, too loving for the vices of a male-dominated human society. Debs' greatest personal achievement may have been to transcend the contemporary male stereotype in so many ways

without ceasing to be "manly", a mensch. Thereby, Debs represented the future human, unafraid to take into himself the womanly virtues of nurture and continual forgiveness. In these ways, Debs managed in a fashion that no labor, Socialist, or Communist leader has approached since, to articulate a vision of future Socialism which appealed simultaneously to class hostility and human love.

The synthesis in the Socialist Party could be found in the richness of language and customs developed through its ranks

in a few short years. No single source was more responsible than the Appeal to Reason, published in Girard, Kansas, by the "One Hoss" editor, J.A. Wayland. With its homespun twang and aggressive self-publicizing, the Appeal reached as far among the Old Immigrants as the Daily Forward reached among Jews: by 1913, it had a press-run of 750,000 weekly, with 50,000 subscribers in Oklahoma alone. The Appeal published short stories and poems by the hundreds, "down home" in their crackling propaganda messade.

A study of the Appeal's "Soldier Salesman" by James R. Green elucidates the Socialist culture at its tap-roots. These hard-working propagandists were mostly from the Midwest, Southwest or West,

native-born, tending toward middle-age, and mostly artisans, unskilled workers, or small and tenant farmers. They had been converted to Socialism by the Appeal, sometimes by Looking Backward. Debs himself perfectly captured their character-type. In a polemic against prize-fighting, he disdained the city-slick "plug-hatted and patent-leather shoed" men who could enjoy brutal beatings, counterposing the Socialists "at their humble cottages with their families, reading sound literature, and studying the science of society." A stereotype, but one with an insight into the Socialism of an age.

In the East, genteel successors to Whitman, self-avowed American friends of William Morris dreamed of

# ♦ The Gospel of Cosmos

By Peter E. Burrowes



It is glinting, twinkling, crackling as if electric with energizing suggestion for its own obedience, for the making of a new nobility of deed and purpose.

2. I am greatly astonished every morning with the mystery of my enlargement. I cannot refrain from celebrating this wonder that all humanity and all other things and I are discovered to be one.

3. When you think of the age that has reared us, and of that which preceded, you must wonder with me concerning our liberation into the faith that is social, at our happy escaping from propertied ego to the human race.

4. Mayhap, also, you will discover with me the immortal fountains that lie waiting for us, ready to rise sparkling with spiritual power to our famished heartaches from the great consolings which have been vintaged in the sorrows of history.

5. Oh, New Year, you shall have tears. But in me you may dry them. Be glad, Oh, ye toilers, for the golden heathen of the mine lands will not always rage upon you. The associations of greed and corruption trampling on your unions shall fall to pieces. The life of the race is in your custody, Oh necessary men.

6. In the age of the capitalist though we are born, he is not sufficient to stand against things that are eternal. He is only great to instruct us, great to be conquered. When his lesson to man is finished he must die.

7. His might was organized to pass its burdens on to the uttermost laborers. Money and all the sacraments of society were devised to suck up success out of the exhaustions of the men below him. With that burden upon you, it is you that must first hearken to the command of the universe—organize.

8. Ye underfoot people, crushed by superstitions and the excessive extortions made of your days, you are the reserve guards of civilization, the manhood of masters, and men is turning.

9. Nevertheless, though in this necessary battle, thou shalt be at peace with all humanity; for it is the battle of peace, of righteousness without hatred, of strife for love. For you and the oppressors are one, and it is eternally predestined that you shall come together.

10. When I heard it first, this gospel of Cosmos, I thought it spoke only for a greater inanimate realm of nature, away and far remote from the affairs of us men.

11. But it came nearer, and then I knew that this thing, the man of the mind, with his histories, mythologies, creeds, emblems, arts, books, monies, governments, is verily the keyboard of creation.

12. When it came yet nearer I beheld every man to be in miniature the story of the whole. When nearer yet again, I knew that it almost intimately touched and enclosed me like a skin; that I was the soul of it. I knew man to be the brain and the eyes of our Cosmos; of Cosmos who, with his brain and his eyes, is self surveying in my pages.

13. Nothing now is too great for me; nothing, any more, is trifling or beneath my notice; all things are mine.

14. This is not for me any longer a mere contemplation. I am contemplated and carried away by the moving of things. I contemplate them and I move them. There is in and around me a great activity organized and united in all of its movements, to correct itself by that which it discontinues. I am in the swim of this Socialist faith of correction; I am in active revolt against all that hinders organization.

15. I am to translate into thinking and habit and Socialist knowledge and into all manner of fellowship the urge that is in me. It is my cry to all to be quickly united. Everything calls me to stand by the Socialist movement, to appreciate all things whatever, for union, that I can control.

16. They are all blotted out; nay, I have blotted them in, my old religions. I have rubbed them in with all the rest of me together. Since I have felt Cosmos in my bones I am big enough to hold all the religions and more that are better until I am face to face with that which has been so mightily holding me.

17. The Cosmic message which I bring you has justified and saved me by saving all things. I am my own priest and accept no revelation but the whole of it for every part, the Socialist gospel.

18. It includes my old bible, but my bible includes not the Socialist gospel; neither can any book include it, for it is the maker of them.

19. If my revelation were a book, as a book I must treat it. And I know that if men were to consider the bible as a volume objective, so great are the evils the thing has promoted, they would hastily shun it as a volume infected.

20. Neither from a pope's chair, I assure you, shall I be directed. Nothing purchased and portable rules me. I bow only in Social faith to the Cosmic message.

21. The gist of many old pagan priesthoods, of vapor pantheisms, and of academic godheads, which never could spell man nor his duty, breathes in the faith that is social and vital, the gospel of Cosmos.

22. Mother faith, who was always found timidly glancing herself in the mirrors of nature, now lingers with labor; she sits in the Socialist workshop.

23. She is the whisper of man unperturbed. The mind of all of the people to the weakest one man is she. Since the first union of minds gave birth to the thought of a god she has sought us.

24. For what is this god but the whole mind of all people who was sitting and silently waiting behind all the gods of our fancies, awaiting expression (growing wise as he waited) for the last and best of our visions of him. When the slaves have fought their last battle, when we all together are thinking.

25. One time I saw the lightning flashing out of a storm, and it lifted up from the calamity its greater pain of darkness. It was terribly, then sublimely, then mercifully majestic: a convulsion in great haste to perform its firm duty. In a swift comprehensive moment the tempest was justified to my soul, and I heard the drowning cry within me, Be sure we are not lost, the might you have witnessed is our own.

26. We only suffer for lack of light and courage, therefore I will suffer furtively until I learn to fight away my evils. Until I learn that ultimate moment of wrong doing from whence springs the resurrection of labor.

gathering a critique of American Civilization at its turning point. In the Comrade, American Socialism's first cultural magazine, one could read for instance the musings of Whitman's friend Horace Traubel, or the grandiloquent commentaries of Peter Burrowes, who had in his enthusiastic reform career converted to a dozen different religions, been a pilgrim to India, become a leading early Socialist speaker on "the Bible question", and was at his death planning a special chess game to illustrate the fate of humanity. An ideological quack? The foreign-born Socialists might have thought so.

But Burrowes, too, sums up something unique in that Socialist credo.

As the Socialist party reached the maturity of its English-language phase, around 1912, the cultural life blossomed to its fullest. Socialist Sunday schools, Socialist prayer readings, Socialist films (at least one was produced in Los Angeles, and other "labor dramas" were popularly featured in the first neighborhood movie-houses), Socialist marching bands -- these comprised a thin and diffuse stream compared with the strength of Socialism in many of the foreign-born communities, but must be considered an impressive achievement nevertheless.

In particular, the Appeal to Reason, in its prime, captured a drift toward an indigenous cultural self-consciousness:

❖ From J.A. Wayland,  
the "One Hoss Editor"

We are getting along, but where are we going? Do tell.

\*\*\*

Don't accept 5 percent if the law says you may take 10, if you want to.

\*\*\*

Work hard, get poor, talk rich, sneer at reform -- and go to the poor house.

\*\*\*

How some folks do kick against what they call "paternalism". And how few know that we have it.

\*\*\*

The patriotism of our times is the patriotism of the dollar, the patriotism of percent, the patriotism of protecting capitalists and exploiting laborers.

\*\*\*

If the Union was in jeopardy while one part was slave and one part free, it is in greater jeopardy while one part is growing richer and another part poorer.

\*\*\*

You allow bankers and railroad managers to rob you and build palaces. Would you allow post office officials to do the same? Would you rather be robbed by a banker than by a post office official?

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Its daughter publication, the Coming Nation ("Saturday Evening Post of the Left") was rich with the humor of self-confidence:



### ◆ Equal Rights

"What's parlor Socialism?"  
asked Maybelle.

"Having two callers at the  
same time, and letting each  
hold a hand," Grace explained.

### Might Stand It

"Ma, what is a plutocrat?"

"A plutocrat is a very wicked  
and naughty man who oppresses  
the poor."

"Ma, ain't you glad pa ain't  
a plutocrat?"

"Of course I am, but it still  
would be my duty as his wife  
to overlook it if he were."

### News To Them

"The rich are much happier than  
the poor."

"They would be except for one  
thing."

"What is that?"

"They don't know it."

### Foreshortened Flings

Help the blind. Hand them a  
Socialist pamphlet.

The meanest man is he who asks  
his family to live on a work-  
ingman's wage.

Inviting the workers to get  
off the earth is irony unless  
the request is accompanied  
by a present of an airship.

In every public manifestation,  
every study class, every  
Socialist magazine, similar  
lessons could be found. The  
Socialist belief in mass  
disillusionment with politi-  
cal corruption and the  
industrial-urban cruelty  
propelled them to imagine a  
moral force, rising out of  
the working class but not  
confined to that class, sweep-  
ing over the nation to save  
civilization from itself.  
Sweet faith.

From the viewpoint of  
the foreign-born, "Old" and  
"New" immigrant Socialist,  
the English-language radical  
culture could only be viewed  
with a mixture of disbelief  
and disdain. One could easily  
compile an anthology of  
essays from the German-  
American Socialist newspapers  
of the 1880's through Yiddish  
theoretical magazines in  
the 1890's to the Italian  
syndicalist press of the  
1910's bemoaning Christian  
Socialism, collaboration with  
the middle classes, and fem-  
inism. The Left-wing Social-  
ist thinker, Austin Lewis,  
made the criticism of the  
Socialist Party on the harshest  
possible grounds when he re-  
marked that, without the  
strikes of the immigrants  
to transform the movement,  
American Socialism would  
be an "uninteresting symp-  
tom of petty-bourgeois dis-  
content."

There are painful truths  
in these criticisms. But the  
flaws of Debsian Socialism  
and its culture cannot obviate  
the movement's importance.  
Frail though it might be,  
the cultural apparatus of  
the Socialist party must

be considered the nearest approach to a coherent English-language radicalism until at least the 1930's. English-speaking Socialists, at their best moments, sought to take responsibility for this civilization, something the foreign-born could scarcely do and which the Communists in the Popular Front performed more as a caricature than reality. And Socialists dug deep down into the culture to find those elements which help stem the tide of advancing Capitalism. Socialist women offer the best example of successful adaptation, because the continuity from women's earlier reform movements to Socialism was evident. Foreign-

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❖ Won't You Vote for Baby?

by J.T. Cumbie

Air: "Just Before the Battle,  
Mother."

Come, dear husband, sit down by me,  
For I've something you must hear,  
And, dear husband, you must heed  
me

As I whisper in your ear.  
Many years ago, dear husband,  
In a cottage far -- you know --  
There you promised me protection  
As the years would come and go.

Said you'd cherish and protect me  
All along life's rugged way,  
Said you'd always truly love me  
Till the close of life's last  
day.

But when baby came, dear husband,  
And had reached the age of eight,  
Then you placed him in the factory  
Where he slaves from morn till  
late.

And now election day is coming  
And our baby's pale and thin --  
Will you cast another ballot --  
Bind more chains on me and him?

You have voted for the masters,  
Who take profit from our toil.  
Won't you think of wife and baby  
When you cast your vote next  
fall?

§ Oklahoma Socialist Song-Book, 1910

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language Socialist women, with the important exception of the Finns, to a lesser extent the Ukrainians and Germans, had no such autonomous female traditions. Finally, American Socialist culture offered a "cosmic" sense lacking in the others. Tangled with theology, contemporary race theories and other such dilutions, it nevertheless possessed fragments of a step beyond Realism. English-language Socialists, for all their weaknesses, perceived that even the class struggle was but the link in a larger, stronger chain of historical events, leading toward a future as weird (from present perspective) as it might be wonderful, a flash of sunlight upon human destiny which would surely blind today's lesser humans. At the edge of their movement's collapse in World War and disillusionment, the English-language Socialists saw more clearly than others the Decline of the West ahead. Not just that new nations would rise. But that the world of the perceivable reality would be toppled. Ella Wilcox Wheeler thus inspired with the Russian Revolution wrote about her passions in a poem simply called "Communism": "And like Communists, as mad, as disloyal/My fierce emotions roam out of their lair/They hate King Reason for being royal/They would fire his castle and burn him there." The Socialists fell. But they left a legacy still worth exploring.

# The "NEW IMMIGRANTS" AND The I.W.W.

## INTRODUCTION

The massive new immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, from the early 1890s until the First World War, utterly changed the topography of the labor and Socialist movements, their way of seeing and understanding. Italians, Slavs, Ukraines, Finns, and others entered American society on different terms than the older generations, and unlike the Jews, made their political-cultural step forward essentially after 1909, when the tightened labor market, the relative solidarity of labor and the growing sense of community cohesion aided the flowering of diverse activity. These groups' sense of community strength permitted little dallying with avant-garde concepts of culture, rather suggesting a re-assertion of the German-style liberal Socialism, but in the quite different context of unskilled proletarians.

Nevertheless, their stirring boosted a visionary sense of the possible revolution by a minority of labor agitators and intellectuals. The Industrial Workers of the World, which had failed in its first efforts to gather a mass movement, took fire in the immigrant strikes and its cultural approach of absolute refusal toward bourgeois values gained new life amongst the heavily oppressed. In Greenwich Village, meanwhile, the famous Bohemian revolt around the Masses magazine stirred. For our purposes, the most fascinating element was the desire to merge avant-garde methods and free morality with the observation of mass society and the proletarian life-style.

## The Finns

—Sirkka Tuomi Lee

The cultural and political movement of the radical immigrant Finns and their children in the United States, and this movement's sustaining power for sixty years and more, is, unfortunately, not known either in the academic community or by the general population. Not until recently has there been a genuine interest shown in the history of the radicals which includes the ethnics in the United States and what they contributed to their fellow man in their endeavors.

The radical Finnish group has lasted and is still in existence due to the combination of their culture and of their political activity and is a good example of how the two activities strengthen each other as well as the people engaged in them.

To give a background to the Finns' experience in America, it is necessary to know their history, briefly, in Finland. In approximately 1100 A.D., the Swedes conquered Finland in a blood-bath introducing Christianity together with a social system that allowed only Swedish to be taught in schools and spoken by the educated classes. Finnish was henceforth a language spoken only by peasants and therefore to be shunned. In 1811, the Russians acquired Finland from Sweden by a treaty after numerous wars. Thus the Finnish people were subjected to two forms of oppression: their language and culture dominated by the Swedes and their government dominated by the Russians.

After 1830, when Professor Elias Lonnroth of Helsinki University visited the country side and compiled a long epic poem, the Kalevala, recited by Finnish "singers" in small villages, he published this gigantic hitherto unknown work, and it became popular immediately, being translated into Swedish and German as well. Longfellow read it in German and was inspired to write Hiawatha based on the meter and content. With the acknowledgement that the Finnish language was rich in poetry, sayings, and expressions, the nationalist movement spread, culminating in an official recognition of the Finnish language; books became published in Finnish; other academicians went into the hinterlands and gathered more poems; and the father of Finnish drama, Aleksis Kivi, wrote his plays

in Finnish, causing some havoc among the actors of the Helsinki National Theatre, who, although born in Finland, knew only the Swedish tongue and now had to learn Finnish.

Together with the nationalist movement among the ordinary people, there was a high literacy rate due to the state church of Finland, the Lutheran church, making it mandatory that no couples could get married unless they knew how to read Finnish, the belief being that in order to be a good Lutheran one must read the Bible and, of course, teach one's children the Christian work and concepts. What happened was that the people read other works as well, including those of socialism and nihilism.

When the Czar closed the doors of Parliament in 1905 due to a disagreement concerning suffrage for others besides property owners, the Finns entered into a successful general strike lasting one week. The Czar capitulated and granted them universal suffrage which meant that women could vote as well, a monumental achievement, considering that the only countries in the world at that time with suffrage for women were Australia and New Zealand.

It is during this period of an upsurge of nationalism, pride in the Finnish language and growing knowledge of Marxism and struggles such as the 1905 general strike, that most of the Finns who came to the United States and joined the radical move-

ment were born and growing up. They came for the most part from poor families, from sharecroppers or crofters who worked for farmers and in return were allowed to grow some produce for themselves, but being by law required to give a half of what they raised to the church, a situation that made them anti-religious the rest of their lives.

The bulk of the Finnish immigration occurred between 1900 and 1915, although Finns were already here from the 1870's.

Upon their arrival in the United States, they joined other Finns in communities throughout New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, West Virginia, Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, the Dakotas, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and later on Delaware and California, finding work in the lumber camps, fishing boats, granite quarries, the Mesabi iron ore range, copper mines, and steel mills. They were active in the labor movement and fought for the rights of the working class including women, blacks, anti-child labor, and for defense of Sacco and Vanzetti, the Scottsboro Boys, and others. The Finnish radicals included Socialists, Communists, Wobblies, cooperative and temperance groups, but the author's familiarity is more with the Socialists and Communists and can speak more about that grouping.

Where did these radical Finns meet to form this ideology of a better future for the working man? At the

Finnish halls. The halls were highly organized, purchased with money raised by hard work and the holding of continual fund raisers. Committees were formed to cover every aspect such as maintenance of the hall, building of stages, dressing rooms, kitchens, development of cultural, political and athletic events and building up of the newspapers and development of literature made available for the membership. This "hall movement" lasted for a period of sixty years at its crest and as one of the children brought up in the Finnish hall, I would like to tell you about our experiences, experiences that molded our lives.

The halls had choral societies, orchestras, bands, theatre groups, poetry societies, athletic and calisthenic groups as well as political groups. The main theme among the Finnish radicals was that although a person may be a worker, it does not mean he is not as good as a rich man, his boss, but that he must be well-read and understand why there are bosses and why there are workers and how workers are exploited. Therefore, a worker has only his mind and his body as well as his spirit, and he should develop himself so he does not become a slave and exist like one. Therefore, a worker must read and learn and develop his body and make it strong and also become cultured and understand that culture is an expression of a working person as well and it is the socialist/communist individual who is capable of understanding this because of Marxist

theories and it is his duty to encourage other workers to believe this as well.

Thus it was that at the Finnish halls the women's committee was usually assigned the task of seeing to the education of the children until the age of fifteen. One of their functions was to see that the children would be taught to read and write the Finnish language in order not to forget their heritage. For this, there were Sunday schools held during the summer months as a rule which were deliberately set on Sunday mornings in order to give the children a feeling of being part of the mainstream that attended churches during Sunday mornings. The teachers were both men and women and many books were published for children by the socialist/communist presses -- especially the Aapinen (the ABC) which had some sprinkling of simplified Marxist theory so the children could understand. There were poetry books as well and stories of heroes from all around the world, one of the most popular ones being Spartacus followed by some of the Finnish peasant heroes who led uprisings against rich landlords. Songs were taught, not only during Sunday school but also during the winter months when the children belonged to socialist clubs and later on, pioneer clubs. One of the Finns active in the chorus or perhaps the director would help teach them the music. Interspersed with the radical songs of revolution or songs of the agonies of poor people were folk songs of Finland and popular songs of that period being brought over from the old country. There would be games and folk

dances taught as well during the year, both winter and summer. These Sunday schools continued for years and years, and lasted for two generations of American-born Finns, taking them through the ages of six to sixteen. The teachers would report back to the women's committees on the progress of the children as a group, and, on occasion, a parent would be approached and urged to encourage their child to pay more attention to learning.

During the winter months, the children's clubs continued with leadership by the women. Usually, women from the cultural committees and some men as well would direct the children in skits and plays. Christmas Eve was always considered the children's special night. It was usually a program with the children playing a piano, a saxophone, or a violin (ah! those squeaky violins) and singing solos or in duos. Poems were recited in great speed to get them over fast, and occasionally a dancer would entertain, sometimes with a ballet number, sometimes tap dancing, and in earlier years an imitation of the free style of Isadora Duncan. The women's committee would give the children a little Christmas gift after the show, and they would have a gay time once the program was over, the night being theirs exclusively with smiling adults looking proudly on their young.

As a note, it might be added here that the Finnish halls were like close family groups. We children looked on each other as brothers and sisters, and were close

to each other; and we addressed all the adult women as "tati" or "auntie" and the adult men as "seta" or "uncle". We were disciplined by all the adults if we misbehaved in public, and our parents would support this discipline once they questioned us and the other adult to see if it was justified.

The children were included in every aspect of the cultural movement, and frequently were in the plays together with the adults. They helped make costumes, move scenery, and ran errands for the actors and actresses. During their participation in plays they had to read their roles and perfected their reading of Finnish. I can remember many an evening "cue-ing" my parents as they were studying their roles.

In terms of the plays, frequently they were concerned with a strike or a revolution or a physical conflict of some kind between the workers and the bosses who exploited them. On occasion a gun (blanks, of course) would be shot on the stage. As a rule, and this is a classic incident through all the Finnish halls, when an actor would take out a gun and engage in a long speech of some kind, the children who usually sat in the first two or three rows would rise as one and run pell mell to the back of the hall, the boys into the cloakroom and the girls into the ladies' room. We'd huddle on the benches with our fingers in our ears waiting for the gunshot. After the expected shot, we'd noisily run back to our seats with our elders "shh-shhing" at us and saying, "Children, be quiet!" In some five-act plays this was

done several times during the evening causing some of the elders to grab the first child they could and make the child sit beside them during the rest of the play.

May I bring in one personal experience? My parents were in plays all the time and consequently I was involved in them as well. We were giving a play where my father was to be shot and I was in the scene. He advised me during rehearsals that I should be a trooper and not spoil the show by running off the stage when the gun went off. He said I had to act the part which was that of a child who is horror-struck and cannot move. I promised I would not besmirch the family name and would stand ground.



Came the night of the show and, as expected, when the actor reached for his gun, the children dashed as one to the back of the hall. I



was ready to leap over the footlights and join the gang when I saw the expression on my father's face, an expression that contained many aspects, reaction to the gun as the part called for, admonition and warning to me as a performer, and even a dash of a beseeching look. I controlled myself, looked horror-struck (which was not difficult) and said my line and was proud of myself for weeks to come!

There were dances held at the hall, sometimes for a whole evening, and at other times a dance would be held after a play or a program. The children shared the floor with the adults as well, and performed the polkas, waltzes, mazurkas, schottisches and the Charleston or other American popular dances, learning how to dance by the time they were six years old. Sometimes, during the course of the evening, there would be a dance where the men would tap other men's shoulders, taking their women partners away from them; or other times when the women were the aggressors; and occasionally the adults would even join in dancing with the children, and it was understood that they belonged on the dance floor together with the adults.

They were also taught poetry. One of the most popular forms of culture was the poetry group that would recite poems in unison with soloists, not unlike a chorus. These epic poems could go on and on and were a form of storytelling, many times stories of how a hero led his fellow workers in an uprising, sometimes failing, sometimes winning and we children enjoyed them.

There were children's choruses as well, and in some communities, children's orchestras, depending on the strength of the hall in terms of numbers; and many a child who learned music or drama at the Finnish hall enjoyed it in public school as well, contributing their talent to the mainstream.

The radical Finnish newspapers such as the Työmies and the Eteenpäin always had a space for children's letters and later on, during the pioneer day organization, the children had their own magazine. Frequently at home, the parents would ask the children to read out-loud articles in Finnish and encourage this to keep the language as the children spoke more and more in English.

Although not a cultural event, a form that was extremely popular and tied in with the concept that a healthy body makes a healthy mind, calisthenics and gymnastics were enjoyed by both adults and children. The adults had sporting events including track and field during the summer months and often several Finnish communities within a state or neighboring states would get together for a mass sporting event. There would always be a morning devoted to participation by the children in track and calisthenics with prizes awarded to them as well as to the adults. During the winter months, the children would have a calisthenics exhibition, being led by the adult with the older children first, single-file followed by the younger ones tapering down to the six-year-

olds at the end. We would enter the hall single-file from a side door, accompanied by the orchestra playing a revolutionary march and the audience clapping in unison. We would march around the hall in twos and threes and take our positions and then perform our calisthenics. The costume for boys was usually white trousers and white shirt with red sashes around the waist; and the girls wore black bloomers (baggy black bloomers) with white middy blouses and red scarves. Oh, how proud we were!

During the summer there were picnics every week and frequently programs were held on a small dais in a field where poems were recited, songs sung, and speeches made. The children were involved in these as well. It was a practice at the halls and at the picnics to sell radical literature and sometimes the children were called upon to be in charge of a particular pamphlet to sell, and they were required to read the pamphlet before selling it. At the picnics, and also at summer camps usually held for two weeks, the tradition of the Finns in their respect for nature was nurtured. Nature walks were taken and the children were swimming by the time they were six years old. At the summer camps swimming and diving contests were held frequently. Hikes and races were encouraged as well interspersed with socialist ideals of healthy bodies and healthy minds and class struggle. There were episodes of pioneer clubs being broken up by the American Legion and other groups, most of the time with violence on their

part; and for this reason, the Finns would try to buy or rent a farm area where they would not be too close to a hostile community for their summer gatherings, festivals, and pioneer camps.

A word here about Finnish women. Although the Finnish women were more fortunate than a lot of other immigrant women in that they were more in leadership having come from a country which traditionally gave women more power such as the right to vote, they were still relegated to the kitchen at the hall with the men usually selling tickets at the door and in the cafeteria (ravintola). The women who were responsible for the education of the children participated in all the hall activities as well as on picket lines and demonstrations and in spreading the literature in the community as well as working in private homes as cooks and laundresses. They were, indeed, a bulwark in the Finnish radical movement.

Although it was difficult for the children of the radical Finns in terms of not being accepted by the average American community, they were given a sense of worth and belonging by their parents who organized all activities at the hall to encourage them to stay with the group; and the group as a whole tried to teach the children why they believed in socialism and why they believed in the rights of the working class. The children were taken to political meetings with the adults, frequently falling asleep as speech after speech went on; but there were no baby-

sitters at the time and the elders felt that the family unit should always stay together and participate in everything together. The children were frequently on picket lines together with their parents and when there was a strike or a demonstration, for instance, demanding a fair trial for Sacco and Vanzetti. The children were in the May Day parades and demonstrations. In the beginning, they were part of

the front of the parade, the idea being that the police wouldn't dare attack little children, and their mothers would be behind them followed by the men. Alas, this was found to be totally wrong, since the cops on their horses would run right through the children's lines and knock them over, beating the women and saving their best muscle to beat the men. After that, the children marched in the parades and demonstrations between their parents.

As the children grew up into young adults, many of them continued by participating at the hall, with their own children now on stage and in basketball games rather than just calisthenics. Many of the young adults during the Thirties helped organize the CIO and other unions, and quite a few went to Spain to fight fascism, many losing their lives or becoming incapacitated for life. During the Second World War, the Finnish-Americans who joined the armed services understood more what was at stake in their fight against international fascism than did the average American.

In summary, from the 1890's up to 1950, the children and grandchildren of the Finnish radicals in the United States enjoyed a training in culture, politics, and athletics that was incomparable to any other training. The organizing that took place within hundreds of Finnish communities, the time spent

by the elders in giving their children an education beyond the education they received in public school was beyond precedence in American history as far as the radicals were concerned. Unfortunately, due to the American dream of climbing the ladder, seeking wealth, and the aberrations of the McCarthy period including the deportation of the radical foreign-born, most of the children are fearful to this day, having turned away from the beliefs they were taught. Perhaps not being accepted by the American community when they were children played a large part in this. The happy note is that a great many of the grandchildren are now looking to their grandparents in trying to find out how they fought for unions and justice for themselves as workers.

What was the legacy that the radical Finns gave their children, grandchildren and America? It was a legacy rich in culture -- in appreciation of what the human spirit can accomplish under the umbrella of a group, a group that believes in socialism and also of individual responsibility. It was a legacy that culture was not for the rich only -- that workers are entitled to have beauty

around them as well as better wages and working conditions. It was, if you will, a legacy of the renaissance man with a socialist or communist base -- the ability to mentally, spiritually, and physically understand the politics of socialism and its hope for the future. This legacy which has not been acknowledged by either the academic community until fairly recently, or by the public in its institutions, will endure; and when histories are written in the future, it is important for those of us who have lived this, to record this for those future and now historians so they can let the world know what really happened.

## ❖ THE LEFT-HUMOR HERITAGE: THE MAGAZINES

As a German New Left writer pointed out several years ago, the tradition of popular caricature and humor in the Socialist movement runs deep.\* Die Wahre Jacob, published by the German Social Democracy from 1879 until forbidden under Hitler, had an enormous popularity. The mainstream humor magazines, Britain's Punch, the German Simplicimus and the American Life (not to be confused with the later magazine of the same name) also featured satirical materials, some drawn by radical artists or able iconoclasts. The American Left had mostly joke columns and occasional cartoons in newspapers and journals, especially Yiddish, until the New Immigrants planted Der Groysser Kibitzer (later, the Groysser Kundes) in 1909, a Yiddish weekly, soon joined by the Finnish Lapa-tossu, and finally in 1921, the English-language Good Morning. With a minor exception or two, nothing similar has existed in English since the 1920s.

\*Friedrich Knilli, "Der Wahre Jacob--ein linker Supermann?" in Comic Strips (n.p., Berlin?, 1969).



v. 1904



v. 1912

Lapa-Tossu, Mar. 1, 1912: Finnish-American Socialists gain respect in the community

# Ukranian Radicals and Women

—Maria Woroby

Where are you going, my Sister,  
turning away from the past?  
On a new path? Do you not know  
that only the cold of loneliness  
will be there to greet you?

Na Novyū Shliakh  
(On a New Path)

Ukrainian migration to the United States began on a massive scale in the early 1880's, peaked during the decade from 1889 to 1910 (the years 1907 and 1910 witnessed about 24,681 and 27,907 immigrants respectively) and continued on a steady but lesser scale until immigration restrictions were imposed in 1924. It is important to note that Ukrainian migration proceeded from three politically distinct geographic areas. The Ukrainian territories from which immigrants came to the United States belonged, before World War I, to the Russian Empire (Great or Eastern Ukraine), to Austria (the provinces of Galicia and Bukovina in the west) and to Hungary (Carpathio-Ukraine). The largest numerical concentration of immigrants was from the western regions of Galicia and Carpathio-Ukraine. From the years 1890 to 1910, for example, 212,000 Ukrainians or about 7% of the Ukrainian population of Galicia was permanently removed. The consensus of scholarship is that close to 500,000 Ukrainians migrated to the U.S. between 1880 and 1925, though some have put the figure as high as 700,000.

The overwhelming majority of the Ukrainian immigrants were male, usually between the ages of 16 and 44 years. According to the immigration records, 147,375 Ukrainians came to America during the peak decade of 1899 to 1910. Of this number, 74.4% were males and 25.6% females. Most Ukrainian immigrant women came as the wives, daughters and potential spouses of their male peers. Also, unmarried young women migrated as individuals to enter the American labor market, working in the textile mills, in cigar factories and domestic and personal services. Unfortunately, the numbers of such female migrants cannot be determined or approximated from immigration records.

The lines quoted above are the introduction to a poem written in 1891 by Uliana Kravchenko, a leading spokeswoman for the women's movement in the Ukraine as well as an accomplished poet and novelist. Her words challenged Ukrainian women, working women and peasant women alike, to follow a new path, the path of freedom and social, economic justice. Shortly after the poem was published it became

the unofficial hymn of the Ukrainian women who were involved in the women's movement in the Ukraine. Kravchenko's poem was continuously printed in the leading women's journals such as Zhinochōi Doli (Woman's Fate) as well as women's newspapers (Nasha Meta or Our Goal, published in Lviv) and even memorized by peasant women in their small local "self-study" groups. The echo of such words that pronounced, "words are not needed to stand up and fight nor tears, but ardent strength shall be your weapon, your armor..." reverberated to the distant shores of America, carried in the hearts of many of the women who emigrated from all parts of the Ukraine. Some of these women were feminists and socialists who brought with them the ideas and experiences of their own native movements. But most Ukrainian immigrant women were peasants and to a lesser extent urban working women, often illiterate, concerned with and bound to the duties of home and family maintenance. Their stories are many and varied and unique and each individual.

Indeed, statistics for Ukrainian or other Slavic immigration here or elsewhere are subject to error because of the way statistics were kept by the U.S. immigration authorities and the way they were maintained by the various governments of Eastern Europe prior to 1914. This is particularly evident when one observes the various names ascribed to Ukrainians (the term itself did not come into official use until 1917) such as Ruthenian, Russinyak, Rusin and Russian. Many immigrants also listed their country of origin as Austria, Poland or Russia.

Despite this confusion, Ukrainian migration occurred at a time when Ukrainian cultural and national self-consciousness was high. This was especially evident in the Western region of Galicia,

when, after the "ukase" or imperial decree of 1876, which suppressed all overt Ukrainian activities in the Russian Empire, it became the center of the Ukrainian cultural movement. This new identity had been greatly developed during the course of the nineteenth century as a result of linguistic and literary revival, economic development and the emergence of political movements based on cultural identity and affiliation. The "narodnik" or populist movement in Galicia, beginning as early as the 1850's, blossomed in the 60's and by the 1870's, political, social and cultural concerns merged in a decidedly radical socialist movement. However, it was not until 1890 that the first Ukrainian political organization, the Radical Party, was formed. The most outstanding leaders of the movement included such men and women as Ivan Franko (who in 1877 was one of the defendants in the first anti-Socialist trial in Galicia), Mychajlo Pavlyk and his sister Anna Pavlyk, Natalia Kobryns'ka and Ostap Terlec'kyi. Women's political and economic rights were championed by both sexes but never divorced from broader social and political objectives. Kobryns'ka, the venerable pioneer of the Ukrainian women's movement and fervent socialist, stressed in the first issue of Nashōi Doli (Our Fate), a women's journal which she published, that, "There is no woman's question but only the human question." A prolific writer, experienced organizer and orator, Kobryns'ka was undaunted in her conviction that women had to work collectively for the common good of all Ukrainian women both at home and abroad. Throughout the feminist literature of the period, one finds the often used slogan, "in unity there is strength" applied not only to feminist activities but in a marked social and revolutionary context as well.

Fitting into the American industrial order presented numerous hardships for Ukrainian immigrant men, women and their families. Poverty, discrimination and economic disopportunity were countered by both familiar and less familiar institutions. The Church, on the one hand; unions, fraternal organizations, and various cultural activities on the other.

Seeking employment, Ukrainian immigrants tended to settle in the urban, industrialized sectors of the United States, especially in the Eastern states of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Ohio, Michigan and Illinois. The anthracite coal mining settlements of Pennsylvania such as Shamokin, Mt. Carmel, Olyphant and Scranton employed the majority of the male immigrant population. Other areas which attracted the labor of both Ukrainian men and women were the iron and steel manufacturing industries of Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Gary. The meat-packing houses of Chicago and Omaha as well as the automobile industry of Detroit all employed thousands of Ukrainian immigrants.

Ukrainian immigrant women, as stated earlier, were employed primarily in the textile industry and in the manufacturing of such diverse products as cigars, leather goods, and clothing. Some women secured clerical positions in offices, but they were a minority compared with the women who were employed in cleaning those offices. A vivid description of the lives of Ukrainian immigrant women can be found in a work authored by a young Ukrainian marxist which was published in Galicia, in 1914. In his book, entitled Ukrains'ka Emigratsiia v Spolychenykh DerHAVE (The Ukrainian Migration to the United States), Juliam Bachynsky, who spent over ten years in America before returning to Galicia, focuses on the plight of the Ukrainian immigrant worker in his

or her new environment.

Rising before dawn, the young single woman, who lived either with relatives or friends or in a boarding house for single women, along with the married women with family responsibilities, prepared for the long day ahead. Whether in the factory sewing jackets or sorting tobacco leaves, or cleaning a stranger's house, the immigrant women put in a full day's work for a meagre wage. Working from six in the morning until seven in the evening, usually seven days a week except for a few free hours on Sunday, the Ukrainian women who found herself employed in domestic service, for example, earned anywhere from three to twenty-five dollars a month depending on her abilities. If she could cook and iron, the wages were increased. In the evening, if the woman was married, there would usually be children to be cared for and often boarders to be fed as well.

Indeed, taking in boarders was one of the most common forms of work for Ukrainian women. Boarding places were needed since many of the immigrants had left their families behind. The additional rent paid by the boarders, earned by the washing, cooking and cleaning of the immigrant woman, could mean economic survival for her family.

Though exhausted from the day's labor, many women found time to read (according to Bachynsky, romantic novels weere a favorite), attend evening reading and writing classes, as well as participate in various cultural activities within the immigrant community. Dramatic presentations, choir concerts and lectures were often organized under the auspices of concerned women who regarded these activities as vital in maintaining community cooperation and interaction, as well as providing a welcome diversion from the



monotonous work routine faced by most immigrant workers. Needless to say, the cycle was interrupted only occasionally and work remained a constant reality for the Ukrainian immigrant.

Over a relatively short period of time, Ukrainian working class activity began to take the form of organizations which challenged the capitalist system in America. It was the various Ukrainian socialist organizations which presented a vocal and committed response to the "human question" in America. Parallel to this development was the growth of the Ukrainian women's organizations, some of which were socialist in their philosophical and political outlook and whose goals were harmonious with the political, economic and social concerns of the Ukrainian community.

The Ukrainian socialist movement in America was the intellectual and political outgrowth of community formation and institutionalization among the various Ukrainian settlements in the U.S. The Ukrainian immigrant socialists reflected not only their past socialist and revolutionary heritage but also their immigrant status in America. They were committed to the maintenance of

Ukrainian culture, to the socialist organization of society's means of production and to collaboration with other nationality groups in the pursuit of common objectives. It was during the years of 1907 and 1908 that the first successful attempts were made in creating viable socialist organizations within the Ukrainian immigrant communities. The first Ukrainian socialist newspaper published in America, the Chervonyi Prapor (The Red Flag), recounted in its first issue (November 15, 1907) the activities which led to the formation of the Ukrains'ka Sotsial-Demokratychna Organizatsiia or the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Or-

ganization, the first such Ukrainian organization in America. At their first meeting in New York City, on October 4, 1907, the two hundred members present voiced their concern over promoting the socialist cause among the Ukrainian proletariat and the need to establish an organized link with the American Socialist Party. Other Socialist organizations which appeared during this period were the "Organizatsiia Ukrain's'kykh Vol'nodumstiv v Ameryki" or the Organization of Ukrainian Free-Thinkers in America, located in Salem, Massachusetts, and the Ukrains'ka Postypova Robitnycha Organizatsiia Haidamaky, known simply as the Haidamaky (untranslatable, the name symbolized the historical struggle against opposing forces) whose members were primarily Ukrainian immigrants in New York City.

At their first convention in New York City, in May, 1909, the "Free-Thinkers" changed their name to the Ukrainian Workers Party of America. Never gaining much support (only thirty delegates attended the convention), the Ukrainian Workers Party was torn by political infighting, concern over political developments in the Ukraine, and a lack of specific organizational goals. These factors prevented the Party from making any significant contributions to the Ukrainian socialist movement. The Haidamaky, on the other hand, gradually moved away from political organization to creating small fraternal benefit societies in hope of reaching more Ukrainian workers. They were quite successful in this approach and in 1910, the leadership of the Haidamaky decided to support and contribute their resources to the Ruthenian National Association, one of the largest fraternal insurance organizations at that time.

Indeed, this was the first fraternal organization to admit women as equal members, though the female members tended to form their own exclusive chapters. In

1913, at the second convention of the Ruthenian National Association, a woman (Anna Kul'chyts'ka) was elected to a position of organizational leadership concerned with the recruitment of new members. In 1914, the Association changed its name to the Ukrainian Workingmen's

Union (today it is known by yet another version, the Ukrainian Workingmen's Association) and established their headquarters in Scranton, where they began publishing the Narodna Volia (The People's Will), a daily newspaper that is still thriving today.

The Ukrainian Workingmen's Union was consistent in its support for an all-inclusive socialist organization which would unite the various independent Ukrainian socialist groups and stressed cooperation and alliance with American working class elements. Since a distinct Ukrainian socialist organization had not yet been established, many Ukrainian immigrant socialists joined, on an individual basis, either the American Socialist Party or, in the majority of cases, the Russian Socialist Federation, which was established in 1912. It was in that same year though, that a major effort was made to consolidate the Ukrainian socialist movement through the leadership of socialist organizations in Detroit and Cleveland.

The socialist organizations in both cities struggled over who would assume leadership of a national Ukrainian socialist organization. The battle continued for two years, fought on the pages of their respective newspapers, Robitnyk (The Worker), published in Detroit, and Proletar (The Proletarian), in Cleveland. Finally, due to outstanding individual leadership on the part of the Detroit socialists, especially Mykola Tar-novs'kyi, the Ukrainian Socialist Federation (USF) was established

in June of 1915 and it became formally aligned with the American Socialist Party. By May of 1916, there were 46 chapters of the USF with over 1000 members. Due to the impact of the October Revolution in Russia, membership grew and by the end of 1917, there were 70 chapters, totalling over 2000 members.

Detroit remained as the headquarters of the USF, though its organ, the Robitnyk, was published in Cleveland. In 1917, a local "Agitation Committee" was formed in that city and Hamtramck as well, to develop an intellectually oriented network of reading and study clubs throughout the Ukrainian communities in the US. Women took an active role in these committees and often formed their own.

Two exceptional women's "Agitation Committees" were established in Hamtramck and New York City. Their primary function was to organize women for collective socialist action. They conducted "consciousness-raising" sessions, women's self-study groups and were one of the leading forces in the establishment of Ukrainian Workers Schools for children. One such school, due to the efforts of Ukrainian women socialists, was set up in Harlem, in New York City, near east 100th street, in the early 1920's. Unfortunately no statistics were made available on the numbers of children attending this school, but one finds 74 pupils enrolled in the Ukrainian Workers School in Hamtramck by 1924, 40 students in Cleveland, and 25 in Minneapolis. This points out an interesting aspect of the role that women played in the Ukrainian socialist movement in America. Usually keeping to the background and rarely assuming organizational leadership positions (though the USF benefitted greatly from the organizational talents of Irene Sichyns'ski), Ukrainian women socialists showed

an inordinate ability for activity "behind the scenes." Yet, they were in the forefront when it came to organizing workers schools, establishing workers theatrical groups, singing societies, publishing and editing journals and newspapers, and creating local study groups

and libraries. The socialist women in Scranton even sponsored a school for the training of midwives, the "International College of Midwifery and Hospital," advertised in the early issues of Narodna Volia. Ukrainian socialist women were resolute in promoting women's economic, social and political interests both within the Ukrainian Socialist Federation and without.

Ukrainian women's organizational life can be said to have begun in 1897. During this year, under the auspices of the Uniate Church in Jersey City, the Sisterhood of Saint Olga was formed. Within a few years, there were chapters in Brooklyn, Yonkers, Elizabeth and Newark. The Sisterhood was not only a cultural organization sponsoring plays, dramatic readings and even dances, but also a mutual benefit society for women. With dues at twenty five cents a month, each member was eligible for benefits in time of sickness (\$2.50 per week) or \$100 in the case of death. At the 1905 convention of the Sisterhood, socialist women seized control of the organization, continuing the economic benefit structure but emphasizing the importance of allying with American women's organizations and those of other nationality groups. Their support waned in a few years, and the Sisterhood of Saint Olga, as such, dissolved.

The following years witnessed little organizational activity among immigrant Ukrainian women, until 1910, when Irene Sichyns'kyi, at the invitation of Ukrainian socialist women, emigrated to America. Sichyns'ka had a dual

mission in migrating to the U.S. Foremost, she was dedicated to advancing the material and spiritual well-being of her Ukrainian sister wherever she may live and she was deeply committed to the socialist cause. Secondly, Sichyns'ka chose to emigrate to cam-

paign for the release of her husband, Myroslaw, from a Galician prison. She was successful on both accounts, and together the Sichyns'kyis were influential in the formation of the USF, in 1915. In that same year, Irene Sichyns'kyi traveled to various Ukrainian communities promoting the creation of a Woman's Union of Socialists. Her untimely death in 1916 cut these efforts short. But though the Union never materialized, Irene Sichyns'kyi's endeavors strengthened and inspired Ukrainian women socialists throughout America.

The years spanning the decade 1910 to 1920 were golden years for Ukrainian women socialists. They were years furious with activity and organization on all levels, but usually within the scope of strictly women's organizations. There were many women who actively participated in the Ukrainian Socialist Federation but on the whole they tended to form their own separate chapters and separate societies which were dedicated to advancing the multifarious concerns of all Ukrainian women.

One of the major difficulties in researching Ukrainian women's history (or women's history in general) is the fact that most women leave no lasting records. The majority of immigrant women were illiterate and burdened with an overwhelming work schedule both at home and in the factory. Many simply felt that what they had to say was not important. It was for these women that Uliana Kravchenko and Natalia Kobryns'ka wrote for in the Ukraine and Irene Sichyns'skyi, Sofia Rusova

and others, in America. Through stories, songs and poetry, Ukrainian women, together with their working class brothers, preserved even the bitterest memories so that they might be transformed into renewed dedication. The following are a few excerpts, in translation.

❖ For My Sister Anna

Together, my sister,  
Hope and joy you are to me.  
Together, sister to the cross-  
roads  
Dear, our travels be!

Hurry sister! Hear the voices,  
The call of our people every-  
where.

From somewhere, a song lingers,  
Sad and worrisome.  
Together, my sister,  
Be to me, my only friend.  
And to work, my sister  
We will struggle for justice,  
Eternally!  
(Mukohia Bozhyk)

❖ Together Boys and Girls

Together boys and girls,  
Children of the working class are  
we.  
Misfortune tries to make us his  
own,  
Hey - there! It is time to arise!

Our bodies are weak-- our spirit  
strong,  
In spirit we are hearty and full  
of life!  
The sun we will take from the  
sky to  
Chase darkness into the past.

Hear us, brothers, throughout the  
world,  
A united force does march  
To distribute the fruits of Eden,  
Justice throughout the world,  
We will bestow!  
(Iatsko Harmatiuk)

# South Slav Socialists

~ Joseph Stipanovich

"The people shall write their own  
destiny."

Ivan Cankar (1871-1918)

In the aftermath of World War I, the success of the socialist revolution in Russia, and the anti-Bolshevik hysteria in the United States, the leaders of the battered social democratic movement among Serb, Croat, and Slovene immigrants in the United States attempted to regroup and renew their struggle to win their people to socialism. In 1920 the leaders of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation, which had been created in 1909, initiated the Izobraževanje akcija, Educational Program, which was designed to cultivate the arts in Yugoslav communities in the United States and stimulate the immigrants to think of their situation in historical context and in political terms. A central national library for books, dramas, music, and political pamphlets was organized in Chicago, choirs and musical orchestras were organized in Chicago and Cleveland, and plans were laid for a travelling repertory company to be formed. The effort was to be funded by small but regular contributions, about \$.25 per month, from individuals and the local lodges of the Yugoslav fraternal organizations who wished to avail themselves of the services offered by the program. By 1930 more than 70,000 immigrants were affiliated with the program as individuals or through their lodges.

The educational program was the creation of several minds but one Slovene, Charles Pogorelec, appears to have been its chief architect. Pogorelec had immigrated to the United States as a young boy and had gone to work in the coal mines of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company in the vicinity of Pueblo, Colorado, around 1906. Pogorelec was soon involved in union activities, found himself barred from CF & I's fields, and went to work in the smelters in Pueblo, and the Western Federation of Miners. In 1909 Pogorelec joined the Yugoslav Socialist Federation and became secretary of the Pueblo local. Pogorelec distinguished himself as an organizer and speaker in Colorado labor activities until early 1919 when he was made an organizer for the United Mine Workers in preparation for the strike of that year. Pogorelec was assigned to the Iron Range of northern Minnesota where he worked among Croat and Slovene iron miners. After the disastrous end of the strike he was offered the position of executive secretary and translator-secretary of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation by the executive committee of the organization. Pogorelec knew the immigrants well and proved to be an active and able executive secretary. The educational program which he helped develop reflected his many years of organizing experience with the immigrants and also his belief that sustained cultural as well as political and economic efforts had to be made to organize the immigrant communities.

Pogorelec was fortunate to be able to draw upon the talents of a remarkable group of Serb, Croat and Slovene socialist intellectuals who possessed remarkable skills as journalists, historians, dramatists, short story writers, poets, composers, artists, and translators. One of the most remarkable individuals in this group was Louis Adamic who began his publishing career in English with his translation of the Slovene classic Yerney's Justice, by Ivan Cankar. Adamic obtained his working copy of Cankar's novel from the library of

the educational program through the mails while working in San Pedro, California. While Adamic proved successful in his efforts in English and Slavic, most immigrant writers were most prolific in their native

tongues. Outstanding among these people was Jože Zaveržnik, a Slovene and co-founder of the class conscious Slovene National Benefit Society in 1904, the Slovene Socialist Federation in 1903, and the Yugoslav Socialist Federation in 1909, initiated the mammoth project to chronicle the history of the Slovene communities in the United States. After five years of work Ameriški Slovenci, American Slovenes, was published in 1925. In its 700 pages was to be found a history of the United States, a history of the American labor movement, the Slovene National Benefit Society, and the Slovene communities in America.

Another important figure was Ivan Molek who also was a co-founder of the Yugoslav Federation as well as the Croat-Slovene Benefit Alliance of Calumet, Michigan. Molek came to Chicago in 1916 to edit the newspaper Prosveta, Enlightenment, the official organ of the Slovene National Benefit Society. In his long career, Molek wrote hundreds of articles on history, politics, and the arts as well as more than one hundred poems. One, "The Badge of Brotherhood," "Bratstva znak", is reflective of Molek's style.

Brothers seek each other  
Throughout the entire world--  
But how are they to recognize  
each other?

Can we tell by the mark of wealth?  
Or we who see a brother in every  
man,  
Who on the chest wears the badge  
of brotherhood?

Not by the mark of wealth!  
The badge of brotherhood truly  
Does not glitter on one's fancy  
coat.

The badge of brotherhood truly  
Is in the heart, I think.



It was the fruit of that  
 early attempt  
 To find a true brotherhood to  
 their content,  
 In a world that was strange to  
 their customs and needs  
 And denied them appraisal  
 for their efforts and deeds.

May she ever grow stronger in  
 glory and fame  
 But may she these principles  
 bear ever the same.  
 In a strong link of brother-  
 hood dispel all out fears,  
 And be with us young folks  
 all through the years.

The educational program also  
 collected plays, both dramas and come-  
 dies, which could be sent out to immi-  
 grant communities so that they could  
 be produced locally or so that any  
 one of several groups could add them  
 to their repertoires. By 1932 more  
 than 180 plays, 136 original and the  
 remainder translations into Slovene,  
 had been assembled. The most success-  
 ful and popular South Slav socialist  
 theatrical group, the Croat dramatic  
 society, Naša nada, Our Hope, made  
 extensive use of the theatrical coll-  
 ections.

The description of conditions  
 in the factories and mines began with  
 the first immigrants in the 1890s,  
 but the social democrats took folk  
 descriptions and used them to build  
 self-respect in the people, to re-  
 inforce the meaning they gave to  
 their sacrifices, and accomplishments,  
 to dispel the alienation and atomiza-  
 tion that seemed to be the only guar-  
 anteed reward for industrial work,  
 and to move them to political activi-  
 ty. Among Serbs the poem "Under the  
 Earth in America," originally trans-  
 cribed by Božidar Purić in 1911 in  
 a village in Montenegro, was especial-  
 ly effective. The piece was trans-  
 lated into English by Dinko A. Toma-  
 šikin 1938 and portions are pre-  
 sented here.

God help us and Saint Sunday  
 Far away and across the world!  
 A Serb makes something out of  
 wood....

He pulls skin from a goat,  
 Some hair from the tail of a  
 horse....  
 And from this made a gusle:\*  
 Building it he invented a poem:

I pray thee, my Lord the Creator,  
 Put into my heart patriotism  
 That I may show my countrymen  
 How we lived in these lands....

Let him hear the cry of my heart:  
 When I was there in that country,  
 In the real heaven on earth,  
 I too was torn by wild desire....  
 To come here and dig gold....  
 But now I see I was mistaken....  
 I repent my deed,  
 That I left my home,  
 To crush through these mountains....  
 But again I should not blunder,  
 And talk against the country,  
 Which is among other countries  
 As a bright moon among the stars  
 In progress, justice and order....  
 To freedom it gives all,  
 To rich man and to beggar;  
 But it is cold to a Serb, my  
 brother,  
 It is strange and miserable....  
 Thou must work with all thy power  
 to learn the language.  
 This language is more hard than  
 any stone....  
 The Englishmen speaks as though  
 with a mouthful of hay;  
 Thou must bend both ears to  
 understand it....  
 But one must learn to ask for  
 a job.  
 The mine is a bad home,  
 It's worse than any jail....  
 It is full of poisoned smoke  
 and white dust,  
 But this be forgiven;  
 It's surely better to watch  
 cattle.  
 Thou are killed by darkness  
 under the earth....  
 There is no church, no priest  
 To chant for the miserable dead.

\*(single-stringed lyre--the eds)



And I will tell thee  
That I will long for gold no more,  
May I call myself no Serb  
But some kind of wild Avar,  
If I'm going to live longer like  
this.

I would rather go to hell--  
I see already the luck of miners.

And he dropped his bow.

In 1929 the educational program was given institutional form in the Prosvetna matica, Educational Society. The society was an independent bureau of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation until the latter dissolved in late 1932. The library and other materials of the society were transferred to the Slovene National Benefit Society. In 1964 the papers of the society, of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation, and the papers of several other Yugoslav immigrant organizations were deposited in the Immigration Research Center at the University of Minnesota.



If you want the omelet you must break the egg.  
—Chicago Socialist.



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### Poets and Pearls

Our poet came near landing another job today. He was walking along the street, wondering where he could raise the price of a Turkish bath, to match his cleanly raiment, when his eyes lit upon a sign: "Dishwasher wanted, Experienced."

Dear Reader, let me interrupt you while I tell you I can see the Editors' eye gleam BALEfully, as he anticipates the harrowing tale of his crack poet cracking dishes.

He will rise up in his sanctum, paw the air, and distribute hands full of hair in the wastebasket -- the mere thought of our poet entering the "field of art" -- Spasms of suppressed Emotion will shake his frame and he will utter words no Mule Skinner need be ashamed of, even though, the Editor may repent, and deny them later.

He will try to argue that a premier poet, with fine spelling and comprehensive punctuation, is frittering away his time diving for pearls, in a restaurant, when he might be making himself useful wheeling sonnets on a Construction Job.

But our poet will cite authorities to prove that former great poets have reached dizzy heights in the fertile plains of Art on the verdant pastures of science.

Robert Burns, the brilliantmost star in poesy's constellation, won greater fame as a wielder of the broom than our modest bard can hope ever to win -- washing dishes.

"Dishwasher Wanted, Exp."

Here was my opportunity for a Turkish bath. Our poet might enter the sweat box kitchen, perspire to his hide's content, and get paid for it. Wash six thousand dishes for passtime, scrub the floor, compliment the cook, and while away the rest of the day discussing relative merits of chewing gum as essence piquant added to soup, with or without celery.

All this for \$1.42 6-7 per day; and bath; and coffee and beans, and comebacks and never arrived, etc.

I entered -- in my best voice and choice words, I informed the proprietor that his anxieties, from this moment on, would be banished; that I, even I, the inimitable immaculate T-Bone Slim, had resolved to emancipate him from the drudgery of the sink; that I would undertake to bathe his superb china (in the sweet water of Lake Minnetonka, if necessary), to maintain the spotless purity of the "hot-dog" joint, Le Par Excellence -- would he kindly reveal to me the nature of the wages I would be honor'd with?

"Certainly, my friend," (I had won a friend already -- though I hadn't touched the dishes) "Certainly," he says, "we are paying ten dollars a week and we furnish all the soap and water..."

"Why damn it, man, you don't want an expert dishwasher -- what you want is a Common dishwasher" -- I had reverted back to my mother tongue.

"Are you an experienced man?" he inquired.

"Why man alive," say I, "I've cracked rock on some of the leading rock piles all over the country." (This, of course, was a lie.) Little indeed moots a lie when facing the realities of life; when a man wants a job; and a good sweat over a tank of dishes, little indeed.

"Well if that's the case," he says, "I'll give you Eleven dollars and a quarter."

"What in the name of benevolence is the quarter for?" I inquired. "Make it Eighteen dollars a week and free pie three times a day -- I'll take it."

"Goodness Gracious," he exclaimed, "Eighteen dollars a week -- that would be 77 dollars a month; 800 dollars a year. Eight hundred dollars, just think --

"With eight hundred dollars you would be able to support a family. No, no, this place cannot afford to support a family, excepting, of course, my own dear family -- leave me,"

he pleaded, "We -- we couldn't afford to let you eat any custard pie anyway. Good Day," he says, as he hit me in the eye with a fresh doughnut.

With my remaining eye

I saw that if I prolonged the "conference" he would still hang on to his money (but lose his mind) so I went (as is a custom with great poets) down to the river -- but not to drown myself.

I'll get a chance to wash dishes yet -- when the weather gets warmer...

### Conclusion

Life, it is said, is a funny proposition. But I fail to see the humor of it. And if there is any humor in it, I would be sure to recognize it -- for I have quite a rep for distinguishing the difference between the drab and the vivid...We cannot consider the business of life as an antic, a few years of clowning through the world, or as a farce that brings down the house of the future in outbursts of uproarious laughter. No, we cannot see it that way.

We see life, we feel life, as something mysteriously terrifying. We try to study it. We fear to study it. And sometimes when we are studying it we fear to step into it. We fear to put our foot into it. But thank goodness, we are not afraid to study Industrial Unionism, the breathing, living, protest of the millions against a system of wage slavery.

Although we do not know that we are slaves, although we only know that the alarm clock tells us when to wake from our sleep; although we only know that the hours are long and that the pay won't reach around; although we know only that the boss tells us that the company will do all the "sitting down" yet, we sometimes, somehow feel that we are not free.

Adam, upon a time, felt that he was naked. And a voice said, "Who told you that you're naked." So it is with us; we don't know that we are slaves -- we only feel that way. And the feeling is strongest

upon us in times of unemployment. We go from place to place blindly; asking, inquiring, if there is a job for us. We have felt that every man is against us. We have felt that every eye was on us when we got turned down. Where is the system, of such proceedings?

Yes, indeed, we have felt like slaves. No place is there a guarantee of a

job. In a large country a man might travel indefinitely before he would find work. But as serious as is the lack of system in the way civilized people attempt to live, we find that the act of asking for a job has become very "mat-



ter of fact". A man will walk into the employment office; without tears or sobs he puts the question to the unemotional employer, and upon being refused he retires gracefully out to the street -- to wear out more shoe leather.

Many a pair of high heeled dancing slippers too have been worn out this way.

What is there about work that makes it so attractive. A gang of rough-necks will trample the weaker ones to death

in their mad rush for a job. Do you call that a system, and is it the Capitalists system? Aren't you proud of it? Isn't it an elegant arrangement? So perfectly brainless; a child could invent a better one.

» Ed's Note: See Franklin Rosemont in ARSENAL #2 for a commentary on T-Bone Slim. A Finnish-American Wobbly, he was best known for his satirical songs. Rosemont has rediscovered his writings and provided this selection.

from Starving Amidst Too Much (IWW, n.d.)

### ◆ US, THE HOBOES AND DREAMERS

WE SHALL laugh to scorn your power that now holds the world in awe,  
We shall trample on your customs and shall spit upon your law;  
We shall come up from life's desert to your burdened banquet hall,  
We shall turn your wine to wormwood, your honey into gall.

We shall go where wail the children, where from your race killing mills  
Flows a bloody stream of profit to your cursed insatiate tills;  
We shall tear from your drivers in our shame and angered pride,  
With the fury and the fierceness of a fatherhood denied.

§ from Graham We shall set our sisters on you, those you trapped in your hells,  
Where the mother instinct's stifled and no earthly beauty dwells;  
We shall call them from the living death, the death in life you gave,  
To sing our class's triumph o'er your cruel system's grave.

§ We shall strip them of their epaulets, the panderers who fight  
Your wars against the workers from a bone on which to bite;  
We shall batter down your prisons, we shall set your chain-gangs free,  
We shall drive you from the mountainside, the valley, plain and the sea.

We shall hunt around the fences where your ox-men sweat and gape  
Till they stampede down your stockades in the panic to escape;  
We shall steal up through the darkness, we shall prowl to wood and  
town  
Till they waken to their power and arise and ride you down.

We shall send a message to them on a whisper down the night,  
And shall cheer the warrior women drive the ox-men to fight;  
We shall use your guile against you—all the cunning you have taught,  
All the wisdom of the serpent to attain the ending sought.

We shall come as comes the cyclone—in the stillness we shall form,  
From the calm your terror fashioned, we shall hurl on your storm;  
We shall strike when least expected, when you deem toil's rout  
complete,  
And crush you and your Hessians 'neath our brogan-shodded feet.

We shall laugh to scorn your power that now holds the world in awe,  
We shall trample on your customs, we shall spit upon your law,  
We shall outrage all your temples, we shall blaspheme all your gods,—  
We shall turn the Slave World over as a plowman turns the clods!

—Covington Hall

# The Avant - Garde

## ◆ ECONOMICS

She does not wait  
At night  
For some lover  
To count her stars  
With her or watch  
The jagged teeth  
Of the sea  
Catch a golden  
Beach-garment.  
She never saw  
A pink orchard  
With blossoms melting  
Into fruit  
Or felt a nightwind  
Tossing her  
Into the arms  
Of a hungry forest.

No.  
In the motley drippings  
Of a hot grease-world  
She waits and waits  
Upon the hungry crowd  
And serves them  
Ham and eggs and chops  
And when they go  
Her smile is measured  
By tiny stars  
And silver moons  
Lying beneath  
The sky-white plate.

I saw a shower  
Of blossoms fall  
From her orchard  
Of smiles  
When a corpulent beast  
Finished his dinner  
And left a patch of green  
Beneath the sky-white plate.

~Laura Tane, in the Industrial Pioneer, 1924§

§Note: Louis Fraina, an Italian-American slum child, became after 1910 the first theoretician of American Communism. He also edited several numbers of Martha Graham's Modern Dance magazine, from which the following selections are made.

### The Dance

The new spirit in the dance rejects mere motion and emphasizes expressional power. The dance is a dead thing unless shot through with the spirit of self-expression.

The dance is an art, not a pastime. It is an art which stands alone as an inspirational mode of self-expression, and to which all other arts are contributory. Not an isolated and dead form of amusement, but the rhythmic synthesis of instinct and feeling conveying emotional stimuli -- that is the new conception now creating a revolution in the dance. Nor is this actually a new conception, being a renaissance of the dance in its earlier forms as a spontaneous form of self-expression.

The dance is the earliest form of art because it responds spontaneously to instinct and feeling. Men and women are beings of instinct and feeling, and develop the dance as a mode of

expression adaptable to all moods and all modes of being. In this sense, the dance touches life at its source. The impulse of self-expression through instinct and feeling is universal. Instinct and feeling are at the basis of emotion, thought and action. The instincts of the individual, conditioned by the social milieu, lie at the roots of all life and all art.

The idea of the old philosophy was that thought is something apart from instinct and feeling, dominant and supreme. The old idea was that the man who subordinates his instincts and feelings to his mind was the complete man. As a matter of fact, you cannot separate feeling from thought, instinct from action. And the man who could, might become a thinking machine, but he would be dead to the world of living men and women.

A man is, and then he thinks; he feels, and therefore acts. Man has tried to make intellect the ruler, but it has been a marionette ruler with instinct and feeling pulling the strings.

Our artificial civilization crushes instinct and feeling, and any power that vitalizes them develops the vigor and beauty of the race. The dance being the highest, expressional unity of instinct and feeling, its utility is immeasurable.

The fundamentals of the dance are simple, the rhythmic movement of the

body, hands, and feet. There has been practically no change in the positions of the body since the dance developed. The change has been in the expressional meaning of the dance. Expression is the vital thing, and this is the point of contact between the dance of the ancients and the Modern Dance. All dances unite in expressional meaning.

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The ancients considered the dance a necessary part of life. The dance was not a perfunctory form of entertainment, but united its living force with their joys and sorrows, their hopes and their fears.

Primitive man is superbly utilitarian. Rhythm and poetry are purely instinctive with him. They are woven into his character and instinctively into his dances. While his dances are based upon and inspired by the movement of natural objects -- sun, moon, stars, trees, rivers and animals -- they are strictly utilitarian, as his religion is strictly utilitarian.

Primitive man indulges in dances because of an instinctive impulse toward mass action in religious ritual. This impulse is based upon the fact that primitive man's religion is primarily magic; that is, his religion does not request or pray, but demands and threatens, seeks to cajole or compel by action the receipt of the gift he craves.



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The Greeks were a free, joyous people, and their dances swayed to the spirit of the joy of life. Their dances were human dances, varied as life itself. The Muses of the dance neglected their divine habitats and mingled with men and women, loving all that was human. This vital expression of character and ideals makes the spirit of the Greek dances a source of modern inspiration.

The Romans, a military race, early developed military dances -- in harmony with the military genius which molded their art and architecture.

The dance, accordingly, draws its inspiration from life and its rhythm. The dance expresses the spirit of a people, its customs and character, its ideals and its vices. The development of the dance proceeds in measure with social and cultural development.

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It has been insistently borne into our artistic consciousness that the dance today is a revolutionary cultural factor, a real force in the advancement of a humanly esthetic and liberal civilization. The end of all life is the joy and beauty of living, and the end of all art is the diffusion of beauty and its expression. The dance pre-eminently expresses these requirements. It is a universal art; moreover, it is an art with an infinite capacity for development; it may express all moods and all feelings, the tragic

and the gay, the simple and the complex. And the dance may be equally inspiring whether expressing, through a supreme artist, the most subtle moods of the soul of man and woman, or when serving as the medium of expression for a crowd of rough, happy, boisterous peasants.

The new art of the dance has revealed to us a new religion, the religion of the marvelous beauty of the human body -- a beauty of which the world talks much, but feels little. Anyone of the many dancers admirably pictured in Arnold Genthe's The Book of the Dance is a vision of the body, supple, tense, melting, flowing; and it makes one wonder at the strange perversity of man in transforming the body into a thing of evil, to be shunned and hidden in a mass of ugly wrappings.

But the real miracle of this revelation of the human form is the realization of the spiritual beauty that may manifest itself by means of a physical body -- the appreciation of the spiritual grandeur which inheres in the physical, and that may reveal to us ourselves with all the tragedy and tears, and warm human sympathy, of supreme art.

I open Mr. Genthe's book, look at his picturizations of Isadora Duncan and her pupils -- and my memory warms with the devotional, the religious feeling that surged in me at the unforgettable performances where Isadora Duncan and her dancers interpreted the yearnings and the sorrows of humanity. Beside me a

woman sat weeping. Beyond, on the stage, in the midst of a seeming infinity of space and sound, the protagonists of the Story of Sorrow moved and danced, swayed and gestured, with all the simplicity, the majesty and the terror of what the ancients called Fate.

Simply a group of human forms, rising and falling, coalescing and melting away in measured cadences, and a vast, illimitable space -- but it gripped one and moved one with an indescribable power. Yes, it was religious; even a confirmed irreligionist like myself was compelled to admit it. The grandeur it revealed recalled the description of David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant: "Praise the Lord with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the psaltery and the harp; praise Him with the timbrel and the Dance."

But this wasn't all -- there were dances that expressed sheer beauty and joy, making one wonder why trouble and sorrow should mar a world in which such joyous beauty manifests itself. These were dances that hymned a future of wonders, and that amply visualized the high hope of Isadora Duncan: "The Dancer of the future will be one whose body and soul have

grown so harmoniously together that the natural language of the soul will have become the movement of the body...She will dance, not in the form of nymph, now fairy, nor

coquette, but in a new nakedness, no longer at war with spirituality and intelligence, but joining itself forever with this intelligence in a glorious harmony."

There is in Mr. Genthe's book no single group as interesting and symbolic as that devoted to Classic Dancers. Perhaps classic is a misnomer, unless nudity is classic alone. They reveal a beauty of form that holds one in reverent awe. Daphne is particularly entrancing; all the more so as it is not an artist's intellectual resurrection of the beauty of the Greeks, but a living, modern woman, perhaps an acquaintance of yours or mine. The beauty that was Greece is ours as well, if only we observe and appreciate. This beauty of the nude has a challenge for our age, which covers the loveliness of the human form with the linen and silk products of the machine, litters the fields of nature with ugly rails and oil-pipes, and smears the heavens with the soot of belching furnaces.

...

The Dance is to be socialized. That is the task of the new Modern Dance movement.

The trend of the times is toward a larger social consciousness, a deeper social faith and activity. The community is finding a collective artistic expression, and communal activity is becoming a vital factor in the advancement of civilization. Communal artistic endeavor, in the

form of pageants and masques, necessarily has the Dance as its basis; and community dances in themselves are becoming more and more the vogue.

This is the spirit of the new epoch in the Dance -- the spirit of fellowship, the development of the art of the Dance to express the human and individual desires and aspirations of our people.

"The modern sensual dances are opposed to the best interests of society." Has society, then, interests apart from the interests of the individual? That which promotes the individual interest promotes the social interest. The Modern Dance is an expression of modern life, and that is why the Modern Dance possesses the vitality which inspires the world. It is a favorite dodge of the reactionary to claim that new ideas "are opposed to the best interests of society".

An objection which pretends to go deeper into the subject is that the "new vulgar dances developed among the vulgar common people". And the nose of the speaker tilts in scorn: "Why, just imagine, the turkey trot developed in the Barbary Coast!" And that settles the controversy. But it doesn't. The new dances were spontaneously developed. And they were spontaneously developed because they expressed a popular aspiration. Within the last thirty years there has been a revolution in art. Art has been revitalized by the spirit of

Life. Instead of routine ideas and empty prettiness, art now aims to express life -- become a part of life.

The old dances are dead things. They expressed a social life different from ours, a society in which courtly grace and empty frippery held sway. Fifteenth and sixteenth century society, which developed the dances now dead, discouraged sincerity and self-expression. The people of that age were afraid of Life, at least in social activity. Repression and not expression was their ideal. Consider the ballet -- a nuisance in the opera. Pirouettes, jumps, and whirls, but no vigor, no contact with the reality of life -- all technique and agile gymnastics. And this is precisely the spirit of nearly all the old dances.

Then came the revolution in the dance. The ballet was transformed. The Russians infused life and energy into its technique. The Greek dance was revived. Oriental dances charmed the imagination and conveyed to the Occident that spirit of the Orient. And the revolutionized dance -- the Modern Dance -- instantly met with popular approval.

But why confine expression to the stage? Expression in art must correspond to expression in Life. Expressional art withers unless based upon expressional Life. And it was inevitable that the general public, appreciating the new stage dances, should develop a dance medium through which the public

itself could find expression. Behind the new dances there is a new social urge -- the urge of freedom, art and self-expression, all made to serve life. The Modern Dance is the highest esthetic expression of the Modern Spirit.

The trot, hesitation, and other similar dances are a popular form of the esthetic Modern Dance. In another sense, the popular form of the new American dances are a development out of "rag-time" music. The peculiar and marked rhythm in syncopated music expresses itself in the new dances in harmony with the new music.

One may condemn "rag-time", or syncopated music, but at the same time one must admit that "rag-time" is the only original American music, expressing American characteristics and individuality.

The ideas developed by the people cannot be ignored. It is the task of the artist to express and interpret these ideas, strip them of their crudity and develop them into art. Art has its roots deep in the soul of the people.

Language would degenerate if it were not for slang -- yes, slang, that much-abused art of the people. Shakespeare used slang, which is now a part of the language of the cultured. Language would die of anemia did not slang revitalize it continually.

Dant  wrote his marvelous poetry in the common idiom of the Florentines, scorning the dead Latin. And history has justified Dant . Latin is now

the sport of shallow "esthetes", while Dant 's language is that of modern Italy, one of the most melodious, felxible, and beautiful of all languages.

All human beings need art. Without art imagination withers.

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But we not only need the art of others; each of us must be a creative artist.

Art is Life vividly expressed. The artist lives and expresses his living in terms of art. The poetry of Life inspires the poetry of art. Art-forms are not art. Art is the Spirit of Life which art simply interprets. And all human beings who live intensely, who feel vividly, and who express their individuality freely in living, are artists, though they never produce a scrap of art in the conventional sense.

The dance is an elemental form of art. The Modern Dance is the only universal medium of popular art-expression.

The dance in all forms, and particularly the Modern Dance, coordinates in rhythmic and inspirational motion our instincts and impulses -- vivifies our emotions and conveys psychological and physical stimuli.

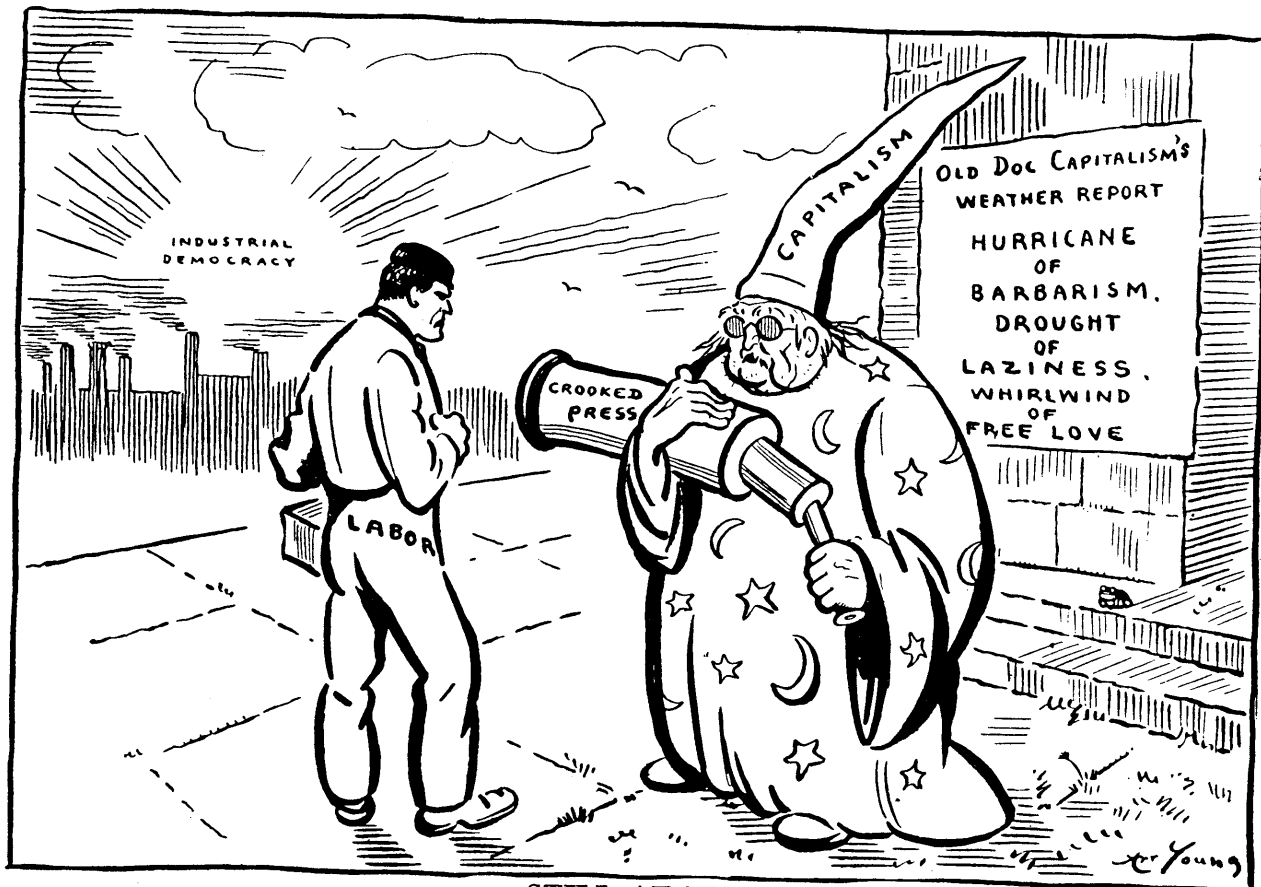
"Men and women may become artists of their own lives" through the new dances.

Selected and edited by  
Lee Baxandall

## ART YOUNG: GRAND HUMORIST

His greatness has not been measured, let alone comprehended and put to use in Socialist fashion. Learning the cartoon trade in the last great newspaper era before photographs came to dominate (see the autobiography: Art Young, His Life and Times), Young became revolutionary without ever losing his sense of humor. He drew for the radical press

from the early years of the century until the close of his life in the late 30s. What he might regard as his greatest accomplishment is not rendered here: successive illustrations with his own text of Dante, last drawn as Hell Up To Date in the 1930s. It may be noted that in each series, Hell came to represent a little more the world of today, rather than only the place that capitalists would gain their just reward.

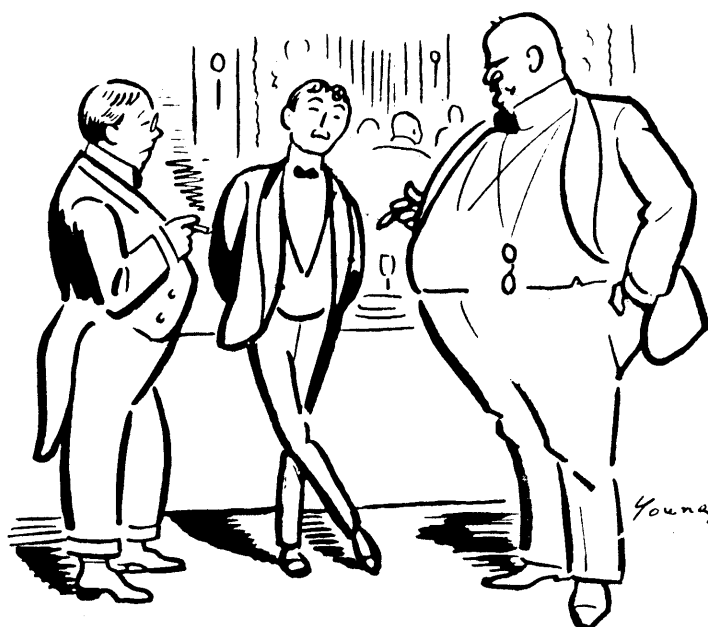


STILL AT IT!

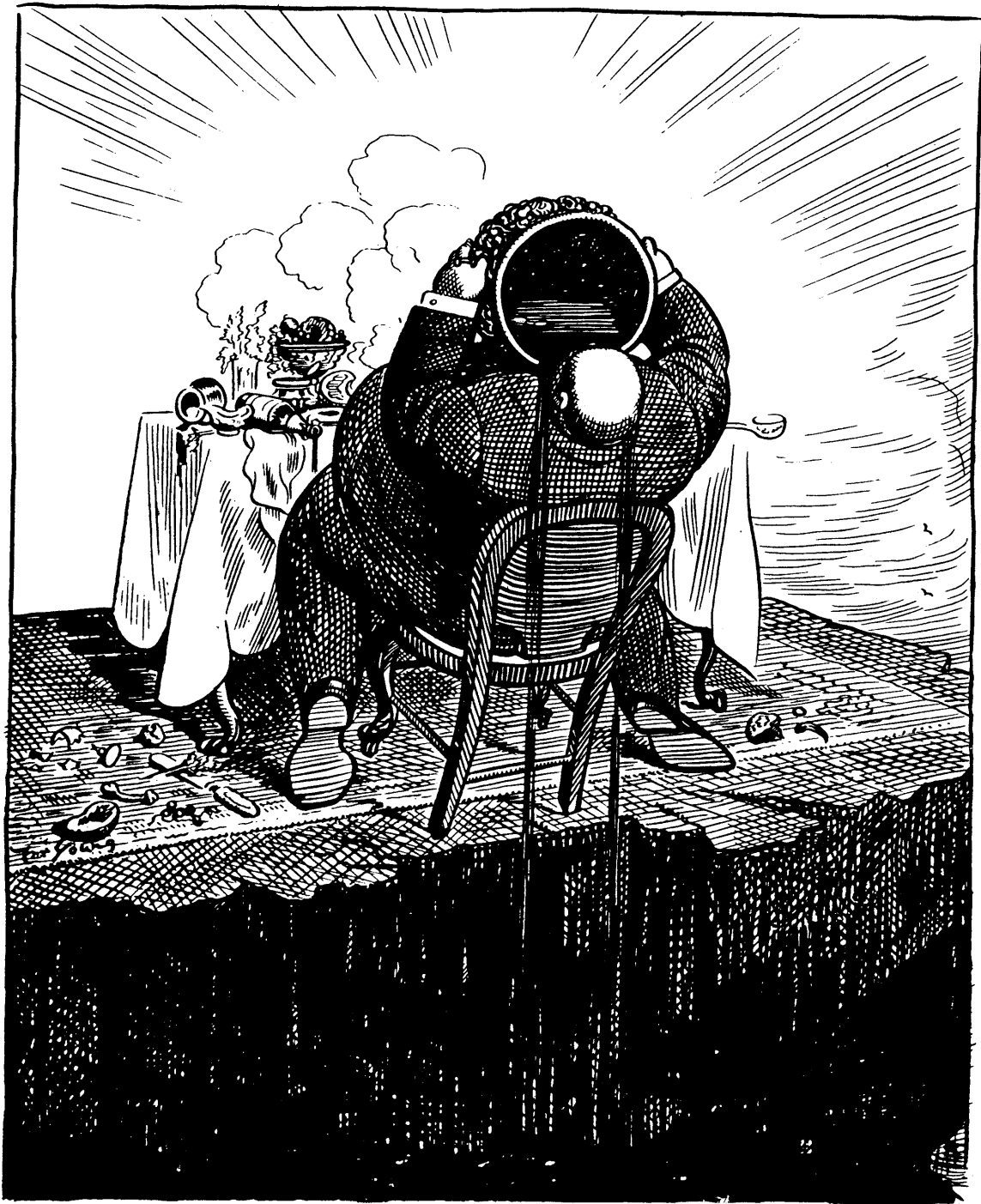
Cartoons from Good Morning §



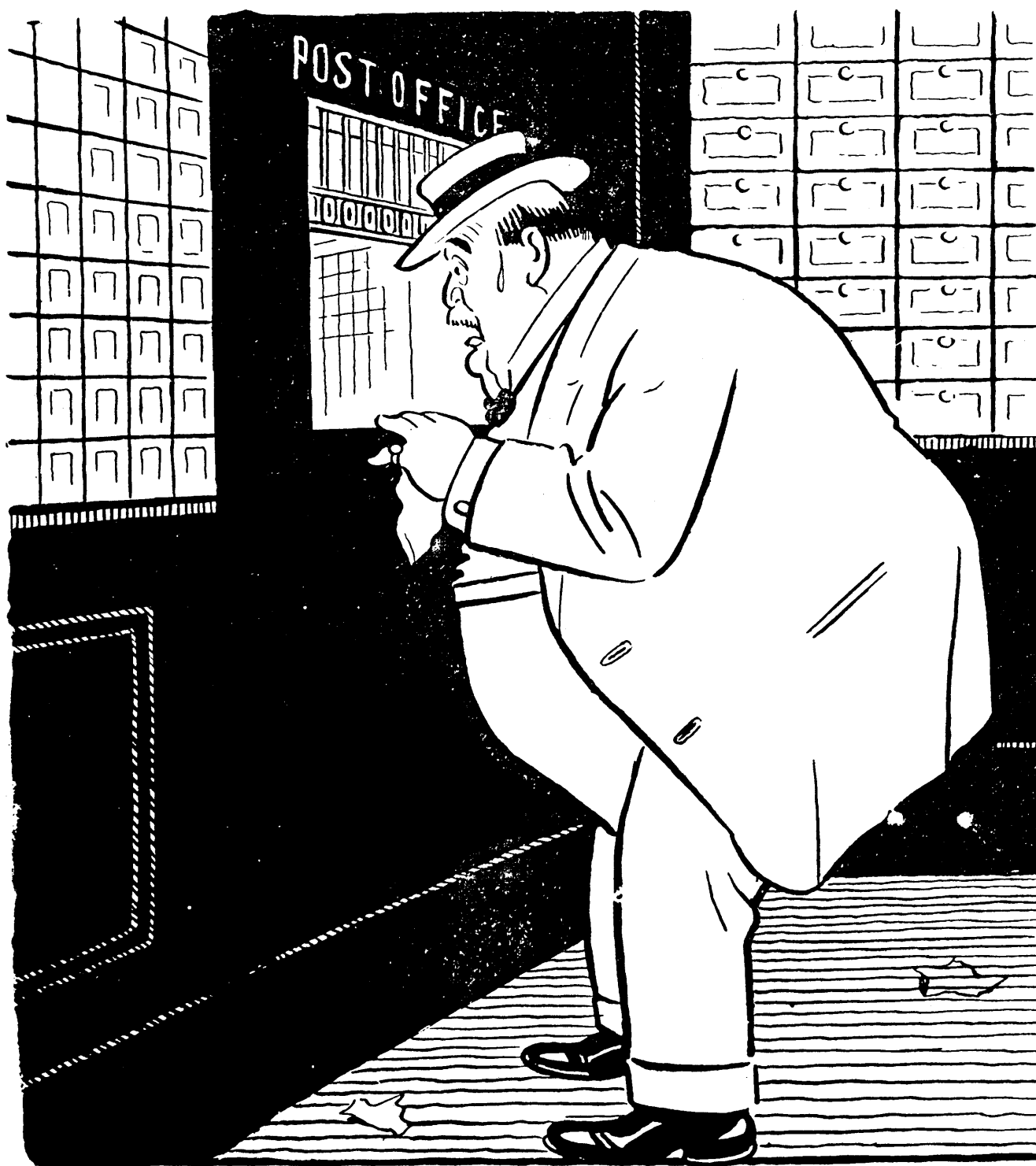
*"They're going to make slaves of the Russian People."*



OF COURSE NOT  
CAPITALIST (at the Writers' Club): *"Boys, never mix propaganda with your art."*



Capitalism: The Last Supper



*"Any Bombs for me—this morning?"*



*The New Humorous weekey*

# GOOD MORNING

MAY 8 1919

TEN CENTS



# A Story of American Communism

## Introduction

The culture of American Communism, as Socialism, had many diverse and tangled roots. Perhaps it will surprise readers to know that the first English-language organ, the Ohio Socialist, had a distinctly rural twang or that papers in such distant points as Duluth, Minnesota and Kansas City waxed eloquent with an old fashioned Socialism honest to its convictions, years before Big City, New Immigrant groups took over the show. So, too, the avant-garde had a distinct input, the Greenwich Village-based Liberator (successor to the Masses) for the time the best-known publication of the movement. In the long haul, two elements stood out: on the one hand, the bitterness of radicals toward the rightward turn in American culture at large, the nativism and consumerism that seemed to dominate public mentality; on the other hand, a cleaving to the immigrant groups that remained hungry and potentially radical, those (poor white millworkers and Blacks) who appeared outside the Consensus.

## ❖ Defecated Definitions

The enemy -- An Alarm Clock.

Alarm Clock -- A small machine made by a wage-slave for the purpose of calling slaves so they will get busy producing more for the master class.

Factory -- A modern slave-pen.

Public nuisance -- Five a.m.  
Factory Whistle.

Necessities -- Slave, Shoddy,  
and Fodder.

Luxuries -- Commodities made by slaves for the exclusive use of the master class.

Liberty -- A privilege indulged in by the master class.

Capital punishment -- Legalized murder by the state.

Pulpit -- The place where the  
piffletalkers stand while  
peddling mental chloroform  
slaves.

Church -- A monument to Ignorance.

Weather -- A condition of the  
atmosphere and the main  
topic of slave talk.

Job -- The most valuable posses-  
sion of the master class.  
They loan it to the slaves  
on shares -- one-fifth for  
the slave and four-fifths  
to the master.

Editorials -- Usually 14th cen-  
tury opinions printed in  
the plute press of the  
20th century.

A.P. News -- Piffle for Pinheads.

Hearst News -- Dubb dope.

W.E. Reynolds, §The Worker, 1922

❖ HOMESICK

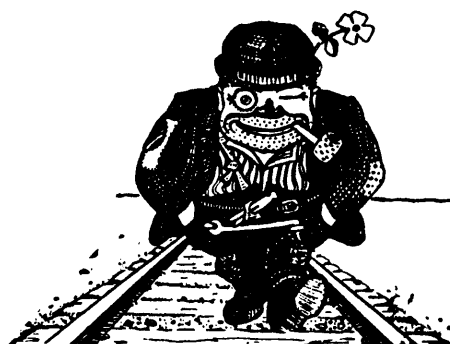
I am homesick,--  
Homesick for the home that I  
have never seen  
For the land where I shall look  
horizontally  
into the eyes of my fellows  
The land where men rise  
only to lift  
The land where equality leaves men  
free to differ as they will  
The land where freedom is breathed in  
with the air and courses  
in the food  
Where there is nothing over a man  
between him and the sky  
Where the obligations of love are  
sought for as prized and where  
they vary with the moon  
That land is my true country  
I am here by some sad cosmic mistake--  
And I am homesick.

Anonymous, in §The Truth  
(Duluth, Minn.)  
1920

❖ Communists On Jazz, 1919

The confusion, hesitan-  
cy and anarchy of this society  
as it approaches destruction  
is visibly reflected in the  
amusement world. Unable  
to cope with the vital prob-  
lems that confront the world  
today, this institution with  
the class it serves, sinks  
into idiocy. As a substi-  
tution for jingoism, in  
the amusement world we now  
have "jazz music" and "shimmy"  
dances. These barbarisms  
could only originate in a  
degenerate society. From  
the vile dens of the degen-  
erate Turks adventurous  
showmen use to secure  
"hootchie-kootchie" dancers...  
Today, however, the musical  
comedy or vaudeville perform-  
ance without its shimmying-  
jazz number appeals only  
to old women. And the  
hootchie-kootchie dance  
formerly exhibited only  
in questionable side-shows  
is now wriggled in the  
leading ball rooms of the  
nation.

Harry Wicks, "From War Plays  
To Jazz", §Communist, Aug. 16,  
1919



Self-Portrait: Editor, Punikki §  
(Finnish-American, 1920s)

# The Twenties

## The 1920's Ethnic Groups

The European events and the growing self-awareness by ethnic working-class groups in the country had created pockets of radicalism that not even overall reaction could obliterate. Jews, Finns, Hungarians, sections of Slavs, Italians (until overwhelmed by the power of Mussolini's influence from the Old Country), all had a political and cultural flowering. These blossoms were necessarily of short duration. The "Americanization" program accelerated by the U.S. government during the First World War, the effect of radio, sports, and public education on the younger generation, and the determination of the Left to "Americanize" their cadres created an inevitable drift toward assimilation. The most hopeful writers, like the most talented politicians, were constantly tempted to give up the old ways, while their readership and constituency increasingly became middle-aged. But the time limits did not render the cultural and political movements fragile. To the contrary, the bitter trek into American economic and social life had hardened these immigrants against all opposition, and given them a special sensitivity different from the Europeans they left behind, equally different from the "Americans"

who did not share their experience.

Despite all the political and cultural odds against them, immigrants in their physical and mental ghettos moved toward a decisive cultural maturation. Their community institutions had perhaps more solid financial footing than ever before, their choirs, theaters, and festival events flourished despite internecine warfare, amongst the Leftist and Socialist parties. Very quickly, the immigrants became the financial backbone of the Left and the radical labor movement, a role they were to maintain into the 1950's.

Here, translated from the Chicago Slav paper, Novi Soviet (November 25, 1926) is a typical report from the 1920's:

"The Yugoslav League, International Workers' Defense, is sponsoring a concert and dance on November 25, Thanksgiving Day in the Bohemian-American Hall...

"The program begins at 2:30 p.m. in two sections as follows:  
1) Address by Mr. Krasnic, secretary;  
2) "Spirits Awake!" by the chorus "Sloboda" from South Chicago;

4) Croatian "Kold", with music by the string orchestra "Dlub Clumacx";  
5) Russian folklore, by the Russian singing chorus; 6) The "Volga Boatman", sung by Mr. Maller; 7) Croatian songs, by Svdnimir.

"Second section: 1) ILD President Elizabeth Curley Flynn, address in English; 2) Ukranian Singing Chorus, popular songs; 3) Mrs. Maller, opera selections; 4) "Brotherhood, Liberty, and Equality" sing orchestra plays "M. Clumac"; 5) Russian song, by the Russian Chorus."

Nowhere was this so clear as in the Yiddish sector, for all the reasons cited above. Yiddish writers, as the critic Itche Goldberg says, had to pass with other Jewish immigrants through a long period of nostalgic longings for the Old World life (if not the miserable conditions that underlay it) before accepting the finality of the American experience. They then could move toward a synthesis, which showed itself strikingly in the 1920's. Meanwhile, the founding of the daily Morgen Freiheit in 1922 brought together strains of revolutionary sentiment and literary aestheticism into a new pattern. H. Leivick, Joseph Opatoshu, Isaac Raboi, and above all Moshe Nadir could

be counted among their converts. In the pages of Freiheit (circulation 50,000 at its peak) and the monthly cultural-political Der Hamer, these writers and others pursued their craft, probing here into American experiences of Jews, there into memories of the old country and commentaries upon the experiences of European Jewry, elsewhere into the development of Art and Culture.

~MOSHE NADIR:

### ◆ Where Folks Go Promenading

My longing -- beloved.

I long for you.

A land where you don't go promenading, where you don't drink wine.

A land of high mountains and flat commonplaces. The land of Pittsburgh, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Delancey Street.

The land of prairies, watermelon, the Yakahoola dance, Theodore Roosevelt, Singer Building, habeus-corpus, Coney Island, infantile-

paralysis, and breach-of-promise.

The land of Billy Sunday, the Rabbi of Toln, Bisbee-Arizona, Cary Nation, and Evelyn Nesbit.

The land where you go to take a walk, where you go to take a swim, where you go to have an evacuation, where you go out with your sweetheart.

The land which has forgotten the art of promenading.

The land of iron and steel, of money and technique, of titanic impossibilities and of professional uplift.

The land where the one who spits farthest is declared champion and is carried on the shoulders of his admirers.

The land where a  
person is valued only as  
long as he is a child, and  
loses all value as soon  
as he becomes of use to  
mankind.

A land where life is  
not consumed in the raw,  
but is boiled and sterilized  
until its raw and wholesome  
savor has evaporated.

The land which is  
denuded of adventure, stripped  
of romance, devoid of limi-  
tations.

Therefore, I sing as  
they sing on stage:

I long for home.

There they go promenading  
with religious regularity.  
There life has its limits and  
death its close ties with  
life.

There the whole town  
weeps when anyone dies or  
goes off to America, and  
there the whole town rejoices  
when anyone marries or wins  
in the lottery.

There they light the  
lantern of the house of prayer  
on the anniversary of the  
death of Rabbi Meyer, the  
Miracle-worker, and pluck  
corn in neighbor's gardens  
on the nights of penitential-  
prayer.

There it rains mud and  
it freezes with blue, trans-  
parent layers of frost.

There the flocks of  
stars are lost eternally  
in the heavens, and the  
moon moves about among  
them like a frightened shep-  
herdess, and does not herself  
know where in the world she is.

There the flowers are  
small and have no names,  
and the woods are big and  
filled with flecks of  
sunlight and running water.

There every youthful  
heart is a treasure-chest,  
and every soul a nest of  
many-colored dreams which  
issue forth from the eyes.

And love? Love is  
quiet, secret behind all  
fires, buried behind all  
stones.

And full of the color of  
blood.

Red elder-berries, red  
cherries, red goose-berries  
grow over all the fences  
and tell of love.

And the autumns come  
from behind the hills, like  
nostalgic travelers, in  
colorful dress and with gi-  
gantic pipes through which  
they blow away the winds  
in glassy rings that tinkle  
and fall and break somewhere  
beyond the mills, beyond the  
villages.

And the winters are  
fierce and old. And under  
their teeth crack the  
bones of the dead forest  
and the marble bones of the  
congealed lakes. Folks  
hear the winter gobble his  
plunder and are frightened  
even behind their white  
chimneys.

And if the sun comes  
out in broad daylight and  
sets the snow on fire with  
a bluish flame, the winter  
sees the harm he has done  
and, with regret, weeps  
down from the roof -- weeps  
real tears.

But when night gathers together her black pieces of gloom and spreads them over the town, winter forgets his regret and, again, folks hear the cracking of the

forest bones and the murderous gasping of winter as he lies on his victim, on all fours, like a crazed dog.

And in springtime, when the sky begins to smell of the fragrance of willow and the dove coos her song upon the roof and a swallow, like a black arrow, darts past the window, that's when folks begin promenading -- faithfully, earnestly, festively. Tailor-apprentices in daring caps, men in velvet hats, girls in Viennese caped-coats, and girls with white, pressed kerchiefs on their heads -- all go promenading slowly, as if not wanting to wear away the ground. So they traverse the highway to the promenade-grounds, to the lake, to the hill. And not only the folks on the highway, but the highway itself goes promenading -- along with the boys and the girls -- and sings under their feet the song of the promenade.

Summer makes everything more summery. Warm sunbrooms sweep the town. The cedars are tired and sleepy. The red cherries hang indolently on the cherry-tree and lack the energy to fall off and Hungarian pears, with little red cheeks, would like to tremble in the wind but cannot.

At such times folks wait until the sun sets and then go promenading. They

link arm in arm and their feet choose a delicate, refines way for a promenade one might take home and sleep upon -- so sweet and fresh it is.

There is nothing much to eat -- bread and honey for the youngsters, a pot of milk -- set to sour -- for the grown-ups; however, everyone goes promenading. And every step of the way is an artful step, a matter of refined science.

There life has style, and calm, and warmth of spirit, and so much free time -- folks are submerged in time. And that cleanses better than a stream, refreshes more than a lake, invigorates more than the sea.

There, when one raises his hat to a lady, he does it so thoroughly and leisurely that it is easy to read the name of the hat manufacturer and the size of the hat. To raise a hat several times and to say, "My highest respect," is a day's work.

And even the older men, Hassidim, promenade to the spring, with pitchers in their hands, and with the dream of cold water on their broad, bearded faces.

I long for the land where promenading is an art

and not a labor. I long for the lost promenades in the town where going about idly was not a matter of shame. I long for the low roofs, for the high skies, for the Jewish angularity of the hills,

for the earth of mud, and snow, and dust, which is still a lot softer than the earth of stone and iron.

I have just come from a Promenade in Central Park. People looked at me as an alien because I went promenading slowly, earnestly, and was carrying a cane.

§(from Henry Goodman, ed.,  
The New Country. Reprinted  
with permission of YKUF.)

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That this literary adaptation was no mere Communist "tactic" is amply demonstrated by the dedication of the young Left movement to the pioneers of Yiddish-American social literature. The close relationship of Morris Winchevsky to the Freiheit, and the Communists' publication of his collected writings illustrates the Left dedication to re-establish as an historical basis for the revolutionary aesthetic.

Alongside these developments grew the Communist fraternal-linked apparatus, the Yiddish shules (schools), benefit organizations, reading societies and choirs. All these had broken bitterly from the Socialist fraternal network, the Arbeiter Ring (Workmans' Circle), provoking hostilities which have never healed in the Jewish-American community. Yet the Communist organizations took new life,

gathered new followers as well as veterans, located and encouraged new talents.

Not the least were children's writers, like Chaver Paver (Gershon Einbinder) whose story follows.

How far the development of Yiddish-Communist culture in America might have reached, without the interruption of European events, would be difficult to ascertain. Unquestioned loyalty to Russia drew many adherents, but also cost the movement dearly, again and again. The reorientation of Yiddish Communists had scarcely begun when they were impelled to defend Arab pogroms of the Jews in the Middle East as "Liberation Struggles". At about the same time, the Communist Party went through the culmination of factional shake-ups and asserted an iron hand over the finances and programs of the ethnic cultural-insurance organizations. Most institutions remained intact. But the readership and non-Communist following of the Freiheit sagged, and among the major writers, only Nadir and Raboi remained with the Freiheit.

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## ◆ LOBSIK, THE DEPRESSION DOG

(Translated by Elaine Holtz)

In Brownsville, a woman puts her little dog in a basket so that he will not be able to see which way he is going. But the little dog, Lobsik, is glad that he is being taken somewhere in the basket and lies happily on his back, waving his little paws joyfully in the air.

The woman from Brownsville goes to the Sutter Avenue station of the elevated trains, throws a nickel in the turnstile and hurries up to the platform. A train is already there, waiting to rush them quickly away past roof-tops, then underground, then up again past more roof-tops, and once more underground.

As the train rushes on its way, the woman talks to the little dog in the basket. "Please, Lobsik, don't be angry with me for doing this. It is only because of the depression."

"Haugh, haugh," Lobsik barks, and tries to wriggle up to lick the tip of her nose with his tongue. The woman turns her face away from the little dog and keeps on talking. "And don't think, Lobsik, I don't love you. I love you very much. It is only because we don't have enough to eat any more. That is also why we had to send our little Emma to her aunt in Boston."

"Haugh, haugh," Lobsik answers and playfully tries to grab her finger in his teeth.

The train rushes on, up past the houses, down under the ground, and finally arrives at the Jackson Street station in the Bronx. It stops there for a minute. The woman from Brownsville gets up, lifts Lobsik out of the basket and quickly

sets him down outside on the platform, while she herself remains in the train. The doors close behind him, the train starts to move, and the little dog runs after it, barking at the top of his lungs, "Haugh, haugh, wait... wait... don't leave me, don't leave me."

But it is too late. The train is gone, and the woman from Brownsville with it. The little dog is left behind, all alone in a strange place, with just a little note hanging from his neck.

At first Lobsik thought it was a game and that someone would soon come to take him home. So he lay down in a corner and waited. He waited and he waited. The hours passed. The sun went down and night-time came; and the little dog began to cry very quietly, "Wooo, woooo..."

Every time a train full of working people would pull up to the station, the doors would open, and the people would rush out and down the stairs, without even a glance at Lobsik. Then he began to cry louder, "Whah... whah..."

Meanwhile it starts to rain and it gets very cold. Trains keep coming, people keep rushing out, but no one notices the little dog with the note suspended from his neck.

Lobsik is now very frightened, and he thinks he is going to die. This makes him feel even worse, and he begins to feel very sorry for himself. He whimpers like a little baby, "Yee... yee..."

We are going to leave Lobsik whimpering on the platform for a while and tell you about Beryl the cloakmaker.

Beryl the cloakmaker has big brown eyes that are always laughing. He also has a wife Mollie, who is an excellent cook and housekeeper. He has a son Mulik and a little daughter Rebecca. He is riding in the train, sitting next to the window and looking out. "Oh," he thinks to himself, "it is raining. But who cares, as long as there's a good supper waiting for me."

The Lexington Avenue Express pulls into the Jackson Avenue station. Beryl, the cloakmaker with the laughing eyes, gets off, and just as he is about to rush off to his home and the good supper that is waiting for him, he notices the little dog with the note tied to his neck, shivering in the cold and whimpering like a baby.

Lobsik licks Beryl's fingers as he bends down to look at the note. This pleases Beryl, and he reads the note which says, "It is the depression. My husband is not working and we don't have enough to eat. Kind people, if you are still working, please take him in. His name is Lobsik."

Beryl argues with himself. "Should I take him home with me or not? We'll have to feed him, and I'm not working much these days either. Ech... but who cares about that. I'll take him home with me anyway."

Lobsik lets Beryl wrap him in his newspaper. Lobsik knows that he has found a good kind person.

Now I'm sure I don't have to tell you how happy Rebecca and Mulik were when their father brought the little depression dog into their home. They fed him warm milk, they bathed him and dried him with a nice clean towel. Then Rebecca sang to him as she rocked him to sleep.

Sleep little Lobsik,

Sleep little depression dog.

Don't be afraid any more

We are going to chase away the depression

Sleep... sleep.

And Lobsik listened to the little girl and closed his eyes and slept.

§from Chaver Paver, Clinton Street and Other Stories (YKUF, 1974), reprinted by permission

And yet, for all its faults, the Left had wrought a remarkable transformation of Yiddish culture into American revolutionary sentiment. In the document following, Peggy Dennis gives us a priceless glimpse of how Jews outside the New York City milieu might recreate a radical culture climate around themselves:

◆ Memories from the 'Twenties

Not until I was specifically asked the question a few weeks ago did I realize that yes, radical culture in its broadest sense had been a major influence in my first exposures as a child to the revolutionary movement. And the use of cultural forms remained an important media through which that radical commitment worked throughout my growing up years.

Born into a highly insulated counter-culture of a large Socialist family, my first conscious awareness of these things I believed in came to me through the Yiddish language and literature that dominated my early years in Los Angeles.

First, there was the large glass-doored bookcase filled with the treasured bound volumes of Yiddish poets and writers Mama and Papa loved so passionately. Second, there was the socialist daily newspaper Forvets (Forward) and later the communist daily paper

Freiheit (Freedom). Each evening after supper and after a day's work either in the needletrades factor downtown or in the small neighborhood cleaning and pressing shop they operated periodically, Papa read aloud to Mama. First the newspaper was read thoroughly, every word, and then one of the books was taken down from its shelf.

At age four I became a weekly feature at the socialist club meetings of the Jewish emigres. Hoisted upon a table, I recited one of the Yiddish poems (about a worker who never saw his children because he worked from sun-up to sun-down; about the horrors of war; about child laborers in factories wanting to see a bird in the sky). To these visionaries who listened with tears in their eyes, the Yiddish was incidental to the socialist content but it was the only form they knew.

At six, my radical education shifted to the English-speaking world. Enrolled in the Socialist Party's weekly Sunday school, my horizons widened as we sang revolutionary songs and played games where familiar "Tag" and "Tug-of-war" were given "worker versus boss" interpretation. I recall some big program we put on for the adults in which we younger children were tiny flower buds waiting on the vine until the Red Dancer entered, pirouetting around us as a boy with a big Sun mask appeared and we tender flowers burst through our cardboard pots to dance towards the Sun of tomorrow.

With the organizational consolidation of the split between the Socialist and Communist parties, at 13 I joined the Young Pioneers, the children's movement of the Communist Party. For the next three years, dressed in the brilliant red embroidered over-blouse of the Russians, I recited frequently at radical gatherings. The selections now were from The Masses magazine rather than Papa's Yiddish books (I recall one very long epic poem about Peg-leg Johnson relating his struggles in the mines, the efforts to organize, the loss of his leg, and his cry, "A Great Deed Is Needed"; I recall, too, reciting with my sobs echoing those of the audience, Ralph Chapman's "Mourn Not the Dead", at the memorial meeting for Lenin in 1924). Interspersed with these dramatic readings, I gave fiery speeches urging organizing the children to carry on the torch of Revolution and Freedom.

At 16 in 1925 I graduated from the children's movement into the Young Communist League and simultaneously into the Communist Party. My main assignment as a young adult was that of being one of five YCL leaders of the children's organizations. With a year we had some 300 children in the Los Angeles area, organized according to ages 7-15, in groups that met weekly. Songs, games, drama, dance were the sole media through which most of our radical education was transmitted. Devotion to the little Red

Song Book, which every child owned, preceded by some forty years the fanatic devotion evoked by the little red book of the Sayings of Chairman Mao. Those songs and the discussions we stimulated around them expanded the children's horizons as they had mine a few years earlier. The struggles of miners and textile workers, of Wobbly jailbirds in far-away places -- all became part of the child in L.A.'s Jewish Boyle Heights. The "Internationale", the songs of the Italian, German, Russian movements -- these made us part of a worldwide movement and the single barricade of battle. When we rode in open trucks to join the I.W.W. longshore strikers in San Pedro, the port town 20 miles away, our song "Hold the Fort, for We Are Coming, Union Men Be Strong" was our armour.

Once a year, to celebrate each anniversary of our growing children's movement, we put on an elaborate event consisting of original song, ballet, drama and, one year, even original opera -- new words set to the known Red Book songs. Every child, regardless of age, was involved in one number or another. I wrote plays and skits; my sister (Mini Carson Boc, who went on to become a fiery

strike leader, union organizer, and Communist woman activist) wrote the songs and opera. Everything was quite simple in symbolism but quite intricate in effort. One of my most dramatic "successes" (later published in the national Daily Worker in story form) was the conflict between a father -- a striking

miner, and his son, an 18 year old recruit into the National Guard called out to break the strike. Enter the last minute the red-bloused YCL group with their leaflets and their call to "down guns." Lesson, of course -- "Organize the Youth!"

Our adult audience cried and cheered in the right places and we were all exhilarated. My sister's operetta carried the story of a child's development through the various stages and conditions of exploitation and brainwash propaganda -- a highly complex production in scenery, ballet, acting, original song, pathos, and, of course, inevitable victory. Even now, some fifty years later, as I meet persons not seen for years, I realize that not one of the many hundreds of children who went through our Young Pioneer movement in the 1920's in California remained unaffected by that experience.

Into the beginning 1930's and beyond, the YCL reduced its own cultural activities, becoming more and more a straightforward youth replica of the economic-political activities of the Communist Party. The direct, more simplistic fusion of the cultural into the political organization disappeared, at least in my experience. Cultural activities became a separate organization, centered around the New Masses magazine and the John Reed Clubs. These participated in the political organizations as a separate sector. For better or worse, I don't know.

~Peggy Dennis

# From PRISON POEMS

## I

THE windows are barred,  
And frozen the walls;  
Feebly the light  
Of the doorlamp falls.

Under a cover  
Of gray I lie;  
A point on the wall  
Has fastened my eye.

I am far from myself,  
Forget all I know;  
Who knows? perhaps I  
Was freed long ago.

And maybe I died,  
And dutifully  
The doorlamp was lit  
In my memory.

## II

Dry are the tears,  
And laughter is bleak;  
The good and the bad  
Are equally weak.

Our bodies are beaten  
With iron bands,  
And he who is fearful  
Licks the guard's hands.

We all are shadows  
In the house of dead pains.  
Does the silence scare you?  
Then rattle your chains!

~H. Leivick

English version by A. B. Magill

from Graham

# Popular Front Culture

## ➤ Introduction

The complexities of 1930s Left-Culture are too extensive to be seriously documented, let alone analyzed in these pages. But the main features are apparent enough. A literal (and often sectarian) policy of the early 1930s pitted "class against class," as if the Revolution were days away. Less because of Communist policies than because of the inspiration a revolutionary prospect offered, writers, dramatists, and other creative artists along with workers and intellectuals threw themselves into hectic labors. By the mid-1930s these activities had matured, and the sectarian aspects of the movement had eased. Union theatre, sports, literature and much more flourished. Popular Front policies both accelerated and undercut many of the advances. The recognition of national sentiments as legitimate allowed a growing self-consciousness of Eastern and Southern Europeans in particular to take a socialistic content, while the liberalization of political guidelines permitted the flourishing of a different culture -- baseball and swing music are perhaps the high points -- in the younger generation of radicals. At the same time, what has been called "yankee doodle Americanism," the hesitancy of the Popular Front to maintain a principled class orientation, tended to blur the revolutionary intent of earlier days. And a bureaucratic conservatism -- about form even more than the content of creative work -- remained to limit or stifle many of the best efforts, to forbid open experimentation in many fields, especially those whose contrary tendencies (e.g., Surrealism) had taken a political stand.

Here we focus on sports and the fraternal societies to the exclusion of other subjects -- mostly because of space limitations. But these tell the story of "Americanism," in its best sense, quite adequately.

### Communists on Sport, 1930

Another Harry Wills from among the Negroes is coming up to the front among the heavyweights who is known as "Black Hope" and whose name is Big Bill Hartwell...

The reason he is called "Black Hope" is because the Negro bourgeoisie is "still" having hopes to see a Negro the world heavyweight champion. Not a bad idea, but the trouble is this "hope" is helping to create the illusion among the Negro masses that sport in our system of society is pure and gives everyone a chance in spite of the fact that past experiences have proven that sport in general and boxing in particular is used by the bosses to further the practice of segregation, discrimination and Jim Crowism among the Negro masses... The Negro athlete in general and the boxers in particular would do well to draw lessons from their past experiences by organizing themselves in a real fighting sport organization that stands on the principle of race equality, as the Labor Sports Union...

§ Young Worker, January, 1930

The Eastern District Labor Sports Union will open on January 15th a three months' physical training and club leadership school. Classes will be held on Monday and Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. The subjects to be taught are: Physical education, calisthenics, gymnastics, athletic games, boxing, water sports, theory of physical education--two hours each session. Hygiene, anatomy and physiology, 12 lectures, one hour each. Administration and club leadership, the history of workers' athletics, workers' defense, 12 lectures. Public speaking, elements of the class struggle, etc.

§ Daily Worker  
Jan 5, 1930

Sports and the Left, excerpts from a discussion

» A.B. Magil -- In 1928, when I was a young staff member of the Worker, and the paper decided to appeal to the unfortunate interest of some of its readers in the World Series, I was made Sports Editor. I wouldn't think of using my real name, so I called myself something like "Hy Johnson". I wrote daily stories on the World Series, not, of course, attending the games. I was sitting at my desk and reading the UP ticker. A scoreboard was put out in front of the building, with the latest results. A Black fellow would go out on the window ledge and he would broadcast the play-by-play from the UP ticker, and in between innings he would broadcast slogans, like "Down With American Imperialism" and "Vote For Foster and Ford".

There were a few people outside...Also, that year I wrote an article or two exposing "Capitalist baseball".

When the paper moved to New York in 1927, there were a few "Young Turks" like myself, who began to work for it, and were very sensitive that it was unreadable. Much could be said in criticism of our conception, but I think it could be said that we exerted a positive influence...

Max Gordon -- I happen to be the first guy who wrote a Sports Column for the Daily Worker. I had been sports editor of the Young Worker in the early 1930's, and the guy who presided over the liquidation of the Labor Sports Union. When I started to write a column for the Daily Worker on sports in '32 or '33, there was a great deal of resistance. The resistance came actually from the constituency; it was not until the Popular Front period that it was possible to expand the sports section and break through that resistance. We had taken over the profound sectarianism of the German Social Democratic movement, to the extent that if you played the YMCA team, you were opportunists and revisionists, because it was a bourgeois team. So you only played among yourselves. There was one exception: you were permitted to play Black teams. Even here ideology had an effect. We had a national basketball championship when I was secretary of

the Sports Union, a Brooklyn Finnish team and a Harlem team were the two finalists. I was umpire of the game. Before the game started, a YCL leader came up to me and said, "Remember, Mac, you're a Communist before you're a sports fan."

As far as the paper was concerned, there was a constant struggle between those who wanted -- especially from the '42 period on -- to introduce new features, and those who resisted. There was also another kind of struggle. We couldn't put out a better product because we were resisted by certain elements, even in moments of greatest political popularity. The conflict is between remaining a narrow party dedicated to a particular line, as against an effort to broaden out, which necessarily meant to dilute the forms of your approach to reach the bored sections of the population who didn't think like you.

» Ed's Note: this is reproduced, with permission of the speakers, from a taped discussion in New York City, Spring, 1977.

### ✠ "What We Are Thankful For" ✠

Speaking for the whole sports staff, I'd like to loudly proclaim our thanks for:

Our readers. And that's not the old hooey. If the sports page of the Daily Worker has attained any value, and significance, it is due almost completely to the warm guidance, friendly criticism and support of our readers, the like of which is unknown to the capitalist sports page. Whenever we from our closeness to the situation, have become muddled or temporarily confused, we have gone to our readers, and found out what

they needed.

As a working class sports page embarking on more or less of a new path, we wish to express our thanks to those figures in the world of sports who have cooperated so heartily on so many occasions. People like Red Rolfe, third baseman of the New York Yankees, who took time out after every day's World Series battle to write his exclusive story for the Daily Worker; for Al Douglas of the Rockland Palace, who turned over that arena for boxing bouts for the benefit of the Scottsboro boys; the Brooklyn Hispanos and other soccer teams who played "Games for Spain" last year and netted over \$7000 for the defenders of democracy; Jack Dempsey, who on so many occasions, has taken a decisive stand on the side of progress (Abraham Lincoln Battalion,

dinner Sunday for the Brooklyn Eagle strikers, etc.); Howard Day of the Brown Bombers for playing that game for the Expansion Fund, and too many others to mention.

We are also thankful for Joe DiMaggio, on more than one count. Not only because he thrills us as the coming ball player of the generation, but for the guts he displayed in stating that Satchell Paige, Negro Star, was the greatest pitcher he ever batted against (yes, it takes guts in the face of hostile magnates).

For manager Joe McCarthy, manager of the champs who, with eleven of his players endorsed the Eagle strike and refused to be interviewed by scabs--who allowed DiMaggio to race down to Brooklyn an hour before a double header to thrill a bunch of kids in the International Workers Order softball tournament by throwing out the first ball....

For Casey Stengel and Burleigh Grimes, ex and present

managers of the Brooklyn Dodgers for their unequivocal support of the Eagle strikers (Casey contributed on the QT)....

We're also thankful for the new life that's been put into the boxing game by such clean-cut battlers as Joe Louis, Henry Armstrong, Lou Ambers, Pedro Montanez, Sixto Escobar, Barney Ross, John Henry Lewis and Fred Steele...

Thankful that a swell guy like Charley Gehringer got the most valuable player award after years of being overlooked because of his lack of "color." \*I don't think Di Mag minded the award going to Charley. Joe has at least ten years ahead of him and Charles is about thru. Don't forget that baseball has been Gehringer's life business and it really means something to him to be recognized....

Lester Rodney  
§Daily Worker  
Dec 25 1937

(\*that is, not being an "exciting" player--the eds)

~~~~~  
✻ "Baseball"

It happens that the vast majority of American workers, farmers and middle class people are not yet Socialists or Communists. You see what a drop this gives such as this [stuffy Communist] woman over the rest of the population. She may meet great inventors, poets, scientists, heroes, but the fact that they haven't heard of Marx also gives her a thrill of superiority.

Such people, of course, are only a parasite on the movement. They contribute nothing to the movement but only harm it. They drive people away. They haven't learned the first kindergarten lesson in Marxism, which teaches us exactly why the masses of every nation under capitalism are kept in ignorance....

Recently, in the Daily Worker, there appeared a symposium of the readers on the question as to whether the "Daily" ought to carry a sporting page. The letters voting "aye" seemed to be in the majority.

The point is, the arguments of those who voted "no." Many of them seemed to think that with the N.R.A. breaking up and with strikes sweeping the country, and war and fascism on the horizon, it was a waste of time and valuable space to discuss baseball.

Snobbism again! You see in the circles in which these comrades move, they never meet anybody who is interested in baseball. It happens, however, that baseball is the national American game. I would say that nine out of every ten American workers follow it intensely, as well as other sports.

You can condemn them for it, if you are built that way, and you can call baseball a form of bourgeois opium for the masses. But that doesn't get around the fact that they, I mean the vast ocean of Americans of whom we are but as yet a minority, adore baseball. What are we going to do, insist that they give up this taste? Are we going to maintain our isolation, and make Americans stop their baseball before we will condescend to explain Communism to them?

What folly! What a complete misunderstanding of the human material we must work with, the human material that forms the ranks of the workers' movement. It is precisely in a world of war, fascism and unemployment that one needs baseball and sport. The American soldiers in the trenches of the last war found relief in playing baseball and football, and in boxing matches. In the trenches of the class war, sport



is just as necessary for one's sanity.

When you run the news of a strike alongside the news of a baseball game you are making American workers feel at home. It gives them the feeling that Communism is nothing strange and foreign, but as real as baseball.

Besides, what's wrong with baseball? Some of the people who object to it have other hobbies. I know probably chess, or tea drinking and conversation in cafeterias, or beating their wives. But they don't care for baseball, and to hell with anybody who hasn't their tastes: he isn't a Communist!

Let's loosen up. Let's begin to prove that one can be a human being as well as a Communist. It isn't a little special sect of bookworms. Communism is a movement as broad as life itself. And to quote Lenin again, "in a big house one can find a use for everything, even the smallest piece of string."

§Mike Gold's column,  
"Change the World"  
Daily Worker Aug 31, 1935

### ✻ "Each a Symbol"

...Joe's from the sun-filled fields of Alabama, the state of the Scottsboro case; Schmelling's from Hitler's Germany. Alabama's tough on Negro and white workers and Joe and his family left there years ago. Germany's tough on all workers, Jews and women, but Schmelling, a good Nazi, likes it and returns there as fast as he can soon after each fight.

In the popular mind the two men have been made to typify and symbolize much more than just two prizefighters. Max Schmelling gave to the newspapers one of the most

unsportsmanlike statements ever issued from a fighter's training camp. He claimed that it would be easy for him to whip Joe because (1) Joe's a Negro and Negroes never forget beatings, (2) Joe's afraid of him and (3) he will enter the ring with a "psychological edge" over the Negro....

No great issue, of course, will be settled, no matter who wins; but Joe's winning with a hundred thousand eyes watching and millions of ears listening will be bolstering to many a sagging ideal among 12,000,000 Negroes whose lives have long been misrepresented and vilified in America.

Visits to Joe's training camp at Pompton Lakes reveal throngs of curious standing around for hours in a state of deep awe, waiting for just one glimpse of the champion. They were good, simple people and when the champion appeared a hush fell upon them and they stared.

They were working people wanting terribly for something to feel deeply about; something to be loyal to; and a prizefighter such as Joe Louis, young, clean, sportsmanlike, is comprehensible. They can take him into their lives because he is an idol and occupies in the public's mind a place such as they never can.

Many people will deplore the wild elation of millions over a prizefight; but against the background of deadening cynicism, indifference and money-grubbing such wholesome enthusiasm is bracing. It signifies, if nothing else, that there lies in the simple heart of the masses of the people a great capacity for loyalty, devotion and exultation, all of which can be channelized toward meaningful and historic ends.

Under all the excitement it is well to remember that the majority of all prizefighters come from the heart of the working class; their capacity to fight stemming from an early life of hard work in steel and iron foundries, coal mines, factories and fields.

§Richard Wright  
Daily Worker  
June 22, 1938

---

✚ And oh -- Where Were  
Hitler's Pagan Gods?

**Time:** When fascist Hitler and his world allies of repression are trying to conquer all mankind by force of arms and intimidation.

**Scene:** An oval sea of faces of all races, criss-crossed by powerful floodlights, and centered about a snow-white squared circle.

**Place:** New York City, where a foul nest of Nazi spies has just been routed.

**Characters:** Joe Louis, Negro Boxing Champion, once defeated by Schmeling, and who is circumscribed because of his color as to where he must eat and live despite his success in the ring; and Max Schmeling, friend of Hitler, who believes that his mere "white" presence is enough to throw fear into the heart of a Negro.

Quick as a panther, Joe was out from his corner with the sound of the bell. There was a brief lull during which each fighter looked the other over; it was here that it seemed the entire fight hung in the balance. But if there was

any doubt which way the battle was going, it was dispelled when Joe shot two straight left jabs to Schmeling's chin and followed them with a blunt, vicious left hook that must have jarred Hitler's Charlie Chaplin moustache, if only slightly, in faraway Fascist Germany.

Schmeling must have thought he was facing one of the Soviet Union's newest army tanks, for he backed away with amazement showing all over his face. But Joe was razor-edged and mad; he followed his challenger. Maybe he was thinking of those countless jibes and taunts let loose upon him for having let a man like this once beat him. He let fly a shower of fistic destruction, included in which was a nerve-shattering right to Schmeling's chin.

Then Joe leaped back just in time to avoid an over-hand right, which just grazed his jaw. It was the only real blow Schmeling threw during the fight; the Nazi must have thought Joe was afraid of him, because he advanced for the first time in the fight, only to take one of Joe's left chops on his chin.

Again Joe's fist bounced twice of Schmeling's face, and still another right found the fascist chin. Maybe Hitler's Aryan Gods saved Schmeling from the next whizzing left hook, but all the pagan gods of Dr. Goebbels could not have saved him from the next left

hook, which staggered Schmeling and rocked his very senses.

Hitler's wilted pet looked like a soft piece of molasses candy left out in the sun; he drooped over the ropes, his eyes glassy, his chin nestling in a strand of rope, his face blank and senseless and his widely heralded powerful arm hanging ironically useless.

It was the shortest and most lop-sided heavyweight bout on record, two minutes and four seconds of the first round, and it left no doubt in anybody's mind as to the caliber of the fighter who won. There was a lot of cheering when Joe's hand was hoisted in victory, but there was a lot of stunned silence too; silence stemming not from a lack of respect for Joe, but from inability to grasp the fistic and political significance of what had happened so quickly.

#### Harlem Responds

But if the spectators did not respond quickly, Harlem did. The quarter of a million Negroes who live within these narrow confines knew in terms of their daily American life what this fight meant and they gave vent to it in a demonstration, wholly political in character, such as Harlem had never seen.

It was the celebration of Louis' triumph over Baer, Carnera, Pastor, Farr, Brad-dock all rolled into one plus placards which hurled slogans of defiance at Hitler's pretensions of

Aryan superiority and called upon native lovers of democracy to be true to democratic ideals.

OUST HITLER'S SPIES AND AGENTS!

PASS THE ANTI-LYNCHING BILL!  
DOWN WITH HITLER AND MUSSOLINI!

ALABAMA PRODUCED JOE LOUIS;  
FREE THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS!

With no less than 100,000 persons participating, it was the largest and most spontaneous political demonstration ever seen in Harlem. Joyously, they careened through the streets, on sidewalk and pavement, singing, shouting, yelling, laughing, beating drums, pans, and tubs. Effigies of Schmeling adorned with the swastika were dragged through the swarming crowds.



Richard Wright, Daily Worker,  
June 24, 1938

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✻ "Lester Rodney Remembers "

You ask why sports seemed to represent "Americanization" of the left more than any other cultural aspect, and whether it was a successful Americanization, by which I suppose you mean lasting.

I'm not sure of your premise, but it does start my juices flowing, and this may bear at least peripherally on your question.

Back when we started the Daily Worker sports section in the 30's, sports surely was one of the biggest components of the generation gap between foreign born and first generation. And not only foreign born, but old stock native radicals who put all sports into the bread and circus, opiate of the people category.

Parents who had never allowed themselves the luxury of non-purposeful use of free time were hostile to their kids' obsession with playing ball, and worse, wasting commitment to professional teams. It was a formidable gap. (When I met my prospective father-in-law for the first time, he asked what I did, I told him I wrote sports, he blinked uncomprehendingly, then smiled tentatively as if to say, you seem intelligent, and asked what else I did.)

Now comes the Worker with sports. Not only sociological stuff, but straight details on games. "You know, I never read a word on any sports page in my life before, and I really enjoy the sports section." I must have heard this many hundreds of times. What the sports section did to melt the gap was merely to put the abstract "sports world" into the world. It showed athletes as people, with pressures, contradictions, evolving maturity, eroding prejudices, humor, innate appreciation for cooperation. The paper went into the training camps, where a fighter put in his hard, tedious preparation, and a perpetual motion slugger like Henry Armstrong

could stop and read to me a poem he wrote before fighting Barney Ross. How beautiful and serene it was at Pompton Lakes, a serenity he never knew existed until then, yet the journalists are talking up a bloody battle between himself, a Negro, and Barney Ross, a Jew from the streets of Chicago, but "we're not mad at each other, we're just fighting for the things we need, to be the best..." Henry knew the Daily Worker man would not ridicule his poem, an advantage I had. Ballplayers from mining country speaking of their work-battered fathers snatching only a little tired weekend time for the beloved tossing around of a ball. Joe Louis in '41 with a stack of mail from blacks asking why he was risking his title against Buddy Baer for Navy Relief, a Navy which discriminated against Negroes, and telling me his answer: "Lots of things wrong here, but Hitler ain't gonna fix 'em."

Well, on this level, where the older generation readers were, the sports section played some role in melting the gap. Did it do anything on "non political" levels, like starting an understanding of the JOY of total exertion, improvement, and achievement in competitive sports? And did it stick? Beats me.

» Editor's Note: Rodney was a long-time editor of the Daily Worker sports page. See Mark Naison's interview with him, In These Times, Oct., 1978

# The Utopia We Knew

The following selections are taken, with permission, from *The Coops*, a booklet published on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the United Workers Cooperative Colony in 1927, in the Bronx. The quotations speak for themselves, more or less. The Coops failed financially, partly because the enthusiasm of the colonizers had exceeded political-economic calculations. But many people remained and still remain in the buildings, fragments of a community which they hoped the whole nation (and world) might become. Special thanks is extended to Boris Ourlicht and Ernie Reymer for helping us with reprint rights.

**"It was the biggest family I ever belonged to. . . It was a village. . . It was like living in an illusion, an island. . . It was a complete community, we had everything a working family could need or want. . . It was a dream that came true. . . It was a Utopia."**

This is how the Workers Cooperative Colony is remembered by many of its original founders and members, as well as by their children and now their children's children. This article, we trust, will help answer that perennial question: "What made the Coops so special?"

The buildings were conceived and constructed during the late 1920s by first-generation American workers with, predominantly, East European backgrounds. They worked at various trades, only a few of which had been organized by unions at that time. The young founders of the Coops, like most immigrants, had come to America seeking a better life. Their concept of it was influenced by ideas and experiences they had in the early socialist and Yiddish cultural movements, and some had, in fact, participated in such movements on both sides of the Atlantic.

**"The very first time I visited this area, we saw absolutely a virgin neighborhood, unpopulated, with the exception of Bronx Park East going south: about two blocks before Pelham Parkway there already existed a couple of private houses. There were no apartment houses. The elevated line was up, and the streets were already laid out, with the water lines in, and things like that.**

**But simultaneously with our coming in—and I don't know if this was a natural process of inhabiting a new area—other people began to**

**come in. Our new development was even unusual for size in those days. Although it was only five flights, with no elevators, it was at that time considered the tallest building in the Bronx.**

**Private entrepreneurs began to buy up the land and build houses, and this is how the two very big houses close to Pelham Parkway on Bronx Park East—we called them the "Spanish Houses"—came up at that time. Then the Beth Abraham Home came along; of course, it didn't look the way it does today because it's now four times the size it was then, but it was the first big institution in this area.**

**There were a lot of small private houses going east on Allerton Avenue and in the side streets, like Cruger and Holland."**

They had been eye-witnesses to and participants in now dimly remembered events that changed the history of the world: the 1905 and 1917 Russian Revolutions, World War I, and the 1920 U.S. Presidential election, in which the Socialist candidate, Eugene V Debs (who was imprisoned at the time for opposing United States entry into World War I), received almost one million votes. These young people knew that they were living through an era of social change and reform.

In the early 1920s, a small group of socially conscious young men and women organized a co-operative restaurant and a cooperative 10-apartment housing experiment in Harlem. Many of these young people had been physically active, and had enjoyed weekend hiking and camping trips to get away from New York City, so in 1922 they established a cooperative summer camp for working people at Beacon, New York, then a port of call for the Hudson River Day Line. "Camp Nitgedaiget" (meaning "don't worry") proved a great success, attracting many people of similar backgrounds and interests by its low prices, easy access, cooperative structure, and good times. Imbued with optimism by this experience, a number of the campers began discussing the possibility of extending their cooperative efforts.

**"I don't think it was a conscious decision not to include elevators in the Coops; I think it was simply not taken into account. We were so young, all of us, that climbing stairs was never a consideration. The fact is, everybody tried to get an apartment as high as possible; nobody wanted the downstairs apartments. Everybody wanted the high view."**

They came up with the idea of building a worker's housing development, a proposal that aroused great controversy within the Yiddish left-wing groups with which many of the Coop founders were associated.

Some argued that a cooperative project would divert energy from more pressing political issues and could only succeed after a socialist system had replaced the capitalist system in the United States. But the founders were able to unite enough of the fragmented left movements of the mid 1920s to proceed with their plans to build an ideal cooperative community.

By planning their own living quarters, the founders were able to ensure that many of their specific needs and desires were included in the architect's drawings. They wanted working people to live surrounded by beauty, in sunshine-filled apartments with high ceilings and cross-ventilation. Indeed, the Coops' second house was specifically designed with unusually wide U-shaped courtyards facing Bronx Park, because the co-operators believed that at least one room, preferably a bedroom, in each apartment should receive some direct sunshine that would sanitize the room during the day. Thus, there might be no sunshine in the factory, but the worker would benefit from health-giving sunshine at home.

For privacy, it was decided that only three or four apartments would share a floor in each section. Workers who did not plan to get married or raise families were to be accommodated in single-room apartments.

In addition to planning for their immediate physical comforts, the founders wanted to gain experience in running a large collectively owned enterprise. They felt that managing a cooperative would help prepare them for the day when workers would run the whole society. If large numbers of workers could acquire such skills, the theory held, they would be able to participate in the democratic functioning of all types of educational, social, artistic, humanitarian, and economic enterprises.

The founders believed that such an environment would provide their children with a meaningful, secure and enriched atmosphere. Children would become well-rounded, physically and mentally, and would develop the social consciousness their parents wanted all working people to have. By January, 1927, when the first co-operators started to move into the as-yet unfinished first house, the founders' dreams began to be tested.

**"One of my dear friends brought her five-year old son to be registered for kindergarten at P.S. 96, the nearest school. The teacher received the filled-out papers, and then noted that the address showed the child lived in the Coops. She was one of those people to whom "Coops" meant "Communism," so she turned to the boy:**

**"I see you live in the Coops. Are you a Communist?"**

**"Sure," he replied, drawing himself up to his full five-year height. "I've been a Communist for a long time."**

**"In P.S. 96, once a year, the sixth grade would be taken to Yankee Stadium to see the Yankees play. I was in the sixth grade; I was eleven years old, and at that time I was an ardent Yankee fan looking forward to going to the stadium for the first time.**

**Just that week, the ushers at the Stadium went on strike. As kids from the Coops, we were brought up to never cross a picket line. So Danny Dubitzky, Marty Fomin, and I told Mrs. Shreenan—who hated us with a passion—that we weren't going to go because of the strike. She figured it was a communist plot, but we were adamant and wouldn't go. The rest of the sixth grade went.**



Even a beauty contest at Camp Beacon carries a serious overtone, as the background banner indicates. Harry Kulkowitz photo

**When I came home that evening, my mother asked me how the game was. I was practically crying when I told her we hadn't gone—and why. She was amazed. "Who would know," she said, throwing up her hands, "from an eleven-year-old?"**

### **Spreading the Good Word**

I belonged to the Atlas athletic club, which prided itself on being the leading athletic club in the universe. We'd even travel to Brooklyn to play ball.

For example, we used to regularly play the church teams up on Gun Hill Road—the same kids who used to get into rock fights with our guys on the old foundation. Right there in the church hall, we'd go into the locker room at half time and change our shirts, coming out with shirts that read "Free Tom Mooney and the Scottsboro Boys" and things like that.

**We came out with a couple of bloody noses a few times. some of the guys who did the best fighting were not then—and aren't today—political. But because we often got into these fights, the Coops used to make sure that some adult went along with us; I remember Ernie Rymer doing that.**

### **Lessons in School**

**I always thought that, in order to be a teacher in the city school system, you had to be female, Irish, and a spinster—at least, that's what all the teachers seemed to be in P.S. 96. They were generally anti-Semitic, they made fun of our parents' accents and their attempts to speak English well, and they castigated us for our political views. Not only that, they picked on us because so many kids from the Coops were smart, volunteering the answers to everything.**

**We retaliated of course, and one of the things we kids learned at P.S. 96 was that if we had enough people behind us, if we had enough strength, we could stand up to that attitude successfully. One of our weapons was ridicule, and we in turn would make fun of the songs and statements those teachers considered important.**

**"My memories in the Coops as a child were very positive: it was a happy time with so much to do. It was so exciting on May Day eve—it was the greatest holiday the next day, and everybody was dressed up to go downtown. There was nothing that could equal May Day, nothing at all in my memory as a kid.**

**We had had May Days before we came to the Coops, but the group feeling wasn't there. Here, everybody was participating, everybody came out, everybody was dressed up, wearing the red bandannas and the little overseas caps if they were in the Young Pioneers.**

**You got new clothes for May Day, just like you used to get them in the old country for Passover, I suppose."**

One of the most important cultural centers in the Coops was the Schule, the largest of its kind in the United States. This was a school where the children were taught to read and write Yiddish and learned about Jewish culture. Classes met daily after public school in classrooms designed for that purpose within our houses. There were also upper grades that met on Friday evening and Saturday, attended by children from all over New York (The Mittel Schule).

Parents paid modest tuition fees for their children, so there was not much money to support the small band of dedicated teachers. Often, the parents held "banquets" to raise additional funds; they contributed the food, cooked it themselves, and then served it to everyone who would buy a ticket for the good cause.

The Schule had its own chorus led by Jacob Schaeffer, a distinguished composer and musician, who taught us to sing beautiful Jewish and Russian songs. Edith Segal, an energetic and talented dancer, taught a dance group.

When summer came and school was out, we moved *en masse* to the country to camps operated by various organizations; among the best known were Camps Kinderland and Lakeland, Unity, Wo-Chi-Ca (which stood for "Workers' Children's Camp") and Nitgedaiget (which meant "don't worry")—later known as Camp Beacon. The younger kids went to Wo-Chi-Ca or Kinderland as campers, at first—but as we grew older (16 or 17, perhaps) many of us went to work as kitchen or diningroom staff or groundskeepers in the adult camps.

We worked hard in the camps, but it was also a lot of fun. There was time for swimming and baseball and tennis. On Saturday nights, the staff often performed for the guests. We acted in plays and sang in the chorus. At the end of the summer, we returned to the city with as much as \$100 in earnings.

What was so remarkable about the Coops was the general feeling that everyone was in some way responsible for everyone else. There was a willingness to open hearts and homes to neighbors, to friends, to people from the outside who believed in the same things we did. One group of women started an informal nursery for children of working mothers—fed them breakfast and, after school, milk and cake, and then, supper.

### **A Beauty to Behold**

**For some of the original tenants, the Coops was a dream come true, surrounded by beauty and culture. Our gardens were unbelievable at any season, even in the winter time. The snow looked like sculptures over the hedges and the bedded flowers, already beginning to push through. It was a beauty to behold: whenever you looked out of a window there was light and sunshine, because the architects had been told that we didn't want bedrooms that were dark, that faced brick walls. so they planned it that way.**

**And the tenants were so conscious of the contrast this was with the majority of workers' housing everywhere else. It was an especially proud concept that this beauty had been created by and for workers. One of the old folks used to say, on especially fine and sunny days, that the weather "was a matter of pride and honor for the whole working-class movement!"**

Interview with Ernie Reymer on  
the I.W.O.

PB -- I want to begin the discussion by trying to get at the idea of the "old-fashioned" Left fraternal-and-benefit organization, as a movement which reached across the generations and sex lines. Isn't it true that the I.W.O. was particularly strong among old-timers?

ER -- That was in the nature of a fraternal society. Coming from a tradition of Landsmanschaft\*, the middle-aged naturally thought about being buried in a decent way, with your friends respecting you, not in Potter's Field. And the fraternal society naturally took into account the other needs of the aged -- not only their health needs, but their cultural needs as well.

PB -- But you put strong emphasis on young people too?

ER -- I personally did a great deal with young people. When I first began IWO activities, I went from Pittsburgh to New York and then was sent back to Pennsylvania as a Camp Director on the grounds of a Finnish cooperative. It was one of the most thrilling and richest experiences of my life,

working with striking miners' poor and often undernourished children.

I remember later on, I was conducting a junior group of people 14-15, in Pittsburgh. I already knew

\*Societies of people from the same homeland town or province. (Ed's note).

that one of the great problems was to bridge the gap between children and parents in a cultural sense. I used to ask, what is your father or mother, meaning what nationality are they? I remember one young Italian-American girl, saying about her father, he's Italian. And what are you? I'm American. I multiplied that experience thousands of times. We had to reach youth through their activities. IWO had baseball, dancing, drum and bugle corps, and other activities, on a national scale with meets and championships. Through these activities, we also came into touch with their parents. I had to be sensitive to the common feeling among parents, "An enemy in my house. Make him my son, make her my daughter."

PB -- Some IWO members saw the organization's problem in

needing to become less of a foreign-born organization, more like an American club or lodge.

ER -- You have to remember that the period of the 1930's was an era, I would almost use the words, of "Americanization". The emphasis generally was to shed the past of the nationality groups that made up the IWO, to recruit American-born working people. One objective was simply to increase the membership, and so increase the insurance and death benefits. The very size of uniting different ethnic groups helped make that possible. And we thought about the legitimate functions that lodges had



Once that turn took place, we had a flowering of progressive national activities. Our national journal, The Fraternal Outlook, had as many as sixteen different language supplements, and later some of the foreign-language newspapers developed English-language supplements. And I helped English-language Americans who were interested in ethnic studies. We pioneered the idea to some degree.

Among the children, particularly, we developed the idea that America was a multicultural society. We would select a nationality event or person to celebrate, and conduct an activity so that the education would be of a doing, not just of a reading nature. All the different nationalities would participate, for instance in a Garibaldi celebration, the Italians could take the lead. Or we would take a group trip to Valley Forge. There was a dual aim: number one, to acquaint them with the specific progressive traditions in their own nationality, through historical booklets, craft booklets, particularly on these groups' contributions to American culture. Second, we tried at the same time to unite all groups, to show that there are certain things bringing us all together. Even telling the background of different groups is a form of democratizing. And on holidays, especially of a labor character like Mayday, they all came together, children and adults, each with its own national face -- in different dress, different dance groups, drum and bugle corps, etc. In 1939, for instance, we wanted to

celebrate Latin American cultures and so the Cervantes Society planned twenty-two different dances. At first we only discovered commercialized versions of the dances. But we tried to get deeper, we would ask, "What did your grandmother dance?" and we found a more authentic influence. And we would get help in this way for supporting labor, opposing fascism, for demonstrations, and so forth.

PB -- All these fraternal activities meant a great deal to the logistic support of the labor movement...

ER -- The CIO could not have sustained its early years without the fraternal orders. And IWO members worked within non-radical ethnic fraternal organizations to secure a pro labor position. Some leaders of labor, John Brophy for instance, had a good understanding of the need for this activity. Others did not.

You have to recognize that it was not only the Left that was too indifferent to the importance of nationality work. I think it goes back to the foreign-born basis of the labor and Socialist movements in the U.S. The Socialists and labor activists wanted to reach the "American people", so they tended to shove away their national consciousness and their own identities. They didn't recognize, for a long while

we didn't recognize, that people retain their national consciousness to the second, third, and fourth generations, and even further. If Indians and Blacks are fighting for their identity, other groups need to do that too. A

served. The Molly Maguires had been a lodge, using secrecy to defend themselves against the bosses. A lot of other organizations -- the Elks, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, and so forth -- used basically good ideas of fellowship, fraternity, and so forth, but added to them a lot of mysticism...

We studied the rituals of these groups and others, and tried to work out rituals to dramatize labor history and stress the importance of solidarity. We presented the idea dramatically, through theater groups, when new members were sworn in. We made new membership a festive, holiday occasion, and we even accepted the term "lodge". Those IWO groups which didn't develop such a ritual were the most sectarian, the least successful.

PB -- But in spite of these efforts, you were basically more successful among Jews and particular kinds of foreign-born.

ER -- Yes. First, Naziism fell hardest on Jews. Second, the role of the leadership in some of the other nationality groups was more strongly associated with reactionary or fascist elements. If Pilsudski or Mussolini were the homeland leaders, recruitment of a group became more difficult. And we started too late, began too slow to appeal to the legitimate cultural and national aspirations of various peoples. We should have learned more from the Molly Maguires. They were good workers and teachers. Too often the working class was seen as against everything else, not the leader

of progressive forces generally.

For instance in relation to children's camps. Camp Kinderland had a role in cultural work much like the shules, as much as possible education of a Yiddish character. But in the early and middle thirties there was a negative attitude toward it. The camp held on by its fingernails...

PB -- Wasn't there a political blow-up over the acceptance of progressive national tendencies as legitimate? ER -- Yes. A major re-evaluation took place toward the end of the '30's, precipitating a struggle that asked whether

"Melting Pot Americanization" was the right path. Bitter divisions

took shape. The old leader, Max Bedacht, would find quotations, by Lenin, Kautsky or whoever to argue that this pursuit was reactionary and anti-working class. New leadership was elected into the IWO in 1938-39, just before the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Jews were often more conscious of the need for this change in policy. But the desire found an echo among the other groups, who learned in their activities that something had been wrong. Despite continuing disagreements, the new majority was overwhelming. Then the program changed, and the way to "Americanize", we saw, was to enrich culture with ethnic values of a progressive character. Not that we accept everything, Jewish or Russian or whatever. In every nation, among every people, there are reactionary historical elements, and progressive elements, and there is a struggle between them. But that doesn't mean you throw the baby out with the bathwater.

few people -- Pete Seegar and sometimes Joan Baez, among others -- are aware of this. But too many people on the Left still have a worship of "Americanization". The easiest thing, for instance, is not to touch a second language. But we would have a richer culture through a better awareness...

PB -- In some areas of Popular Culture, it's almost as if the old IWO determination is being borne out by the recognition of ethnicity in the last few years...

ER -- Yes, and perhaps in richer ways than we could carry out. The newer interest should learn from the older experiences, too, though.



Members of the IWO Drum and Bugle Corps marching in the National Herman Kwit photo  
Youth Day Parade, May 30, 1936.

# "GREETINGS TO COMRADE BASKETBALL"

Let us all adopt the slogan of a Basketball Team in Every Branch and wherever possible to build a girls' team as well.

§ New Order (I.W.O.), 1935

## ➤ AFTERWORD

Here our documentation ends. The Hitler-Stalin Pact marked a new and more difficult age in Left-Culture. Many ethnic groups suffered irreversible losses, intellectual culture-producers often fled the movement, and actual government suppression began. World War anti-Fascist unity on the one hand, continuing labor struggles on the other, kept the issues of Left Culture alive. The climax to the Left experience took place in the post-War Strike Waves, accompanied by the beginning of the Cold War.

In the long run, shifts in neighborhood structure, fragmentation of the ethnic family and disillusion with the Left's long-held faith in the USSR took as great a toll as McCarthyism--and both took their share. As the Left press went on more sporadic schedules and the IWO faced legal dismemberment, the average reader/member grew steadily older. The generation gap which had existed since at least the late 1930s, separating the first-generation foreign-born radical worker from his children, now broadened and tragically, much of the tradition was lost.

The Culture of the next Left generations was, as it had to be, another story--but not entirely. We hope this issue may be a living testimony to what we can still learn from the past, now a century from the roots of Left-Culture in the U.S.

~ PB

AS WE GO TO PRESS: Word comes of a Left-Culture conference about the past and present, graced with the likes of Jack Conroy, to be held the last days of May and first days of June under the auspices of Foolkiller newspaper. Write 'em: Foolkiller, 2 W. 39th St., Kansas City, MO 64111

More Slander!



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The "Morning Freiheit" contains a weekly two-page English section for the non-Yiddish reader. This section is designed for those who are concerned with Jewish problems, with the activities and policies of the important Jewish movements and organizations in the United States and abroad. Important editorial statements of the Morning Freiheit and significant articles by our own writers and by writers in progressive Yiddish publications in other countries are regularly featured in this English section.

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### Little Lefty



# Books/ Loose Ends

Raymond and Charlotte Koch,  
Educational Commune: The Story  
of Commonwealth College,  
Schoken, 1972.

Educational Commune is the story of a Southwestern Arkansas college, whose purpose was to "recruit and train leaders for unconventional roles in a new and radically different society -- one in which the workers would have power and would need responsible leadership." Commonwealth College existed between 1923-1940 and was run communally with students and staff sharing in building and operating the school. It was begun by people who were close to the Socialist Party but was essentially non-sectarian. The founders envisioned the school as a training ground for labor and community organizers. The

curriculum, though, was broadbased including courses from the classics to political economy to writing and running of leaflets. While never seeing itself as being isolated from the larger community it was in its early years more "collegiate" than active.

By the 1930's the college had become increa-

singly involved in the struggles of the Southern working class. It recruited working class people more actively, both college age and older, to be trained as organizers. Students and staff were active participants in the CIO organizing in the South as well as in the work of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU). The book recounts incidents where the second director of the school, Lucien Koch, led expeditions to Harlan, Kentucky to support miners and to the fields of Eastern, Arkansas where the STFU and the Sharecroppers Union were active. While the "Commoners", as they were called, often received beatings and jailings for their pains they were able to forge real ties with the working class throughout the South. Because of such activity, the college became the target of numerous investigations by local officials, the Arkansas legislature, and the FBI (in 1972, thirty years after its demise, it was still on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations). Despite these attacks the college survived until 1940 when a combination of increased

persecution, an overly ambitious program of outreach and financial problems caused the school to close its doors.

The book was a revelation to me. I chanced across a copy in the "dollar bin" of a local bookstore indicating that it had hardly been a bestseller. This is unfortunate because the college deserves to be better known and remembered. During the last ten years there has been a great deal of attention devoted to an examination of education and schooling. Much has been learned theoretically about how education related to the economy and how schools have been used to reproduce the class system. There have also been experiments both with traditional schools and in separate new institutions. Yet for those of us who were attempting to build and run such schools, there were almost no precedents which we could draw upon. It would have been helpful to have known about Commonwealth and to have learned from its successes and failures. Of course the lessons are still relevant today as radicals within colleges are feeling discouraged and many more have been severed from any connection to them.

The book is also suggestive as an episode in the history of radical activity in the South. The authors relate a story of increasing class struggle in the South from the late '20's onward. Mentioned throughout were activity in the textile mills, the coal mines, and particularly

in agriculture among the sharecroppers and the tenant farmers. The college devoted a considerable amount of energy working with agricultural workers and they attempted to set up a curriculum combining both theory and practice. The school proved very flexible creating programs that would suit full time students as well as those who could only get an education "on the run". It also utilized as instructors both academicians (although that term was more widely defined) and full time organizers such as Carl Brannin, founder of the Seattle Unemployed Citizens League, and J.B. Butler, President of the STFU. Having such roots in the soil of the South, the college sought to become an organic part of the struggles which raged throughout the area.

The major problem with the book is that it is for the most part merely impressionistic. The authors, husband and wife, were educated and later taught at Commonwealth until a few years before it closed. Writing the book in the late '60's, they were attempting to make it relevant to the "new generation of radicals". While they succeed in creating interest they fail to provide a coherent story. The combination of personal remembrance and reliance on the college paper, the Fortnightly, creates a scattergun effect. It would take a treatment similar to that of Martin Duberman's Black Mountain College to do the story of Commonwealth justice.

The book raises interesting questions which are never answered. What was the role of the Socialist Party in the rise and fall of the school? What if any role did the Communist Party play in the history of the college? Connected is the relationship of those parties to the organizing that was going on in the South during the '20's and '30's. Then there were questions about the nature of Southern culture and the possibilities for building a radical movement in that region.

Another set of questions relate to the curriculum of the school. There seems to have been some success in using different teaching methods with different sectors of the population. Unfortunately few examples

are given nor do we get much of an idea about the pedagogical techniques developed by the staff or whether there was a direct connection between their political and educational philosophy. Also, how much of an impact did the college have on the organizing that was going on in the area? Was it possible to strike a balance between spending time learning in a school and being "out on the line"? These questions relate to the possibility of building and running colleges which are in the service of working class struggles. Can they have an impact on the development of a revolutionary movement, working in concert with those doing another form of organizing?

My impression is that the main intention of the authors was to revive the memory of the school in the hopes that somebody would take the story up and provide a fuller treatment. It would be unfortunate indeed if such an important project failed to have any takers.

~ R. Weisberger

Jules Chametzky, From The Ghetto: The Fiction of Abraham Cahan (University of Massachusetts Press, 1977).

It is significant that the name of Abraham Cahan was unfamiliar to me. After all, my early youth was spent in a household where the Yiddish paper, The Forward (edited by Cahan from 1901-1946), was read and I am college educated. On second thought that explains it. Being educated in the public schools in the '50's and in college in the early '60's would assure that I would be exposed only to standard "American literature". Stephen Vincent Benet and later Fitzgerald were my heroes. Who ever heard of Cahan? I, like many others, had been Americanized.

Times have changed somewhat and those "left out" have in the past ten years been given more exposure. Jules Chametzky's short work on A. Cahan's fiction marks a continuation in the move to expand our understanding of what constitutes American literature.

While Cahan spent a good part of his life as a journalist, this book deals only with an examination of his fiction, written in the years 1891-1917. After a short introduction in which Cahan's early life is put into context, Chametzky characterizes the evolution of the writer's

style as the "development of a realist". Cahan's first major work, Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto (1896) was publicly praised by William Dean Howells. Despite this the book did not have a great success (interestingly the work years later became the basis for the popular movie *Hester Street*). From this point Chametzky details Cahan's ability to translate Jewish immigrant life to American audiences through the short stories he wrote for various American magazines. His tenure as a writer for the New York paper, the Commercial Advertiser, edited by Lincoln Steffens, was important in his ability to better grasp the English language as well as in gaining and understanding of American readers.

The culmination of Cahan's development as a writer of fiction is two novels, The White Terror and the Red, and the more important Rise of David Levinsky. The former was Cahan's contribution to explaining the world of pre-revolutionary Russia as well as his own attempt to deal with the place of Jews in the events of the time. While pointing out flaws in the novel, Chametzky places it on par with Conrad's The Secret

Agent for its ability to explain the nature of terrorism in the years before World War I. Rise of David

Levinsky is clearly Cahan's best work. In this novel, as Chametzky characterizes it, Cahan "gets it all together". It is the author's final fictional attempt to reconcile in himself what has been gained and lost as a consequence of coming to the United States. Levinsky, a manufacturer who has prospered in the New World, says at the end of the novel that "I cannot forget the days of my misery. I cannot escape from my old self. My past and present do not comport well." Chametzky feels that Cahan is here anticipating that spiritual malaise felt later by many in the Jewish community and reflected in the novels of Saul Bellow and Phillip Roth.

From the Ghetto is a good introduction to the works of Abraham Cahan. It can also stimulate the appetite for a better understanding of the period. Cahan is one of the foremost representatives of those immigrants who came to the United States as radicals, made good and in the process lost their revolutionary fervor. His fiction portrays some of the forces at work during the early years of immigrant life in this country. Cahan, having come earlier than most and possessing unusual talent, was in a position to explain some of what was happening. Unfortunately Chametzky's book doesn't tell us much about these forces. Most of the book sum-



marizes the content of Cahan's fiction and provides some literary analysis. For answers to questions related to the assimilation of the immigrant, the loss of radicalism, etc., one would have to look elsewhere.

~R. Weisberger

Vivian Gornick, The Romance of American Communism (N.Y.: Basic Books, 265 pp, \$10.)

Gornick's sentimentalization of the Old Left is a sign of the times, the mellow review of it in the Times by Social Democratic leading intellectual Michael Harrington an indication that at least some portion of America is ready to forgive and absolve. But didn't Barbra Streisand already prove that in The Way We Were? What next? Oldies but Goodies albums from the "Socialism in Swing" concert of 1939? Nostalgia-collectors runs on the Abraham Lincoln Brigade buttons? What's at the root of all this???

Vivian Gornick gives us a vivid hint in the first sentence of her text: "Before I knew that I was Jewish or a girl, I knew that I was a member of the working class." This is real 'seventies, late 'seventies: nobody talked that way in the 'sixties Left. We are glancing over our collective shoulders at the proletarian 1930-40s, looking for insight and emotive energy left somewhere behind up the

trail to the current social disasters.

Gornick never steps away from her subject. She probes and pries her way through dozens of Left veterans she interviewed, is touched or irritated, sometimes even shocked by their retrospective views on their lives in a dynamic political movement. "I hear the laughter and grit and self-mockery of countless people who spent a lifetime on the high-tension wire between being a communist with a small c and a Communist: some of whom fell and were horribly broken, some of whom fell, picked themselves up and went further, some of them walked the wire successfully and remained whole and strong."


She wants to get beyond the usual anti-Communist stereotypes and she does often enough, albeit creating her own along the way.

The book's weaknesses are so obvious that they demand no lengthy comment. Her thesis, that a "passion" impelled Communists to live in the way they did, is thin and becomes rhetorical when she grapples with the particularities of social history. For more than a century, some Americans have fallen in love with a radical political ideal, in some place of their lives, and generally fallen out later with the usual political disillusionment. What could make these people unique? Perhaps it is the customary Left unwillingness to admit the substantially Jewish nature of the Communist movement that causes her to back away from the subject for which she has so much feeling. As Thomas Bell wrote in All Brides Are Beautiful (a novel

which should be recalled and reprinted), the Bronx on a Jewish holiday in the 1930's looked just like a city in a General Strike. And not only because the citizens were proletarian Jews, but because they had so much revolutionary fervor. Gornick has written in the Village Voice on Jewish subjects from Israel to Co-op City with more objectivity and a more careful analysis. Obviously, the subject of the Left is one that raises a perennial lump in her throat, a part of her own past so real that it won't permit her to stand aside for more than a moment or two.

The strength of Romance of American Communism is one of example. Gornick has found the simple fact that so many serious (and well-paid) professors ignore: the best way to learn about people still alive, is to go and talk with them.

~ PB

 Peggy Dennis, The Autobiography of an American Communist: A Personal View of a Political Life, 1925-1975 (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Co., and Berkeley: Creative Arts Book Co., 1977. 302pp, paperback, \$5.95.)

Along with Vera Buch Weisbord's A Radical Life (University of Indiana Press, 1977), this book suggests a new and extraordinarily valuable section of Left-wing memoirs: the unknown story of women Communists. Not since Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's Rebel Girl has there been the kind of personal insight offered into the subject; not even the candid Flynn went far into the painful personal details of male Left insensitivity

and the unique problems raised by marriage between activists. We could use a lot more of these tales. Not only by the wives of functionaries, as both Dennis and Buch-Weisbord were, but of the Left rank-and-file; not only Jewish or Protestant, but Black, Italian, Slavic, Finnish, and others.

Dennis lays her own problems on the line: "While other women fought for work-recognition, I was still battling for my intimate relationship with Gene and our mutual, satisfying work; I needed both." Eugene Dennis, her husband, was a capable Party administrator and international contact, shuttled around from country to country, leaving Peggy to find her political (and personal) identity in a maze of fast-shifting experiences. That she survived the pressure and confusion can likely be laid to the background she describes elsewhere in this issue: she knew where she had come from, and she never questioned the imperative of political dedication. But how to work the problems out concretely, without depriving her family on one side, the movement of her talents on the other? Like Vera Buch-Weisbord, she seemed to have little female help in doing so, and for today's activist this will seem the most isolating feature. A sense of feminism existed, but in a purely

personal way: the defense of one's own integrity. Without collective backing, that defense could only go so far.

One need not share Dennis' political judgements to gain insight into her life and effort. At best, her story is the rambling tale of activities across continents and decades, reinforced by a stubborn determination not to give in to any obstacles. Radical women across the generations in the United States share so much that a reading of the book should help bring to life a dialogue about means and ends, the old self-determination and the newer feminism, activity inside a highly structured movement and outside any coherent political force. Thanks, Peggy. You've done yourself proud.

—PB



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William O. Reichert, Partisans of Freedom: A Study on American Anarchism. Bowling Green: B.G. University Popular Press, 1976. 602pp.

This is a study that deserves more recognition and better treatment than it has received at the hands of professional historians. Reichert takes on more than anyone could reasonably handle. And this should be the last time anyone tries to write a comprehensive study of American Anarchism without working through some of the languages (most especially German for the early period, Yiddish, Italian, and Spanish for the later) in which Anarchists did most of their writing. Reichert is stuck with a second-hand portrait, when even that, of the rich tradition that actually dominated revolutionary sectors of the labor movement in the 1880's and 1910's, and that remained alive as a moral and spiritual influence long afterward.

And yet, the book would be worth mentioning here if only because of the tremendous wealth of detail. Here, you can read biographical information and gain a little insight into the personalities of anarchists ranging from the slightly cynical German-American poet-critic Robert Reitzel, who in Detroit of the 1880's-90s edited the Arme Teufel (poor devil), one of the more lyrical radical papers in the U.S.; or about Voltarine deCleyre, one of the more amazing indigenous anarchist-feminist agitators at the close of the nineteenth century; or about Hippolyte

Havel and Harry Kelly, luminaries of the Ferrer School in Stelton, N.J., one of the last prominent anarchist experiments.

Reichert handles his material with loving care.

Perhaps he reveals himself when he described an anarchist modesty of the 1920s-30s as putting the faith "on a smaller gauge track than the one it had followed before but one which possessed far more potential for the reformation of society" than commonly supposed. When Anarchism died as a political movement, it became a way of living and thinking, a moral discipline. Probably this view can be faulted as a bit too lenient upon the doings of a wicked world; Albert Parsons would never have agreed to lowering his flame of revolt. But perhaps also this is a starting point to putting together again, as we go backward in history step-by-step, the real story of American Anarchism and what it has to say for today. Was it only the failure of Socialist leadership that allowed anarchists and syndicalists to gain such influence in those proto-revolutionary moments of 1886-87 and 1911-13? Was it essentially the power of Communists that blotted out such an influence in 1937-38 or 1945-46? Or can we look deeper inside American culture, find the elements of day-to-day anarchist inclinations, to which the Left once found the power of appeal and may again?

~ PB

Review:

Man!; An Anthology of Anarchist Ideas, Essays, Poetry and Commentaries, edited by M. Graham. Longdon: Cienfuegos Press, 1974. U. K. Library Edition 7.00/U. S. Library Edition \$17.00/Cienfuegos Book-club Edition 3.25 (\$8.00 in U. S.)

The publication of this volume will be welcomed not only by researchers interested in anarchist theory but by all those interested in the broad range of cultural ideas, for

Man!, as it was edited by Marcus Graham from 1933 to 1940, was much more than a house organ for anarchists. Man!, to be sure, did call for revolution; and, like all anarchist publications, it inveighed against the state and government on almost every page. But under Graham's editorship, anarchism was defined not so much as a political ideology as a cultural approach to the liberation of humanity through art, poetry, and literature, and hence the contributors to Man! were drawn from the literary as well as the ranks of the revolutionaries. But Graham's interest in people and their personalities led him to become a self-appointed historian of the idea of anarchism and thus this volume also incorporates a number of biographical sketches of little-known anarchists which are invaluable to anyone interested in the history of the movement, including an autobiographical note by Graham himself. This autobiographical piece is particularly noteworthy, for until the publication of this volume, Marcus Graham

resided underground and could only be reached by correspondence filtered through a few trusted friends pledged to keep his whereabouts a secret. By telling us about himself, Marcus Graham tells us a great deal about the culture that surrounds us in this country, for his experiences have been shared vicariously by a great many of the immigrants whom fate has swept up upon these shores.

Born in Rumania in 1893, Graham came to America with his family when he was fourteen, finding work through the semi-skilled trades of egg candeling and garment cutting. Walking into a slaughter house during a lunch break one day, he was so thoroughly revolted by the gruesome spectacle of cattle being butchered for the housewife's table that he was then and there converted to both vegetarianism and pacifism, and it was not long after this event that he was referring to himself as an "anarchist". Prior to America's entry into the war, Graham campaigned against militarism in Montreal and Toronto; anticipating the tactics that were later to be adopted by the Yippies during the Vietnamese debacle, Graham impishly suggested that the well-to-do professional and business classes of Canada form themselves into an elite battalion to lead the conscripted troops into the trenches. When a compulsory military conscription law was enacted by Congress, Graham returned to the United States to speak out against it, thereby making himself one of the favorite targets of the immigration authorities in their efforts to rid the country of

political "undesirables". Graham's refusal to cooperate with the immigration service when asked to name his country of birth so that he could be deported there probably saved him from the fate of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman who were herded into a leaky ex-troops ship and sent back to Russia, although Graham was arrested countless times on the same arrest warrant and on one occasion imprisoned on Ellis Island for six months. If Graham, like other anar-

### THIRD DEGREE\*

BECAUSE

I dared to question  
By the written word  
Wrongs that made

\*A personal experience—February 21, 1921.—M. G.

Of man  
A slave,  
They placed me  
Under arrest.

Two protectors of  
Everything unjust  
Suddenly encircled me—  
As I arose to leave the  
Public Library.

Without even a  
Legal formality they  
Rushed me off—  
Into the secret chambers of  
New York's Bomb Squad.

Upholders of "justice"  
Began swarming  
Around me,  
As I looked on—  
Defiantly.

Soon  
I found myself  
Thrown about and  
Trodden upon.  
Hands raised  
Me up, as  
Fists, blackjacks, and feet  
Hurled me down again  
Into  
Unconsciousness!

Bleeding,  
Battered and almost  
Stupefied—  
I was led out  
Of the  
Torture room and  
Thrown into a  
Cell.

As  
I turned  
On the iron cot—  
Every part  
Of the body  
Aching in pain—

The story of the  
Martyrs  
Of ancient days  
Reappeared.

Then,  
As somewhat  
In a dream,  
I beheld  
Mephistopheles  
Mockingly  
Laughing.

My  
Mind  
Was stumbling  
Over  
Two  
Words:  
Civilization and  
Progress.

*Marcus Graham*

chists, has been "paranoic" about government, there is very good reason for his paranoia, for the persecution he suffered over the years was very real.

Contributing to a number of anarchist journals under the pseudonyms Robert Parsons and Fred. S. Graham, and later founding several publications of his own, such as the Anarchist Soviet Bulletin (later called Free Society) and Der Einziger (in Yiddish), Graham came to know many of the leading anarchist theorists both in this country and abroad, including Rudolf Rocker, Voltarine de Cleyre, Hippolyte Havel, William C. Owen, Joseph Cohen, Morris Zalichin, Chaim Leib Weinberg, and all the members of the Radical Literary group in Philadelphia. Although he ultimately developed serious differences of opinion with regard to the leading Yiddish anarchist publication in this country,

the Freie Arbeiter-Stimme, Graham's journalistic efforts constitute a veritable chronicle of the Yiddish immigrant who was attracted to anarchism. Yet like many other Yiddish anarchists, he found the individualism of American anarchists such as Benjamin Tucker, Josiah Warren, and Laurence Labadie wholly compatible with his ideological disposition, thereby forging a link between the native American movement and those who had been born abroad. One of the most valuable aspects of Man! is that it demonstrates this connection at the same time that it illustrates the differences of opinion between the individualists and the communal minded opponents of anarchism. But even

more important than this, Man!, published during the dark days of the Great Depression, brings to light some of the criticism directed against Roosevelt's New Deal by some of America's leading radicals -- criticism that until now has been little noticed. Historians of the labor and radical movements of this country will find this criticism a highly valuable resource for their research.

~William O. REICHERT

Yet above the poets' re-echoing sounds of the masses' woes the spirit of optimism predominates. Poets singing of misery, yet never forgetting to raise the dream of beauty. Singing of bitter despair, but not forgetting to paint also the coming day of Liberation. Fiercely denouncing slavery, and at the same time calling to Rebellion. Heart throbs that express feelings of kindred love and sympathy not only towards their fellow-sufferers but even to those who are the causers of all the man-created misery. Dreamers of a society that is to come, while being surrounded and dwelling in the midst of so much misery and want. Dreaming while at work, dreaming while rebelling, dreaming while in jail, dreaming before being executed, dreaming in defeat, dreaming—forever dreaming!

Most encouraging of all is the spirit prevailing uppermost in the very outcry against the new Frankenstein creation of the present: the machine—monster that is annihilating bit by bit everything that is human within man. It is the spirit giving expression to man's longing to return to the bosom of mother-nature, whereon earth's children may weave dreams and attempt to carry them through; where life can cease to be a drudgery of suffering, pain and want; where life may once again become natural, human and beautiful; where life shall at last begin to signify what the word actually implies —*Life*.

§ from "introduction" to Graham,  
Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry

.. This piece originally appeared in a slightly different version translated into Yiddish in the final issue of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, December, 1977.

by Paul Berman

What a shame that the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* is folding! It is a shame for the editors and staff who have sacrificed so much for the paper over many years, a shame for the readers who have appreciated its existence and who have contributed their savings two and three times a year for so long. It is a shame that the Jewish people can no longer sustain this venerable organ of the working class, and that the Yiddish-language Anarchist movement is no longer strong enough to breath life into its old organ. All of this is a shame, but perhaps it is inevitable.

But what would be a terrible shame, because it is not inevitable, would be if the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* disappeared without a trace, if there were no ripple to mark where it had been. I'm not talking about its historical impact, its long list achievements beginning in 1890—championing the labor movement in the foulest days of capitalist oppression, tending the libertarian flame as a weekly for most of its 87 years and then, more recently, as a monthly, the fervor for culture that exuded from its dingy office on the old Lower East Side, its role in the growth of Yiddish literature. All this is stamped in history and will remain there even if the paper never stirs from its grave. The trace I'm talking about isn't its *past achievements* but a *continuing presence*, not just in the memoirs of its old friends but in the minds of those who never saw it, who were too young to have come across it, perhaps, and who don't speak Yiddish. What a loss if the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* folded without passing on its ancient legacy of idealistic service.

Of course it would be the most natural thing in the world for the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* simply to disappear and—speaking realistically—to be soon forgotten except by the circle of its old readers. This has been the fate of countless labor, libertarian, radical, Jewish and non-Jewish papers before it, no matter how distinguished they have been. All of American history conspires to make this happen, it seems, so that the record of what the working class has accomplished invariably disappears into the general blur of cherry-tree mythology. Popular consciousness remembers little of the history of the non-English speaking working class or even less if that history is one of idealism and radical opposition, as it often is. It needs to be said that the lost history of the working class is in large part the story of socialism and anarchism in America.

What a terrible thing this has been for American civilization—this loss which we are witnessing once again with the folding of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. It is as if everything noble and far-seeking in the make-up of the country evaporates, leaving behind it a culture stripped of exactly those elements which are most needed today. The miserable legacy of the Woodrow Wilsons and the Herbert Hoovers is everywhere, but the *other* legacy, that of the labor organizers and the anti-draft militants, the libertarians, revolutionaries and cooperators, the ones who wrung concessions out of the capitalist class, the Yiddish poets like David Edelstadt and the anarchist social critics like S. Yanovsky—and on and on—that legacy shrivels into rare goods available only to the elect few who know of it, to the handful who hear rumors of its existence. And this despite the fact that there are plenty of libertarians and anti-militarists and labor organizers and revolutionary poets today, who ought to consider this legacy their own.

Perhaps it should be said that in spite of the folding of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* and a host of other radical Yiddish papers over the years, the Jews don't suffer quite as badly in this regard as they might. Irving Howe, to mention one writer, has preserved in English and passed on in several books a good stock of Yiddish literature and culture. He has conveyed to the new generation large aspects of the history of Jewish radicalism in his book, *World of Our Fathers*. The benefits from this are not to be discounted. Of course it has several times been noted (and by George Woodcock in the pages of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*) that Howe's history is selective. Howe is a social democrat: the social democrats are painted in glowing colors. Howe has it out for Anarchism: the Anarchists are downplayed and bad-mouthed; the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* naturally gets a mention—but only barely. In any case, to say that the Jews have done something to preserve their own history, even with a social democratic tint, is not to say that enough has been done. Far from it. Maintaining a legacy of secular radical working class activity in this country is an uphill fight, and even among young Jewish radicals, who ought to (and sometimes do) take an interest, knowledge of this past—their own past—is none too strong or accurate. People know more about the crossing of the Biblical Red Sea than they do about the rise of the unions in New York.

What can the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* do about this?

Obviously it's a bad time to talk about the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* doing anything. Funds, energy, inspiration—all are in short supply. Nevertheless, one task or opportunity remains, as I see it, and that is to make the legacy of Yiddish Anarchism accessible to American culture as a whole. How can this be done? By translating important and representative selections from the 87 years of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (perhaps along with selections

from other similar papers, now long defunct, such as the *Freie Gesellschaft*) and publishing them in a large English-language anthology, a *Documents of Jewish Anarchism*.

Some people may not see the point in doing this. They may think that the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* as a Yiddish Anarchist newspaper is only of interest to Yiddish Anarchists, and since the Yiddish Anarchists are dwindling in numbers, why bother? But of course the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* has never simply been a Yiddish Anarchist paper. It has been a labor paper — and the labor movement is not disappearing. It has been a Jewish libertarian paper — and neither the Jews nor the interest in and importance of libertarian thought are disappearing. It is exactly these broader interests that have given the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* its weight over the last century, and exactly this larger role and these grand ideals that make it important to translate selections from the paper. The Yiddish Anarchist movement may decline, but all the other groups that the paper has served — the Jewish people, the labor movement, the libertarian movement — may profit from what an English-language record of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* would have to offer.

Perhaps the task seems impossible. Certainly it is a bigger job than the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* on its own can accomplish. It would need the support of all its readers and friends, and the support also of their friends. Most of all it would need some dedicated organizers and Yiddishists and scholars to step forward to undertake the jobs of translation and selection and fundraising, with the cooperation and support of the old editors. Very large sums would have to be raised from far more sources than have supported the paper in the past.

It is a question whether this can be done. There was a time when the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* swam in the stream of the people, but the people have moved on. The ageing Yiddish working class has little energy left, and perhaps it is more than it can do to cut a channel from the old broad-visioned traditions to the English speaking culture of today. It is a big project. Yet I can't help thinking that thousands of people would support such a project if they hears it was underway, support it on sentimental grounds, perhaps, if only because in a culture such as ours that won't admit to a past, sentimentality is a way of thinking about history.

The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* can be contacted at: Mrs. Fannie Breslaw, *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, 290 9th Ave., Apt. 8E, New York, NY 10001.



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### WORDS WITHOUT SONG

O distances, rival sisters of the altitudes!  
I who have given up floating on the mists towards the stars  
That I might follow the tracks of trains and the hoofs of  
horsemen,  
Shall I forever stay here in the Bronx?  
Shall I never see the red linen sails gliding through the  
amaranth of the Bosphorus?  
Shall I never plant a young sapling by an Indian pagoda  
Or beat with my sweaty hands the silences of the Sahara  
waiting for a human echo?  
Shall I never curry a colt at dawn in the plains of the Pampas  
Or turn my back on the minarets of Moscow and follow the  
wind and say:  
This sun is going back to whence I came?  
Shall I be forever immobile in the Bronx saying to the tailors  
and the dressmakers  
The glory of man is on the picket line downtown?  
And the end of life is two hundred dollars a week?



*from Collected Poems of Arturo Giovannitti*

WHAT DO MOSHE NADIR, E.G. FLYNN, EDWARD BELLAMY, MAX EASTMAN, ROBERT LA FOLLETTE, JOE HILL HAVE IN COMMON?

THEY ARE ALL AMERICAN RADICALS, WHICH IS SOMETHING MANY PEOPLE WOULD LIKE YOU TO FORGET. WE DON'T WANT YOU TO.

In April of 1977 the Bronson M. Cutting Research Association was established in New Mexico. Named after one of the leading Progressive figures of the 1920s and 1930s, the Association was founded to fill what was perceived as a void in American historical scholarship; namely, the benign neglect of Radical and Progressive figures. Through our activities we hope not only to increase public awareness of these figures, but to help in legitimizing an American Radical tradition. We believe that there is an important message to be broadcast by telling the stories of the lives of these men and women.

To accomplish this goal the Association is involved in many activities. The Association is directing the publication of a pamphlet series called the "John Reed Memorial Pamphlet Series." This series will be made up of 32 to 64 page biographies of past Radical and Progressive leaders, authors, activists, and politicians. Also included in the series will be an occasional pamphlet, called "Topics in American Radicalism," focusing attention on a particular event or organization. Secondly, the Association, when financially able, awards grants and funds projects. Right now, for example, the Association is one of the chief funders of the Oral History of the American Left at the Tamiment Library in New York. Thirdly, the Association functions as a technical aid to Radical historians in their work by publishing indexes of Oral Histories, bibliographies of archives, etc. Lastly, the Association publishes a lively newsletter.

By becoming a member of the Association you can support its much needed activities. Membership is open to all persons interested in the Cutting Research Association. The dues are as follows:

\$15-29.....Friend

\$30-49.....Associate Member

\$50-99.....Supporting Member

\$100.....Sustaining Member

(Limited income & Students.....\$5)

As a member of the Association you will receive the Association's Newsletter, (available to non-members for \$5 a year), pamphlets and a discount on all other Association publications.

PLEASE. WRITE TO US:

# CUTTING RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 8893, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87198

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Picasso: Portrait of André Breton

## What Is Surrealism?

*Selected Writings*

by André Breton

Edited with an introduction

by Franklin Rosemont

André Breton (1896-1966) was the founder and the major theorist of surrealism, one of the most vital currents of modern art and literature. He produced an extensive output of manifestoes, interviews, and theoretical writings on poetry, painting, psychology, anthropology, and politics.

This compilation of Breton's writings gives a compact but thorough survey of his views and the perspectives of the surrealist movement. A facsimile reproduction of Breton's 1942 surrealist album is included with numerous illustrations.

Written between 1920 and 1964, about half of the selections are published in English for the first time; others come from rare periodicals. Taken together they comprise the core of a documentary history of surrealism.

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