

# ANY TIME NOW

*FOR SOCIAL ANARCHISM*

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## MONDRAGON, REVOLUTION AND REALITY by John Griffin

Say "Spain" to any well-read anarchist, and it is almost certain to conjure up a set of cherished images from the 1936 Revolution: the Barcelona trams triumphantly painted red and black, the Aragon and Catalan collectives...One might have expected at least some attention to be paid to the co-operatives which followed in more recent times, but I cannot recall seeing anything in the anarchist press. Of course, the fact that Mondragon began in 1956, under the guidance of a priest and with Franco firmly in the saddle, is enough to damn it forever in the eyes of some. 2006 being an anniversary for both the revolution and Mondragon, perhaps this is a good time to reconsider their achievements.

As time takes away the last witnesses to the revolution, we are heavily reliant on "the books" for information, thus becoming separated from the reality of those times; those who are in love with our historic past, not surprisingly, have been prone to myth-making. Mondragon, on the other hand, whatever its faults, is firmly embedded in the here and now - for me, always the realist, that is the powerful attraction.

### **50 Years Experience**

If Mondragon lacks revolutionary cachet, it has nevertheless enjoyed a good deal of practical success over its long history: "By the end of the 1970's, there existed in the (Guipuzcoa) province a modern co-operative system of technical education, 70 co-operative factories with a work force of more than 15,000 cooperators, and a credit cooperative bank with 93 branches and 300,000 deposit accounts." Mondragon also developed its own integrated welfare arrangements for pensions and medical assistance. The maximum earnings differential is limited to 3:1. (See Thomas and Logan,

Mondragon, An Economic Analysis" 1982)

Within 24 years of its inception, Mondragon gained a large slice of the Spanish electrical appliance and machine tool markets. Its growth attested to its efficiency, although they were helped, along with other Spanish businesses, by import controls which kept out foreign competition, and State subsidies to promote their exports.

Things began to change when the more "free-market" Euro-socialism of Felipe Gonzalez's government dismantled the protectionist controls. The 1990's saw closures, but the sheer size of the enterprise ensured that there were no sackings. Eroski, the dynamic retail business expanded at a prodigious rate, and the Mondragon pension fund Lagun-Aro started buying property... (The Guardian January 2an 1992)

By the end of 2003, the work force had expanded to 68,260 people. Of these, 39% were working in Spain, but beyond the Basque country where the cooperative ethic is strongest. 12% of the workers are outside Spain. The Mondragon web site admits that "just over half of our current staff are NOT co-operative members." (my emphasis) so the Majority of Mondragon workers are now employees, without the controlling rights which accompany co-ownership. They would clearly wish it to be otherwise, but maintain that the expansion is necessary for Mondragon's survival in the face of global competition, a notion which strikes me as dubious, but there it is.

It seems clear that beyond the Basque region and its core activities, Mondragon operates, more or less as a conventional capitalist outfit, although they don't like to use this language, and instead talk coyly of enterprises being "created in accordance with the non-co-operative system."

With the involvement of so many people ambiguities have always been present. Mondragon's General Assembly is elected by

the cooperative section of the workforce, but nowhere it seems are middle managers elected or directly accountable to them. At best, we are talking about worker participation, not worker's control. It is easy to dismiss Mondragon as a "benevolent dictatorship", as some anarchists have done, but it is my contention that the yardstick used by them is likely to be that of those cherished images of 1936, which were far from being typical.

### **Social Revolution**

The late Vernon Richards and friends around the London Freedom Group concluded that, "only a small section of the Spanish revolutionary movement was in fact libertarian." ( See Lessons of the Spanish Revolution." 1983 and footnote below.) The undoubted successes which were gained surely owed much to that accident of history which found a large chunk of organized labour within the anarcho-syndicalist CNT's sphere of influence. What luck! We also need to keep in mind the fact that anarchist militias were armed.

Deep social change, as I keep saying, is always a messy business, a muddle of libertarian and authoritarian aspirations and outcomes. And just as the CNT-FAI had their well-known inconsistencies, in and out of government, so too did Spanish workers and peasants; so the anarchist way of doing things (itself variable) was met with approval, disapproval, and everything else in between! Anarchists have always stressed that the revolution must be a social revolution, the work of the people themselves, but when this happens, it seems to me obvious that you are more likely to get a "Mondragon", than a pure manifestation of anarchist theory.

I am not suggesting that revolutionary anarchists actively coerced millions of people into collectives, but workers who were opposed or indifferent to the revolution, would have been likely to follow the lead of the men with the guns nevertheless. Whatever Mondragon's critics may say, they must concede the total absence of coercion. Mondragon has never claimed to be anarchist, but whatever its practices, they have been entered into absolutely freely, and so do genuinely reflect the aspirations and limitations of the work force.

### **The Significance Of Mondragon**

Anarchist criticisms of Mondragon, and other coops would have much greater potency if only there were large enterprises based on impeccably anarchist lines in existence for comparison. Having none, we are prone to look back 70 years to a revolutionary high water mark, which in truth, was seldom reached. It would make much more sense to use Mondragon as a practical yard stick of what can be achieved without recourse to bullets and barricades – but that assumes a willingness to develop our theory and to look forward rather than back... Mondragon is up and running, and its entire 50 year history has been extensively documented and debated, a mine of information which is there waiting to be used in modern libertarian social psychology and economics; this I believe is its significance for anarchists.

Mondragon can be rightly criticized for extending its operations to such a degree, that its cooperative ethos in some areas has become meaningless. Even so, overall it has been successful in alleviating unemployment, through taking positive steps toward shared ownership and worker participation in decision making. The problems of scale and complexity experienced, are illustrative of those which would have to be tackled by anarchists, if/when that "great day" ever comes.

Until such time, the Mondragon experience will remain emblematic of all that libertarians can reasonably expect, within the context of an over-arching authoritarian and acquisitive culture. We would prefer it were otherwise, but this comrades is reality. If we are serious about anarchism as a viable social alternative, we need to maintain a grasp of where people out there are at – their libertarian strengths and authoritarian weaknesses – and work with that.

The successes of 1936 will always be inspirational. I do not want to detract from them, but here in 2006, few in number and with outmoded theoretical texts, we anarchists it seems to me, are apt to give those truly historical events an almost religious significance. Faced with widespread apathy and indifference, we are encouraged to withdraw into ourselves and our past, rather than look outside and to the future. Mondragon is not anarchist, and the region of its birth has few historical connections with anarchism;

surely these are good reasons to celebrate its achievements – and learn from them!

3

### Footnotes

Vernon Richards (Vero Recchioni) born in 1915 was of Italian descent, and his life touched many key events and personalities. His anarchist father was involved in a plot to assassinate Mussolini. He was married to Marie-Louise Berneri, daughter of Camillo Berneri, himself shot dead by a firing squad of men wearing CP armbands during the Spanish Civil War. Vero started "Spain and the World" at this time, and was acquainted with George Orwell, author of "Homage To Catalonia", a source book for anarchists, among his more well-known titles.

A key figure within the Freedom Group, Vero wrote extensively for "Freedom" the paper, until his death in 2001. His books include "Lessons of the Spanish Revolution" 1953, revised in 1972 and 1983, along with "Malatesta, Life and Ideas" 1984. He also translated Gaston Laval's "Collectives in the Spanish Revolution" from the French, to be published by Freedom in 1975. Vero was irreplaceable.

It would have been interesting for me to talk to him about Mondragon, but our paths crossed only a few times, and although I had become interested in that subject long time before he died, I never thought to raise it. Oh, well...

### COMMENTS by LG

When I first read about Mondragon's excuse for not cooperatizing much outside the Basque Region, I thought it sounded pretty lame. But in thinking about it some more, maybe it isn't an totally an excuse. Alienated people reproduce alienation. Cooperation comes more naturally to people who have some sense of community. Quebec has a strong coop sector, and like the Basques, the Quebecois are an historically oppressed people and hence have a sense of common being. Cooperation comes naturally to the Mayas of Chiapas with their communal way of life, as was the case with the Russian Doukhobours or Makhno's Ukrainian peasants. In discussing Mondragon, we are also examining cooperation in a non-revolutionary situation. In a revolution, things are different, people are inspired by the liberating events

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and overcome their alienation to a large degree. Cooperation is going to be more difficult in the usual situation of authoritarian and capitalist existence and its ability to succeed will vary collapses or , at best, staggers along, barely functioning. Therefore, I can't really blame Mondragon for not rushing in to set up worker coops where these institutions are unknown. Mondragon shows the limits of cooperative reform WITHIN capitalism.

I am glad to see that Mondragon now seems to be serious about meducating and integrating people outside the Basque country. According to the Mondragon web site;

"Being aware of this problem, the last Co-operative Congress, which was held in May 2003, approved a resolution regarding 'Membership Expansion' which urged the organisations responsible for this area to study and develop formulas which would enable non-member employees to participate in the ownership and management of their companies, similarly to that which occurs in co-operatives. In this sense, we already have a successful precedent. We are referring to a project set in motion in 1998 by the Eroski Distribution Group which, through the company Gespa, offered non-member employees the opportunity of participating in the capital and management of their place of work - a participation formula which was met with enthusiasm by the majority of non-member employees of the Eroski Group."

Mondragon is also interested in building a European-wide cooperative movement and is thus working with other groups to extend the cooperative culture. Again from their web site;

"Throughout 2002, work was carried out on the setting up of the European Association of Co-operative Groups (ECG), of which MCC (Mondragon) is the chair. At present, this

association is made up by MCC, the Valencian Co-operative Business Group, two Italian co-operative groups, Consorzio Gino Martirelli (CGM) and Consorzio Cooperative di Produzione e Lavoro (CCPL), and the French groups Credit Cooperatif and Cr dit Mutuel."

## ON THE MATRICENTRIC CHARACTER OF EARLY HUMAN SOCIETY by Harold Barclay

Within feminist and libertarian circles there is a widespread and persistent belief that early human societies and ,indeed, most hunter-gatherer and horticultural societies of more recent times were or are matricentric. Such societies it is contended are more liberatory. Further,history is conceived as a process of degeneration in which the initial free matricentered system was eventually hijacked by an authoritarian patriarchal one. There are many problems with this idea. The term matricentric is quite ambiguous; any archaeological evidence supporting the claim is nearly non-existent and contemporary pre-industrial societies do not endorse it.

### **The Question of Ambiguity**

Presumably matricentricity means that women are the central focal points of society. This implies that their influence and power has some priority, that they have significant controls over such things as property, determining family residence, marriage mates for children, discipline within the family, and intra and extra community relations. Matricentric clearly doesnot mean gender equality. On the contrary, it endorses the woman's advantage and comes close to meaning matriarchy, a view that in the ancient past women ruled. Such a notion as matriarchy has long been discredited since there is no evidence for it ever having occurred.

Rather than employing such a word like matricentric, anthropologists have favored more precise terms that specifically concern kinship such as those which specify inheritance of group membership , of property, and status. Thus, one may speak of matrilineal descent in which descent is traced through female relatives or matrilocal residence where the family resides in a house of the bride's mother, or uxoriocal residence which is in the house owned by the bride. Matrilineal descent is found with these types of preferred residence as well

4

as with the avunculocal form in which the newly weds establish their home in the house of the woman's brother. In any case in such female oriented societies women still are not dominant and most are not even equal to male members. The usual power rests in the hands of the mother's or the bride's brothers, particularly the senior one. I suggest that what is being called a matricentric society is in fact a matrilineal, matrilocal or avunculocal one, where women have more equality with males, but exact equality and power are absent. Women remain subordinate,.but much less than in a patriarchal arrangement.

### **The Archaeological Record**

The second problem with attributing the term matricentric to early human societie is that we are dependent upon the evidence of archaeology which can only draw evidence from material sources. Some considerable attention has been given to Marija Gimbutas's "The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe" and her claim that "old" Europe was matricentric.

She alleges that a matricentric Neolithic horticultural population in Europe was replaced by patriarchal, predatory and pastoral Indo-Europeans. For her matricentricity is indicated by the many figurines which she quite arbitrarily classes as female divinities. Whether these figurines are divinities, and in some cases even female , is open to question. In the "History of the Hellenic World", edited by George A Christopoulos, they are referred to a figurines not as goddesses. Further, in that work it is pointed out that in Neolithic Greece there are a large number of male figurines who are seated on thrones. And according to the authors their erect penises show they are proud masters of the earth. Lynn Roller, professor of classics at the University of California , Davis, has written "In reality figurine groups from prehistoric Mediterranean sites offer little support for the hypothesis of a mother goddess cult."

Other evidence offered by Gimbutas includes the more elaborate burial of women than men in some Neolithic European sites. The strongest support comes from one burial the remains of which appear to be a group a related women. Again we are confronted with evidence which is open to a variety of equally

reasonable interpretations. Such burials need not indicate matricentricity at all. Gimbutas also believes that the lack of chieftains, men's houses, and of kingly burials demonstrate matricentricity. But lack of chieftains, men's houses and kingly burials are widespread features of patrilineal, acephalous (that is, anarchic) societies of East Africa and also of bilateral and patrilineal hunter-gatherers.

Pastoralism is characteristically identified with patrilineality. Thus, if Europe were a matrilinear, peaceful Neolithic society it is interesting that recent findings of 4800 BCE villages in Germany show a pastoral economy long before the intrusion of pastoral patriarchal invaders from the East. Some specialists have pointed out that climatic changes towards more arid conditions can induce a more pastoral economy, and it need not have been imposed by Eastern invaders. During the same time there appears to have been a considerable population increase and this created pressures for land and so increased conflict.

In other words there is a good alternative explanation for change in "old" Europe than some Indo-European patriarchal invasion. Finally, let us not forget that Gimbutas is referring only to the European Neolithic not to any other part of the globe and other time period. Perhaps some over enthusiastic advocates of matricentricity overlook this point.

As far as periods prior to the Neolithic, that is the Paleolithic (before ca 10,000 BCE), numerous remains of stone goddesses are frequently taken as examples of matricentricity. But that they are goddesses is pure speculation. And to argue that so many female divinities are to be found. Therefore justifying calling the social organization matricentric, clearly overlooks the fact that so many patrilineal and patriarchal societies also had important female divinities. In conclusion, archaeological evidence for any matricentric system among early humans, or for patrilinear ones either, is extremely poor.

The plain fact is no one knows what the specifics of earliest human social organization were.

### **Matricentricity in More Recent Times**

It is dangerous to attempt to argue that what is characteristic of contemporary hunter-gatherers may be characteristic of antiquity. Every society undergoes change over time and

5 is different from Neolithic or Paleolithic time. Nevertheless, there are many features of hunting-gathering societies which appear similar to those of antiquity. Looking at modern hunter-gatherers with a considerable degree of caution we can observe the prevalence of various forms of social organization among these societies. David Aberle presents data on matrilineality among various societies in terms of their subsistence type. He found that while 57 or 21% out of 269 horticultural societies are matrilinear, only 13 or 16% of 101 hunter-gatherer societies and 14 or 7% of 196 plough agricultural and pastoral societies were matrilinear. In other words those perhaps who seek a matrilinear society should look to horticultural people and particularly outside of Africa.

Of hunter-gatherer societies 61 (61%) of 101 are bilateral in their form of kinship organization which suggests that the most archaic form of social organization might be bilateral in which neither side of a family is given priority. In my view bilateral descent prevailed during Mesolithic and Paleolithic times, given the fact that most present hunter-gatherers are bilateral. In such an arrangement there would be some degree of gender equality. Indeed, the whole idea of bilateral descent emphasizes the equality of both patrilinear and matrilinear kin. This does not mean that full gender equality exists. Hunter-gatherers are often referred to as egalitarian, but that refers particularly to adult males. If bilaterality was the common mode among Paleolithic peoples, it may be that some others may have practiced patrilineality or matrilineality. The point is that no one knows when these first arose. The association of matrilineality with horticulture, however, strongly suggests that it only became important with the invention of cultivated plants. Since women were no doubt the first gardeners, gardens would have been passed from mother to daughter. Patrilineality would come to prevail with the spread of agriculture and pastoralism. That is, agriculture as distinct from horticulture entails extensive cultivation with the plough and teams of draft animals. The teamsters of the world have invariably been men.

Further, it is notable that as an economic activity becomes increasingly more valuable control of it seems to pass into male hands. But both matrilineality and patrilineality may arise as

some kind of property becomes significant so that it is necessary to specify how that property will be inherited, .Hunter-gatherers generally lack an accumulation of property. The accumulation of property eventually entails hierarchy and hierarchy almost invariably leads to state creation. Let me stress that this is still speculation ,although less so than the argument for the matricentricity of early humans. To repeat we do not know the specifics of early social organization particularly during the Mesolithic and Paleolithic.

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### **ON BECOMING AN ANARCHIST JUST THE WAY YOU ARE by joeyonly**

You do not have to wear a specially woven outfit to be an anarchist. There is not a uniform (not blue, red, yellow, pink, or even black) that will in itself make you an anarchist. You are not required to wear masks to determine your political identity however this may be a useful tactic for concealing whatever identity you have from the police.

There is no such thing as an anarcho-hairdo. If you are an anarchist and you get a perm your political insights will not change. What is on the head does not determine what is in the head. You will not become less opposed to authoritarianism if you forget to cut your hair and it grows longer. The only militants that absolutely must cut their hair belong to groups like the U.S. Marine Corps.

I recognize that my European scientific world view comes from a colonial background, it was used to de-mystify indigenous cultures so that they could be subjugated. The empirical world view was historically born out of western culture and has as many flaws as any cultural

6  
assumptions. You do not have to believe in god, nor do you have to believe in humanity. You must only question the rule of authority to be considered an anarchist. All religious thoughts, including atheism, are subject to cultural assumptions within a specific time period. No anarchist has the moral right to condemn spiritual or philosophical principals they do not share, unless those principals are being commanded for the benefit of state and church power.

There is not one style of music attributed to anarchism. To assume that punk, or any other style of music, is the only acceptable music stinks of lifestyle anarchism. There is no rhythm that induces a state of anti-authoritarianism. You do not have to have a mohawk to be an anarchist.

There are many way to achieve the same goal. All future events are subject to unforeseen conclusions, the results are often chaotic so it is hard to say anything for certain. There is always something valuable to be learned in listening to other people. Opinions that come from unlikely places often include very useful insights. Anarchists do not all have to think the same thing, and engaging in ritualistic criticism can be quite damaging.

There are many different types of action that can be impacting, 'diversity of tactics' is a necessary philosophy. Militants and moderates will go further working together than trying to convert each other. The desire to fight authority is not morally repugnant, but people should be allowed the space to be passive if they cannot fight. The total lack of cooperation to move beyond this violence/nonviolence debate is repugnant. Judge an action by its political effect. Anarchism is most genuine when the elements of strength and humility are balanced inside us.

You can be an anarchist and drive a car to work. However walking to the beach may provide you with more head space to think of ways to disassemble authoritarianism. You do not have to vehemently dislike all people to be considered an anarchist. You do not have to live any obscure lifestyle you cannot maintain to be a radical. Do not expect others to fit into your mold in order for you to like them.

There is not one kind of food attributed to anarchism. However a lot of food is used by capitalists to control people and animals to make money. The slaughterhouse is as violent

and integrated into the survival of capitalism as war. There are many kinds of food that are even better than the ones we are confronted with everyday.

And when you get drunk you do not have to talk about anarchism all night. If its 2AM we can relax and just be people again. I know you hate the system and you know I hate the system...so lets crack another beer and talk about camping. You can think about other things and still be an anarchist, your ideology won't change just because you are currently thinking about catfish.

Anarchism is not a religious cult. You do not have to worship figureheads; Kropotkin and Bakunin are dead. You will not go to heaven if you practice anarchism, do not judge others lest you be judged in return. Judgment is a subtle form of authoritarianism. Be critical but be kind, take action whenever necessary to keep others safe.

FREE TO BE MY OWN SORTA REVOLUTIONARY  
by joeyonly

One of the reasons I turned toward protesting and activism was because I didn't have enough confidence in myself to follow my own dreams. I didn't believe that I was worth working for and believing in. My dreams weren't worth pursuing because I actually hated myself. I turned that energy to helping others, providing for their needs and fighting for them. That is a noble thing to do of course, I am not regretting it.

Now I remain a revolutionary, but part of that is to pursue my own creative dreams and to really believe in them. Now I know that focusing on what it is that I do best, it is the best thing I can do to effect the world positively. Being a creative person is what I do best, and I will struggle to be free to create to my potential. I will struggle against the system, my enemies, my family and my friends...I will create art the way I want to...nothing can get in the way.

I still believe in the issues, more or less. I certainly believe in overturning capitalism and imperialism. But in all that I do I have really become confused about: the true nature of reality, what is truly right and what is truly wrong, and the entire cosmic scope of time and space. The questions surrounding these things paralyze me in much that I do. I do not wish to

7  
engage in anything futile, I wish to do nothing which is of no use. The universe is so big and time so vast that I don't know what reality is, I see so little of it.

This prevents me from being any sort of a follower and a player in anyone else's game. There is no game I want to play, and there is no paradigm I will fully subscribe to. None allow me to push the boundaries in the way I want to discover them. None allow me to go as far as I can go to decipher what is truly real and truthful. None allow me to be truly free. There are invisible rules in the games everyone designs for themselves.

Good politics did not make me free, only I could do that for freedom does not exist outside of ourselves. You must be stubborn to be free. The only way for me to be free is to create it!The only way to create it is to believe. !!!MEEEEOOOOW!!!

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## BOOK REVIEWS

ECO CIVILIZATION by Roy Morrison. 2140 (Warner, NH: Writer's Publishing Cooperative, 2006). \$12.95. Reviewed by Kevin Carson

This book belongs to a fairly crowded genre: future history. The point of future history is to portray either the effects of the author's pet ideas put into practice, or a worst-case scenario (dystopia) based on what the author considers the worst tendencies of the present. In this case, the world Morrison envisions is based on sustainable, decentralist, cooperative economics and a resurgence of northern New England-style direct democracy. His future world grew out of the late 21st century "Time of Troubles," with its widespread political and economic collapse. The way out of the crisis was first shown by the Chinese "The East is Green" policies, which gradually diffused by example throughout the world.

Let me start by saying there are plenty of things I don't find attractive in Morrison's scenario: chief among them is probably the national service program, which to me is just another kind of conscription. And overall, I find the uniformity of the model adopted on a global scale to be a bit unrealistic. It's quite likely that the current corporate, neoliberal model of

state capitalism will collapse, under its own weight, from a crisis of inputs; it's also likely that the successor society will be based on radical political and economic decentralization. But I expect there to be considerably more variation in the specific measures adopted than Morrison envisions, and certainly not a uniform system of continental-scale federations of regional and local federations (another aspect of the scenario I don't find especially attractive).

That being said, though, the central ideas of the book are quite attractive.

Probably the most important is the ecological value added tax, essentially reflecting the geolibertarian idea of "taxing bads, not goods." Goods are assigned a variety of tax rates, based on the negative externalities they generate and the sustainability of the resources they consume. The most sustainable and socially harmless goods are tax free. The most harmful and unsustainable, like internal combustion engines running on fossil fuels, are taxed to the point of being prohibitively expensive for the vast majority of people. And the system of ecological taxation is combined with a complete elimination of taxes on income. I certainly like the geolibertarian approach of "taxing bads." I'd probably prefer something more direct, though, rather than a tax at the point of consumption: severance fees for extracting resources from the commons, maybe, combined with heavy tort damages for air and water pollution. And for such an obviously Geolib-influenced system (he even proposes a negative income tax, a sort of citizens' dividend, about which I'm ambivalent at best), the absence of a tax on land rents is striking. But the general principle of internalizing all costs in market price, and then allowing the free market rather than regulation to drive behavior, is one I'd heartily assent to.

Second is the principle of direct democracy and bottom-up federation, about which little more need be added, except that I'm for it--obviously. Morrison's town meetings played a crucial role in destroying the Empire, by refusing to sustain its oil and resource wars.

Third is the practice of stakeholder democracy in the economic system. Local economies are an elaborate mixture of consumer and worker co-ops, community-based and community-owned enterprises (included in a community's "social property"),

8

and stakeholder co-ops with some mixture of the three. By the way: community-owned enterprises, with management responsible to local government, are distinguished from community-based enterprises, whose boards are elected by the public at large. Workers have substantial representation in community-based and -owned enterprises. One day of the annual town meeting in Morrison's future Warner, N.H. is taken up with the business of Warner Community Enterprises.

The absentee-owned joint stock corporation, in Morrison's future, has mostly gone the way of the dinosaur. The Fortune 500 has been replaced by the Cooperative 50,000. The new system of community-owned and -based enterprises came about as a result, among other things, of a citizen backlash against the tax-funded bailouts of bankrupt corporations, and the growing realization that institutional ownership through pension funds and the like could be used to exert real control. The people, essentially, started attaching strings to the money that was given to big business, and used this leverage to reconstruct the corporate economy on a human scale.

The book reminds me in a lot of ways of Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*. As with *Ecotopia*, there are a lot of details I don't like. But the overall picture of society Morrison envisions is quite attractive. It's well worth checking out.

For order information, see:

<http://www.rmaenergy.net/EcologicalCivilization.html>

FIVE WAVES; A Brief Global History of Revolutionary Anarchist Communist Mass Organizational Theory & Practice". Reviewed by Pat Murtagh

The Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation is a platformist organization active in the Republic of South Africa. Part of their activities involve Zabalaza Books, a literature distribution outfit (<http://www.zabalazabooks>). This website leads to a catalogue of titles available in pdf format for download. The spectrum of titles is truly impressive, and the subjects range through 23 categories and a total of 260 entries for local printing. A visit to this site is

the equivalent of the perfect wave for the lit seeking anarchist. This particular pamphlet, by Michael Schmidt, is an attempt to present the history of anarchist organizing within the literary device of seeing, "the fortunes of anarchism-like that of the militant autonomous working class- rise and fall in waves". So on to the ocean.

The first wave is subtitled "The 'Invisible Pilots' Steer the Secret Revolutionary Organization", a technique that will carry through the pamphlet as a quotation is used in the subtitle.. This choice of words, however, is unfortunate as most of this chapter discusses the rise of syndicalism in Europe and Latin America (also Russia and the USA). These were organizations that were definitely NOT secret. The author's "invisible pilots" refer to letters of Bakunin, and they refer to conspiratorial organizations that existed only in the more florid reaches of Bakunin's imagination.

The great value of this section is a recounting of how anarchism spread from its southern European base . Remarkably the Paris Commune is only mentioned in passing, a strange omission for a purportedly anarchist communist as opposed to an anarcho-syndicalist pamphlet.

The 'second wave' is subtitled, "The 'General Union' Builds an Organizational Platform". This covers the period of the 1890s to the mid to late 1920s. This is the longest section of the pamphlet, not surprisingly, as it was the time of the two Russian Revolutions, and the 'Platform' that developed from the exiles therefrom.

It was also, of course, the time of the most rapid growth of both specifically anarchist political federations (platformist or not) and of anarcho-syndicalism across the world. It was finally 'the summer of anarchism' before the great Communist and fascist chill. Anarchists could and did see themselves as the only consistently revolutionary gravediggers of 'real existing capitalism'.

The author includes a wide range of history into his descriptions. He includes not just the 'usual suspects' of France, Russia, Ukraine, Mexico and Argentina but also some rather exotic examples-Costa Rica, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Peru and Paraguay. Some rather important examples such as Spain, Portugal and Italy are barely mentioned (Portugal only to claim that its original syndicalism was more important than that of

9 Spain (?) and Italy only to say that it had a few platformist sympathizers).

The heart of the chapter, however, is the description of the development of the 'Platform' so it is not surprising that countries where it had practically no influence- Spain, Portugal and Italy- seem less important than Bulgaria where it became 'the definition of anarchism'.

The author sees the Anarchist International (1907 to 1910) as the forerunner of the platformist tendency, a doubtful proposition. He is also not entirely even-handed in his treatment of the anarchist critics of platformism, but he presents a generally balanced account of the debate around this document.

The third wave entitled 'The "Revolutionary Junta" pushes for a Fresh Revolution covers the period of the late 20, through the Spanish Revolution, WW II and its immediate aftermath. The author once more presents a global view that includes little known organizations such as the 'East Asian anarchist Federation' (China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and India). The author also claims, with little justification, that "the third wave did not break until the end of the second world war".

The Spanish Revolution was, of course, the height of the 'Third Wave', and the author tells how the Friends of Durruti (saints in platformism) called for a "revolutionary junta" (meaning a council or soviet) to maintain the revolutionary character of the war by means of the anarchist militia, and for the economy to be placed entirely in the hands of the syndicates".

The Fourth Wave; 'The "Vanishing Vanguard" advocates Libertarian Communism describes the period of the 1950s to the mid 70s. The author says that anarchism remained influential in this "dark time" in its participation in the Cuban Revolution and how it was "resurrected on a global scale by the "jolt of 1968". and by the fall of both Communist and fascist tyrannies (timelines are flexible here). Schmidt also recalls the 'Proto-platformist' tendencies that arose in this period. These include Fontentis' 'Libertarian Communist Federation' (no matter the more than slightly history surrounding it) and other European developments of the time.

The fifth wave; 'The Anarcho-Communist "Driving Force" Fights for a Libertarian Alternative', spans the late 1980s to the

present. The author ties the broadening of international anarchism to the collapse of the Soviet Empire and to "the collapse of the para-fascist dictatorships in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay in 1983-1990". He gives special attention to the "revived FAU of Uruguay that rebuilt in 1985, repudiated its earlier pro-Castroism and embraced the Platform". Did it ? And is the total version of events ?

This section also mentions other developments such as the Mexican Zapatistas and Magonistas, the new syndicalism of Europe and the birth of various platformist organizations across the world. The chapter ends with a list of various "anarchist communist, platformist and platformist-influenced groups today". A note to the wisest of this will be outdated the second it is printed.

The author states that "there is no real platformist international, however, because, as we have shown, platformism is primarily an organizational tactic within anarchist communism, not an ideological strategical orientation in its own right". More on this later.

In the Conclusion;" The Role of the Anarchist Communist Organization in a 'Front of Oppressed Classes'" Schmidt presents a call for action. He bases this on the history that he has related that shows that "given the right conditions, conditions of true equality and freedom, a powerful spirit of mutual aid and cooperation springs up. How we act is related to the structure of society".

He also forthrightly admits that present day platformism has accepted a pluralistic view of the 'revolutionary forces', unlike the original Platform. He asserts that, "anarchists are not, and should not be, the sole organizers of the working class in preparation for revolution...we are not the only social force moving in a libertarian direction". This pluralism is something that is common to platformists today, and it is an unadmitted "qualification" that their critics amongst the anarchists generally don't recognize.

Summing up the pamphlet...strengths and weaknesses. The greatest strength is the global vision that the author has, and his demonstration that anarchism has been more than a "Latin historical episode". The author embeds his underlying platformist ideas very well in his narrative, even though he has to sometimes strain the facts to conform. He

10

usually argues against one definite reality-Leninism- and a strawman of "anti-organizational anarchism"-it exists but it is hardly all of the picture-, and his arguments are convincing in their limited context.

The pamphlet is well written, and the literary device of describing anarchism in terms of 'waves' is quite useful for organizing the subject matter. Even if some square pegs have to be pounded into round holes to fit the chronology Anarchist history varies from country to country, and a global chronology is literary rather than factual.

Sometimes rather important movements are ignored in this pamphlet so as to fit into this schemata while other, VERY minor, organizations are elevated to an importance that they hardly deserve. Which leads to my main criticism of the pamphlet. The 'old commie' word is "triumphalism". The art of politics should be to present your ideas and importance as "slightly" more important than they actually are. and NOT to try and magnify their importance so much that it strains credulity.

There are some words that the author overuses ie "'mass', 'important', 'massive', 'vast', 'great', 'sizable', 'huge', etc that occur over and over through the text. Sometimes they are descriptive. Often they are not. The author's point tends to get lost in overstatement. A classic example is the following;

"So, in 1953, just after the anarchists had launched the Cuban Revolution." ??????? A more modest statement would read "participated in the Cuban Revolution". This is hardly the "greatest howler" in the pamphlet, but it is instructive. The author's tendency to overstatement is best seen when he describes those that he disagrees with - the insurrectionalists. He calls one cult that I know for a matter of fact consisted of 5 people, an "organization". He also elevates a bizarre fantasy of a few people in the Messogiorno into an "insurrectionalist international", even though the participants could sign up for the comedy roles in a Wertmueiller film. If the guy gives this sort of importance to those he disagrees with how much can you trust his evaluation of things that he likes ?

This pamphlet is written from a platformist perspective- in the broadest sense as it describes history that most of us "socialist

anarchist" claim as our own. The modern people who describe themselves as "platformists" usually differ quite a bit from the organizational terms set out in the original Platform. A good thing to my lights. If I was appointed the 'Grand Inquisitor' I am sure that I could also find that the majority of people who describe themselves as such could be convicted of "heresy" vis-a-vis the orthodoxy of anarcho-communism.

In my experience the thrust of the original Platform, that demanded "ideological union" has been replaced in modern "neo-platformism" with a vague desire for a more efficient anarchist organization. Very few of us who are really anarchists-as opposed to cultists- could disagree with this desire. The author of the pamphlet says; "platformism is primarily an organizational tactic within anarchist communism, not an ideological strategical orientation on its own right, albeit one that is oriented towards the mass line".Maoist rhetoric aside the sentiment is admirable. We speak "to the people" or we are simply "babbling". This pamphlet is one out of many that comes out of the platformist milieu that the rest of us may both agree with and use even if we have 'fine points' of difference of theory with the author. Just be careful of taking certain details as truth.

#### BRIEF REVIEWS by LG and DM

- \* ANCHORAGE ANARCHY issue 7 is devoted to a critical look at Platformist Anarchism and reprint's Voline et als 1927 Response to the Platform. \$1.00 from Bad Press Box 230332 Anchorage AK 99523-0332
- \* ANARCHOSYNDICALIST REVIEW Issue 42/43 celebrates the IWW Centenary. A first rate issue which includes "The Origins Of The Social General Strike", "The IWW and the Search for an International Policy", "Wobblies Against the War" (WW1) "Wobblies in the Spanish Civil War" and many other fine articles. \$4.00 Box 42531 Philadelphia PA 19101 USA
- \* THE MATCH! issue 103 Fall 2005. In spite of Fred's illness, he still managed to produce The Match! It is up to his usual high standard of production and content. You will enjoy Paul Roasberry's, "The Red White and Blue Taliban" and the huge Letters Section and be sickened by "Who The Police Beat" and "Evil Empire Notes". No anarchist should be without the Match! \$3.00 Box 3012 Tucson AZ 85702 USA

#### NOTICE TO READERS

**Red Lion Press** has a new address:  
Box 297, Stn. A, Nanaimo, BC, V9R5K9  
redlionpress@hotmail.com

- \* TOTAL LIBERTY Vol. 5 #1 Winter 2005. Always a welcome sight in my mailbox, TL remains England's foremost thoughtful, non-sectarian anarchist journal. This issue includes "Anarchy In The UK" (discussion of William Morris and anarchism), "Land Notes" and "Living In A Small World" by Steve Cullen, "Worker Coops and Enduring Mental Illness" by Peter Good, plus the entire RLP pamphlet "Primal Wound" L1 from 47 High St. Belper, Derby, DE56 1GF England
- \*REBEL STEW Number 3 Winter-Spring 2006. An excellent new anarchist publication. Lots of material on police repression and militarism. Articles include, Imperialist Education, Re-learning History and The Function of Prison. Send donation to Box 2351 Falls Church VA 22042 USA
- \*ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS NEWSLETTER - November 2005 This published by a network of anarchist prison abolitionists, and autonomous Anarchist Black Cross groups. Also the 2006 zine distro catalog (donation). For more information contact: South Chicago ABC, Zine Distro, POB 721 Homewood IL 60430. Visit: <http://chicagoabc.org>
- \* SUBURBAN BLIGHT - independent thoughts from the burbs - Fall/Winter '05 This is a real zine, the layout is kind of do-it-yourself; never mind; the content is great. Informative and open to opinions that emerge from the reality of social dilemma, that is, in an anarchist way. Stephanie does a great job here. Get your copy - donation to Stephanie, Rutgers, 26378 DPO Way, New Brunswick NJ 08901 USA; or email: [callthedoctor@hotmail.com](mailto:callthedoctor@hotmail.com)
- \* BULLETIN OF THE KATE SHARPLEY LIBRARY #44 A great source of anarchist history, ideas and news. Be sure to see their list of anarchist publications. Subscribe 3GBP UK and 6GBP Overseas. Kate sharpley Library, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX, England [www.katewsharpleylibray](http://www.katewsharpleylibray)
- \* CRACKS IN THE CONCRETE #2 This anarchist pacifist zine is written from the viewpoint of a school age youth but is at the same time

makes greater insight into the conformity to authoritarian which we are coerced into. Awareness of the problems are the first step. Good insights here and a recommended read. Send a donation to Cracks In The Concrete, 234 Jamestown Blvd., Hammonton, NJ 08037 email: TreeHugger029@aol.com

\*THE CUNNINGHAM AMENDMENT V8 #2 - Journal of the East Pennine Anarcrisps The TCA is a restricted journal circulated within the Anarchist movement. (As hilarious as usual! LG) Subscriptions is by mutual responsibility. TCA 1005 Huddersfield Road Bradford BD12 8LP West Yorkshire, England  
\* SPUNK #8 The Journal of Unrealized Potential Another great issue artistically designed and produced. The underground press and zinesters, art and anarchy; freedom is found living under the repression of modern society. Violet Jones is there with it and lays it out in style, this is a great read. Subscriptions free but send a donation. Spunk, P.O. Box 55336, Haywood CA 94545

#### LETTERS TO ATN

Thanks for no.23 of ATN, and especially for your comments on "Taking Care of Business" on page 9. I'm enclosing some recent clippings about local efforts in that connection. Lots of interesting and thought provoking writing in no.2 I'm enclosing also a fiver for ATN support. Best, Richard Stanewick

#### A LETTER FROM KOSOVO

Dear Dick Martin, It seems that you did not receive any of our letters from Kosovo. The Kosovo post is evidently unreliable so we are using a safer postal way now and giving you a Swiss return address for writing us (RLP After the NATO invasion here we are feeling quite isolated from any radical sources of information. Also we have no access to internet and cannot afford to order any independent publications - the average monthly "salary" is \$40.00 and the unemployment above 75%! So we started an independent/radical free reference library in Pristina town in Kosovo (RLP) and would be glad if you send us a set of back issues of ATN and/or put us on your mailing list for any future ones. Also please ask some of your contributors\* to help us - any second hand copies of printed matter down

12

loaded radical articles CDs / DVDs or videos etc. would be appreciated. Any @ address directory would be quite helpful here - we have not any such information (except the address of Total Liberty (UK) and Red Lion Press. Radically yours, RLP open "collective"

\*They didn't answer our letters also. For the RLP Project, write:

RL Project c/o PF 44 CH4142 Munchenstein 3 Switzerland

#### A LETTER FROM ICELAND

Dear Fellow Anarchists, This is Siggí from Iceland writing, mainly because to let you know I want to keep on receiving Any Time Now. In September last, me and a few friends started up a library in Reykjavík. We have some 1000 books now, plus magazines and pamphlets, and of course we want ATN to be part of it's future. We found a place for it where we don't have to pay any rent, it is in a musical center. Instead of rent we just set up local benefit concerts for the library and the rest of the building. Maybe it's a sign of the times that the center is in a former fish factory. We received some boxes of beautiful and great books as donations from both individuals and groups. Thank you again to those of them who read this.

If there are people who read this who have books they might want to donate, please don't hesitate to be in contact and we will work something out. Last year we also started publishing the first anarchist books in the Icelandic language. The first one was Nicholas Walter's "About Anarchism" and the pamphlet "Revolutionary Self- theory" soon followed (with some adaptations). This year you will see Crimethink's "Days of War-Nights of Love" (also with some adaptations) published in Icelandic. We are not many in Iceland but we are enjoying ourselves. We try not to work ourselves to death but that is highly possible since aluminium multinational ALCOA is now gaining ground in what used to be Iceland's unspoiled nature. Anarchists are on the forefront in the protests there with direct action against the dams that are being built solely for the purpose of fueling ALCOA's aluminum plants. Read more on this on [www.savingiceland.org](http://www.savingiceland.org) Best wishes for now. Siggí.