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Perspectives on Anarchist Theory

A 79 Year Old Woman Who Bowls An Interview with Diva Agostinelli, Anarchist

Born in Jessup, PA, in 1921, to an Italian anarchist coal mining family, Diva Agostinelli is one extra-ordinary person. I hesitate to say that I think of Diva as role model because, even though she is a "part of history" she continues to teach and learn alongside of radicals, not above them. Diva often, in response to a question, says she doesn't have an answer but then goes onto to relate an experience or situation that lends itself to understanding. Diva left Jessup when she was 16 and went to Philadelphia where she attended Temple University. Afterwards, she went to NYC and joined the Why? magazine group (later renamed Resistance). Why? was a group that split off from the Vanguard group and included Audrey Goodfriend, David Koven, and later, David Wieck, Diva's lifelong companion. She worked with this group from 1942 to the mid-50's and met many other people who came in and out of the circle, including John Cage, Paul Goodman, Paul Maddock, Robert Duncan and James Baldwin. It was at Why?'s weekly meeting, at SLA hall, in NYC, (run by Spanish anarchists) where Baldwin first publicly read parts of "Go Tell it on the Mountain." The first time Diva met Goodman, he was on the floor demonstrating a Riechian orgasm! But, the famous personalities dim in the face of Diva and her comrades' life long dedication to anarchism. Whether she was on a speaking tour, writing pieces for the magazine, teaching history, or running a school library, Diva has never given in. Consider her mantra, of sorts, when things get rough: If

you've succeeded in the real world, then you need to figure out how you failed. What follows is more of a conversation than an interview. Diva's life doesn't lend itself to a structured session of questions and answers. I spoke with Diva in Troy, NY, (where she has lived for the past 40 years) on March 3, 2001. ~ Rebecca DeWitt

I was never, after a certain point...I hate to say this but it's true: after a certain point I stopped trying to be a "propagandist," an advocate, a political activist. I was very disillusioned with the anarchist movement. I had to go through this period and ask myself what am I going to do. I really don't have that much confidence in people who call themselves anarchists anymore. But I realized that I really couldn't become part of the world because I so hated, despised, detested what the world was like that I couldn't be part of it. I couldn't sell out. I tried, I literally tried.

When was this, when did these feelings start?

When I was young, I was convinced that I was going to be Voltarine de Clyre, Louise Michel, Sofia Perovskaya. I was going to go out there and make the revolution. Ever since I was a kid, that's the way I saw myself to the point that I would go to the grocery store and start making speeches to the women. And, I guess in a way I was almost a joke to the people in town

and I didn't realize it. The young men in town had a pool hall called the Speedway and they would call me in - my mother said I was 6 or 7 then. They'd take my shoes off, put me up in my stocking feet on the pool table and say "Tell us about the revolution" or "Tell us about the strike" and I would make a speech. God knows what I said. They would put nickels on the pool table and say "What are you going to do with this money Diva?" and I would say "I'm going to bring it to Nena for the political victims." I would collect my money and run up to Nena's house. In school, they gave me a soapbox when I graduated. I was always making speeches, always in trouble. Although, being a small town, they knew me and never expelled me. I went to Philadelphia and, this is very hard to say, but I was so disillusioned with the rank and file of the anarchists. The anarchists I grew up with in Jessup...they never treated me as if I was one, a child, and two, a female child. I get to Philadelphia...it was a more traditional Italian culture and their attitude towards women stank. I was horrified and I was in a terrible, terrible bind because they were kind, they worked and sent money to the movement. They supported me in the sense that I didn't pay for room and board for four

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Rebecca DeWitt

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IAS Update

Sometimes it seems that the most difficult thing we do is schedule our IAS board meetings and this year's winter storms delayed our meeting until the beginning of February. However, our board meetings are always exhilarating, exhausting, and inspiring. This past meeting was no exception and, among other things, we were pleased with the success of the past year, we enthusiastically elected two new board members and went through such an exceptional round of grants that it was painful to send out some of the rejection letters.

We were sad to see Maura Dillon leave the board yet happy that she is pursuing satisfying projects in her hometown of Durham, NC. As with most of the board members, Maura has been with the IAS almost since the beginning and her thoughtfulness will be missed.

Let me introduce our new board members: Ashanti Alston and Brooke Lehman. Ashanti is an active anarchist in New York City. He is a former Black Panther member and was a political prisoner for 14 years. For some time now, Ashanti has been formulating anarchism in terms of the African American community. Ashanti does a lot of outreach to younger activists and brings to the IAS considerable experience with persons of color radical writers and activists. Brooke is very active with the Direct Action Network (DAN) and was a founding member of the Continental DAN and NYC DAN. She currently works with the NYC DAN as the spokesperson, organizing monthly forums and activities, and facilitating the revolutionary education of the anti-globalization movement. Brooke is also studying for her MA at the Institute for Social Ecology.

Our grants, so far this year, are some of the best we've supported. In particular, we were very pleased to be able to support two women. Despite the anarchist ideals of equality, the gender bias is still alive and well in radical politics and it has been difficult to attract women applicants. This is something the IAS has worked hard on, as individual board members, and through our printed materials. In that respect, this round of grants is very satisfying indeed. Another

great aspect of this round of grants is the contemporary nature of the projects combined with historical critique, as seen in Andrés Pérez and Felipe del Solar's piece, "Chile: Anarchist practices under Pinochet" and Will Firth's translation of contemporary as well as historical Russian pieces.

For quite some time now, we have been working on a new brochure that we hope embodies not only the anarchist philosophy of the IAS but also our accomplishments and growth over the past five years. In particular, you will see a new section on grant priorities, the things that we consider when making grant award decisions. These grant priorities and the rewrite in general is a product of many, many discussions and meetings. We welcome any comments anybody has on the new brochure as well as anything that we do.

IAS connections in the international community continue to grow with translations of newsletter pieces. Chuck's interview with Janet Biehl has just been translated into Turkish and my interview with Todd May has just been translated into Spanish.

This year marks the five-year point for the IAS! A fundraising campaign during an "anniversary year" is especially inspiring to us because we can reflect on the past with satisfaction as well as hope for the future when we ask you to make a donation. Many of our donors have been with us from the beginning, five years ago. I can't say enough about how much we appreciate their support. Even better, we have so much to show for it! And, we have, yet again, a fabulous selection of books for you to choose from. John Petrovato continues his generous donation of quality titles and this year, we have 38 new books.

I hope you enjoy the latest issue of perspectives and thank you everyone for your support of the IAS.

~ Rebecca DeWitt

(Correction: in the last issue of the newsletter, Fall 2000, Chuck Morse's name was omitted as the author of the *What's Happening* section.)

Grant Awards

The IAS Board of Directors was pleased to award grants to the following individuals for January 2001 (actual board meeting held February 10, 2001 due to weather delays):

\$2000 to Caitlin Hewitt-White, for her study, "Gender in Current Anti-Globalization Activism in Canada." Using Canadian examples, her project will assess the potential effectiveness of the current anti-globalization movement in resisting capitalist globalization and in reconstructing a society based on freedom, equality, cooperation, and justice. First-hand information will be gathered from activists, which will then be analyzed within broad social and political themes to discuss the challenges that face the anti-globalization movement in not only resisting capitalism, but also in confronting oppression in all its forms and in all spaces. In the face of a rejuvenated movement, this project will hopefully help us to correct on-going problems such as sexism within the left. Caitlin is a student at the University of Waterloo and is active in the Peak Collective and Guelph Action Network.

\$1500 to Jessica Lawless for her article and documentary, "Racializing Anarchism Then and Now." This piece focuses on the re-emergence of anarchism in the broader public sphere since the protest in Seattle and subsequent inter-

national anti-globalization protests. Addressing both anarchist and non-anarchist identified audiences, this study will counter mainstream mediated portrayals of the anarchist protestors as ahistorical, violent, young, white males who are incapable of offering a viable critique of society. In particular, it will argue that the mainstream media has agitated public anxieties toward young people who identify as anarchists by relying on racialized and racist constructions of "blackness" and urban uprising, taking the focus off the issues being raised and putting it instead on issues of law and order. Jessica, currently a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University, has been active in many areas, including women's self defense, social work, and as an organizer of various anarchist collectives in Seattle.

\$2000 to Andrés Pérez and Felipe del Solar for their book "Chile: Anarchist Practices Under Pinochet." As the title indicates, this piece focuses on anarchist practices and organization under Pinochet's military dictatorship from a political as well as cultural perspective. The study will span Pinochet's reign, beginning in 1973, to the present, by tracing the social manifestations, organizational relationships, and political contributions of anarchists. Andrés Pérez is an international free-lance journalist and writes for the national political magazine *Er-*

cilla. Felipe del Solar is studying history at the Universidad Católica de Chile, and has taught at Infocap, the university of the workers, in Santiago, Chile.

\$500 to Will Firth for his translation of three Russian writings, "Russian Capitalism and Globalization" by the MPST (the local Moscow group of the KRAS-IWA) from a 1999 collection of essays entitled *The Return of the Working Class*. The second piece is actually two essays on Nestor Makhno, one by Russian anarchist Ida Melt; and another by N. Sukhogorskaya, originally published in *Nestor Ivanovich Makhno* (ed. VF Verstyuk, Dzvin Publishers, Kiev 1991). The first piece in an anarcho-syndicalist look at the economic and power structures in the USSR and contemporary Russia and examines how they fit into the world economy; and the real-existing labor movement in Russia and draws conclusions about the kind of autonomous, anti-capitalist workers' movement which would be needed to combat rampant neo-liberalism. The Makhno pieces are of a historical nature, incorporating recent research on Makhno and his wife.

If you are interested in applying for a grant, please send a SASE to the IAS at P.O. Box 1664, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009; or print an application from our website, <http://flag.blackened.net/ias>.

Grant Updates

Chris Day's book, *Land and Freedom: The Origins of Zapatismo*, is well under way. Chris has completed eleven chapters of a projected twenty-five chapter book. The chapters include a personal account of traveling into the Lacandonm Jungle in an attempt to set the larger scene, the pre-colonial and colonial history of Chipas, and the actual history of the development of the EZLN from its inception in 1983 up to the days immediately prior to the 1994 uprising. Chapters in the works include post-colonial history, the political currents that converged to create Zapatismo, and the development of the

EZLN since the uprising. He was awarded \$2000 in January 1998.

Kevin Doyle's three act play, "Orange Fire", about Irish Anarchist Jack White, is in the drafting stage with all but the last two scenes written. He was able to interview various family members, including White's son and niece. Research continues to inform the writing of the play. The circumstance surrounding Jack White's incarceration at Pentonville Prison in England in 1916, due to agitating among the miners, is present in Act 1. He was awarded \$1000 in June 2000.

Allan Antliff's book, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (previously titled, *The Culture of Revolt: Art and Anarchy in America*) is now available from the University of Chicago Press.

Frank Adams has unfortunately, due to severe health concerns, returned his grant award to us. He has been unable to work on the project since he was awarded \$500 in June 1997. We all hope that he will begin to feel better soon.

Everyone else is working on their projects. See our website for up to date in-

What's Happening: Books and Events By Chuck Morse

The Battle After Seattle

It is essential that anarchists contend with changes in the structure of power and the nature of oppositional politics effected by the globalization of capitalism. A broad introduction to the relationship between social movements and some of global capital's most important institutions can be found in *Contesting Global Governance*, edited by Robert O'Brien (et al). This anthology examines the relationship between three multilateral economic institutions (the IMF, World Bank, and World Trade Organization) and three global social movements (the environmental, labor, and women's movements). It provides a comparative analysis of the institutional response to social movement pressure, tracing institutional change, policy modification, and social movement tactics as they struggle to influence the rules and practices governing trade, finance, and development regimes (Cambridge University, 2000, 280 pages). Amory Starr's *Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Social Movements Confront Globalization* focuses exclusively on the opposition. This book explores the ways that tendencies in the anti-corporate movement conceive of their enemy and envision a desirable future. Starr discusses the anarchist movement among others (Zed Books, 2001, 253 pages). Catherine Eschle's *Global Democracy, Social Movements, and Feminism* examines the relationship between social movements and democracy in social and political thought in the context of debates about globalization, feminist efforts to democratize politics, and the feminist movement itself. (Westview Press, 2001, 292 pages). She treats anarchism as well as other traditions.

There is a growing literature on the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle. *Globalize This!: The Battle Against the World Trade Organization*, edited by Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach, contains essays by

prominent activists who share their experiences before, during, and since the WTO conference (Community Archives Publications, 2000, 218 pages). Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St Clair's *Five Days That Shook the World: The Battle for Seattle and Beyond* attempts to bring readers

THE WORLD
IS NOT FOR SALE



into the streets of Seattle while also looking at the broader issues raised by the protest, such as the WTO's undemocratic practices and the various menaces posed by globalization (Verso, 2001, 144 pages). Janet Thomas's *The Battle in Seattle: The Story Behind and Beyond the WTO Demonstrations* focuses on personalities as well as issues to present a substantive view of the protests (Fulcrum Publications, 2000, 224 pages).

A direct statement from a leading figure of the movement against global capital is available in Jose Bové's *The World is Not For Sale: Farmers Against Junk Food* (Verso, June 2001, 240 pages). Jose Bové and François Dufour (the General Secretary of the French Farmers Confederation) recount the famed attack on the McDonalds in Millau, France and Bové's subsequent imprisonment. They examine issues behind the attack such as the industrialization of agriculture in the global economy, the massive environmental damage this causes, and the tasteless, unhealthy food that results.

Pomo-archy

Anarchism and poststructuralism both focus on power, but what are the affinities and dissimilarities between these traditions? Saul Newman's *From Bakunin to Lacan* (Rowman & Littlefield, May 2001, 208 pages) treats thinkers such as Bakunin, Lacan, Stirner, and Foucault, and examines the tendency of radical theorists and movements to reproduce power in their very attempts to overcome it. He asks: is the essential human subject the

point of departure from which power and authority can be opposed or a site of domination itself that must be unmasked?

The Battle after Catalonia

The experiences of the anarchists during Spain's Civil War are rich in lessons for both historians and activists. Stuart Christie develops an anarchist critique of the FAI in *We, the anarchists! A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) 1927-1937* (Meltzer Press/Jura Media, 2000, 127 pages). Christie argues that the FAI ultimately hindered the development of revolutionary, anarchist initiative during the Civil War. Although the Spanish anarchists fought for a revolution in political and economic relationships, they also fought for the transformation of other less explicitly 'political' aspects of life. Richard Cleminson focuses on one aspect of this in *Anarchism, Science and Sex: Eugenics in Eastern Spain, 1900-1937* (Peter Lang, 2000, 288 pages). Cleminson examines the reception of eugenics in Catalan and Valencian anarchist reviews in the early twentieth century, setting anarchist discourse on sexuality, theories of degeneration, inheritance and disease in the context of anarchism's ideological framework, European sexology, and eugenics. It shows how far the social and ideological concerns of anarchists shaped their form of eugenics and how eugenic science in turn shaped their anarchism. Eduard



Masjuan Bracons treats similar themes in *La Ecología Humana en el Anarquismo Ibérico: Urbanismo «Orgánico» o Ecológico, Neomalthusianismo y Naturismo Social* (Trans: *Human Ecology in Iberian Anarchism: 'Organic' or Ecological Urbanism, Neomalthusianism and Social Naturism* (Anselmo Lorenzo, 2000, 504 pages). Two new publications detail activities of Spanish anarchists after the Civil War: *Revolutionary Activism: The Spanish Resistance in Context* recounts

some of the anarchist opposition to Franco's regime in the 1960's (Kate Sharpley Library, 2000, 19 pages) and, in Spanish, Joan Zambrana's *La Alternativa Libertaria: Catalunya 1976-1979* (CEDAL, 2000, 224 pages) treats the CNT and the libertarian movement during the later part of the seventies.

Spanish readers may wish to check out a recent contribution to the study of Argentina's rich anarchist heritage: Jorge Etchenique's *Pampa Libre: Anarquistas en la Pampa Argentina* (Ediciones Amerindia, 2000, 242 pages) explores the history of anarchism in Argentina's Pampa region from 1915 to 1930.

There is no doubt that Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth Magazine*, published from 1906 to 1917, was a centerpiece of radical intellectual culture during its time. Peter Glassgold, author of *Angel Max*, a novel featuring Emma Goldman and other anarchists, has prepared the first anthology of the magazine: *Anarchy!: An Anthology of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth* (Counterpoint Press, March 2001, 400 pages).

Panthers

Despite the extensive literature on the Black Panthers, there is still much to explore. *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*, edited by George Katsiaficas and Kathleen Cleaver, gathers reflections by scholars and activists on the historical impact of the Black Panther Party (Routledge, 2001, 288 pages). These articles recount the Party's tumultuous history and its reverberations through modern politics, including Chicano movements, international labor movements, and the campaign to free Mumia Abu Jamal. For a treatment of a very different group that also embraced the fight against racism, read the account of the UK's Anti-Fascist Action in *Bash the Fasc: Anti-Fascist Recollections 1984-93* by K. Bullstreet (Kate Sharpley Library, 2000, 29 pages).



Education for Change

The Institute for Social Ecology (ISE) has added a new program to its already rich educational offerings. This year the ISE will hold *Continuing Studies in Social Ecology: Philosophy & Politics in the Age of Globalization* from

August 3rd to the 12th. Two Institute for Anarchist Studies board members (among others) will facilitate classes. Students must have completed the ISE's Ecology and Community program to enroll. You can find information about the ISE's programs and other resources at their new website: <http://www.social-ecology.org/> or write ISE, 1118 Maple Hill Road, Plainfield, VT 05667.

There will be a second *Renewing the Anarchist Tradition Conference* in Plainfield, Vermont on August 23rd-26th. The organizers are presently accepting proposals for presentations. For information on presenting or attending write C.M., 5641 S. Blackstone Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60637-1898 or J.P., P.O. Box 715, Conway, MA 01341 or visit their website at <http://www.homemadejam.org/rat>

Switzerland's International Centre for Research on Anarchism (CIRA) has informed us that they have relatively few contacts in English-speaking countries, which suggests that Anglophones are unaware of their rich resources. CIRA holds more than 15,000 books in 25 languages on the anarchist movement, 300 current periodicals (including 3000 archived), and much more. CIRA is open weekdays from 4-7 p.m. and by appointment. They lend books abroad, can provide photocopies, and also produce a bulletin. Access to the library and borrowing rights can be purchased for \$25 annually. You can learn more about CIRA at <http://www.anarca-bolo.ch/cira/> or write C.I.R.A. Avenue de

Beaumont 24, Ch - 1012 Lausanne, Switzerland.

Print Media

Several new anarchist publications have appeared recently. *Arsenal: A Magazine of Anarchist Strategy and Culture* is a stylish journal containing thoughtful articles pertaining to the anarchist movement, reviews, and even an advice column. Subscriptions are \$14 for 4 issues from Arsenal, 1573 N. Milwaukee Ave, PMB #420, Chicago, IL 60647 or e-mail arsenal@wwa.com. Another new publication is *Onward: Anarchist News, Opinion, Theory, and Strategy for Today*. *Onward* has an activist orientation, but also contains articles on theory and strategy. Subscriptions are \$7-10 in the U.S. and \$10-13 elsewhere from Onward, PO Box 2671, Gainesville, FL 32602-2671 or theonwardcollective@hotmail.com. Another good new periodical is *Modern Times: A Long Island Journal of Art, Community and Radical Politics*. This magazine is directed toward residents of Long Island (New York), but contains articles and reports of much broader interest. Subscriptions are \$7-\$25 (sliding scale) from Modern Times, PO Box 7152, Garden City, NY 11530 or mtnews@aao.net.

Writing Prize Deadline Extended to December 15, 2001

The IAS is offering a \$1000 award for an essay that advances anarchist perspectives on the "new social movements" represented by recent international anti-globalization protests. Essays should address this movement in a fashion that links theory to practice in order to contribute to the emergence of new anarchist praxis, theory informed by practice. Submissions should be between 3000 and 10,000 words. Written work already funded by the IAS will not be considered. The winning essay will receive \$1000 and excerpts will be published in the IAS newsletter.

A 79 Year Old Woman Who Bowls:

Continued from page 1

years. I realized that they were good people but they were ignorant about a lot of issues. They were all working class people but so was my family. Well, I came to NY and I met some really terrific people, David, Audrey, the Why? group. They saved my life in a sense; I mean it was the best thing that happened to me. We were naïve, we really didn't know as much as we thought we did but it was wonderful. I felt I belonged, I felt I was part of something important. We worked hard, we had meetings, we had discussions and we wrote the magazine. When the war came...I did not support the war effort.

It was a major issue that permanently divided the anarchists...

It divided the anarchist community. I understood that America's involvement in the war had absolutely nothing to do with getting rid of fascism, saving Jews, or any of that. It was to make America the center of the empire and we tried to tell people this...But it was very hard not to be pro war. That's why I could never completely identify with the pacifists because I could not say I would never fight, I would never kill anybody. I found myself helping people escape the draft and feeling very strange. For example, I helped a young person in the Midwest. I went there by bus and on the bus I met a Jewish refugee kid who told me about his experiences in Germany. Of course, he came from a well to do family and they had money and they got him out just before the death camps were full blown. He's telling me these stories and I'm having this problem that I'm going to help this kid come east and get out of the country to avoid being drafted. I was never a hundred percent convinced that I was doing the right thing. So, I brought the kid back to NY and he got out of the country. Today,

he's a solid citizen of America; he's a good catholic. But at least he's not dead...When one of the Why? group people said he was being ostracized because he went into the army, it's a crock of shit. We supported you in your decision. If you felt that you had to go and fight, we supported you. We differed in propaganda style, either being publicly pro-war or against the war but once you said you went into the army, it was okay.

Was that unusual, were other anarchists groups that supportive?

No, no I wouldn't think so. Franz Flagger went into the merchant marines; he felt he had to do something. He was working on his ship, trying to get refugees Israel. David Koven joined the merchant marines. I mean people had to do. Cliff Bennet went on the lam before he was sent to jail. David (Wieck) went to jail. It was a hard time but of course post war has shown that we were right in that that's what America wanted. It became the American century. I really hated so much of what America stood for. Part of that was what my father had inculcated in me. Here was this man with a second grade education who had told me about the treatment of American Indians, which I didn't hear about again until college. I don't know where he learned it. My father made sure that we understood how America treated blacks. I remember him telling us as children that the reason why Jack Johnson was forced to give up his title was not because he was black but because he used to date white women.

The story of the name your father gave you is also indicative of the kind of upbringing you had.

Well, that was true of all the Italian anarchists. They knew they had relatives who were religious and who would sneak the children off to church and baptize them.

So they wanted to have a name that they were sure the priest wouldn't accept. They [the priests] sure as hell wouldn't accept...some of the names of my friends. Revolta, Volunta, Unico, Liberta, Diva, that's the kind of names we had. Some named their children after famous people, like we had a Sofia Perovskaya...Oh Christ, they were good people. But anyway, there were certain things that my community seemed to have that the rest of the Italian anarchist movement didn't have, like acceptance of women....To make a long story short, [during and after the war] I used to make speeches, I used to go around to Boston, Detroit, Chicago. I can give speeches, I have the gift of gab. [One day] I'm making a speech and I realize I had a lot of young people in the audience and that I was influencing them. I listened to myself and I felt that this was not what I wanted to be doing. I did not want to influence people by emotionally getting to them. What I wanted, what I saw as anarchism, was to help people think for themselves, make decisions themselves. I said to myself, how different, Diva, is this than when Mussolini harangues the crowd and gets them yelling "a la la". I could have gotten those kids to run out into the street and start demonstrating that day. I quit speaking and I never made another public speech again.

How do you feel about direct action these days, like in Seattle, where there's always someone getting the crowd going? Is it useful?

That's a hard one. The fact that the movement is spending months after Seattle explaining Seattle has not done a hell of a lot for anarchism. One of the reasons why I'm allowing this stupid piece to appear (an interview by the medical group who owns Diva's retirement community) is because of the sentence "Do you think of an anarchist as a young radical? What would you say about a 79-year-old woman who bowls once a week?" I'm hoping that maybe people who read that will understand that anarchists are not just young hot headed kids. I think that we sometimes



*Diva, David Koven, and Audrey Goodfriend
Members of Why?*

An Interview with Diva Agostinelli, Anarchist

do a disservice to young kids by getting them emotionally involved, which is necessary, but at some point they have to begin to think for themselves. Do I believe in leaders? Yes, but only to this extent. I think that David (Wieck) put it very nicely: that in any given situation there's going to be a person who by general knowledge is more expert in that situation, knows more, has more of take on it. So, that person will be the "leader" in this particular action. This does not make him or her a permanent leader... I'm not sure how I feel about Seattle since my first instinct is to join them!

What kind of ideals or goals does the anarchist movement need to address?

Well, there are two really basic changes that have to be made, without sounding like a Marxist. One, there has to be a real moral change to find your place as responsible individual but functioning within a group. And, two, the basic economic structure of society has to change. [In Seattle] they were trying to bring attention to the worldwide corporate structure of the economy that is happening which may really lead to the science fiction world of one world. The Seattle movement is right in attacking that because that really has to change before anything significant happens. Because we're headed down a terrible road and I won't be here to see it. I'm sorry in a way but I'm also glad in a way because I think it's coming. Except for these people who are protesting, there's nobody who really takes it seriously. Of course, the irony will be is that if they finally have their multinational corporate world and there's no world to dominate. The pollution will destroy the world anyway.

When you were younger and active in the Why? Group, did you have a cynical worldview?

No, I still thought we could change the world. I expected that we would have an influence but I didn't think it would happen fast. I had the sense that we were laying the groundwork. It was okay if I didn't see it in my lifetime...up until the end of the second world war, I really

expected that we would make a difference. What really was devastating was to see how the economic upturn of working class people in the US affected how they looked at issues. I was shaken by how readily people accepted the Levittown's, the cars, the fancy refrigerators, the stoves, all those trappings of middle class life. And, the dying of the community. There used to be communities in America, I used to live in a community wherever I lived. The anarchists in Jessup were like an extended family. Nena would write plays that my mother and I would act in and 400 people would come to see them. I saw the dying of the community when the economic upturn was happening. I remember thinking, isn't it sad, am I saying that there has to be poverty and misery for good things to happen? I knew that wasn't right but that's what I was feeling at the time, that people were not active when they were in better economic circumstances. So, the children of the anarchists were taken up with making the good life and they were no longer part of the movement. Very few children of the anarchists, whether it was the Jewish, Italian, Finnish, Spanish movement, were active. I did think we would make a difference up until the end of the second world war. I remember telling people, in a very angry tone, that they were buying their comfortable life on the blood of the rest of the world. And, they were. And, we are.

You mentioned that your friend David Koven made you feel guilty about not wanting to be interviewed. What did he say to you that made you change your mind?

Well, he says to me, on the telephone a couple of weeks ago, that...he meets a lot of young people who want to know about the movement and the past and he thinks that I'm depriving them of that knowledge if I don't tell them about my particular community, the kind of



Diva - self portrait

anarchists I grew up with, what our life was like. He makes me feel guilty and I think that maybe I should but do they really want to know? Is what happened to me of significance to some young kid in downtown Troy who's trying to come to grips with a world that's

so terrible? For example, I met a young kid who, just on the question on religion, had so much trouble in school because he declared himself an atheist. Teachers were ostracizing him and so forth. Now, what effect, to a kid like that, will my telling him that I grew up accepted produce? I was an atheist; if we had a school party on Friday I brought chicken sandwiches. But I was never ostracized. Why? Because my father and mother were part of the community. My grandparents had been in the community since 1890 or something. Everybody knew, so I wasn't ostracized. This poor kid, living in the non-communal society that we live in, is being treated like shit because he says he's an atheist. What good will telling him about my experience do to this kid? It's not him, it's the people who are treating him badly who need to be told what's it like. So, if it should have any affect, it should be on the people who are attacking him. [Tell them] that there were "good Catholics" who accepted the fact that some of us were atheist. How do I get to them, they're the ones I want to talk to. If I could write, that's whom I want to write to, not to the kids who are already aware what the world is like but for the people who think the world is fine. Who I would like to get to, because I think their impulses are generous, are all these kids that are running into born again Christian sects. They scare me but I think that what's really scary is that very often their motivation is a good one, they want to help people. But they've fallen into the hands of these manipulators. So that's whom I want to talk to, if I talk to anybody.

Seeing as you are walking, living history, you

Book Review: The Ends of Politics and Utopia By Chuck Morse

The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy By Russell Jacoby, 240 pages, New York: Basic Books, 1999

The End of Politics: Corporate Power and the Decline of the Public Sphere By Carl Boggs, 236 pages, New York: Guilford Press, 2000

There is no doubt that the thinkers and activists who shaped the anarchist tradition in the late 19th and early 20th centuries expanded our sense of social possibilities in ways that still seem vital today. Even now, at the beginning of the 21st century, it is hard not to be inspired by Proudhon's polemic wit, Kropotkin's generous radicalism, or the deep social reconstruction carried out by the Spanish anarchists.

A contemporary anarchism must be much broader than the old thinkers and activists imagined

But there is also no doubt that circumstances have changed radically since their time. A contemporary anarchism must be much broader than the old thinkers and activists imagined and we must contend with new barriers to the creation of an egalitarian, cooperative, and decentralized society. We would be ill-advised - to put it mildly - to try to build a movement on the works of a Proudhon or a Kropotkin (etc), but we can and should emulate their example by fighting the forces that hinder the realization of existing liberatory potentials.

Fortunately there is a vast literature that can help us in this task. Although we will often be disappointed by the lack of radicalism or absence of nerve in much of it, there are nonetheless many works that can help us build an anarchist critique for today. The two books I review here have instructive contributions as well as shortcomings. They are Carl Boggs' *The End of Politics: Corporate Power*

and the Decline of the Public Sphere and Russell Jacoby's *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy*.

In different ways both Boggs and Jacoby want to confront an obstacle of serious concern to anarchists: the political and intellectual forces that obstruct the development of a radical opposition in America. Jacoby grapples with the decline of a utopian spirit among intellectuals and academics, whereas Boggs examines forces in our political culture that undermine the emergence of a challenge to the status quo. Although Jacoby and Boggs offer pessimistic appraisals of our current situation - as indicated by the titles of their books - they clearly hope that their critical diagnoses will play some role in the development of a remedy.

The *End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy*

Jacoby's objective in *The End of Utopia* is to describe the loss of a utopian commitment in American intellectual culture and to indicate the negative consequences this yields for theory. He is concerned specifically with the fact that social thinkers are no longer driven by the conviction that "the future could fundamentally surpass the present ... that history contains possibilities of freedom and pleasure hardly tapped." (XI-XII). Although Jacoby weakly asserts that we should be worried by the demise of the utopian spirit because its radicalism gave liberalism its backbone, serving as its oppositional "goad and critic" (p. 8), it is clear that what really disturbs him is the disappearance of leftwing utopian social critics who oppose capitalism and yet remain democratic in culture and politics.

Jacoby begins his discussion of the retreat from utopia by chronicling the reconciliation to capitalism that is so common among today's self-styled 'left' intellectuals. He cites numerous cases in which supposedly radical theorists either counsel us to accept the market as the

ultimate determinant of economic life or advance ameliorative measures that are really forms of acquiescence ('we should create responsible corporations', etc). He paints a portrait of cynical ex-Marxists and Ivy League policy wonks who urge conciliation with capitalism to rationalize their own relatively comfortable positions within the social hierarchy. This makes for good but macabre reading, although Jacoby's point is that by abandoning a confrontation with capitalism these theorists not only relinquish the struggle against the left's historic adversary, but also the very idea of an alternative social order.

Jacoby's discussion of the rapprochement with capitalism sets the stage for the rest of the book, in which he analyzes an intellectual culture that becomes increasingly adrift as it moves further and further away from a radical stance. Jacoby takes aim at a multiculturalism that descends, in the absence of any larger transformative vision, into estimable but prosaic exhortations (e.g., 'we should respect people who are different') or claims of 'subversiveness' that lack political content. Jacoby expands upon this by castigating academics for allowing the democratic critique of mass culture to devolve into a celebration of consumer culture (for example, he contrasts Dwight McDonald's anti-authoritarian cultural criticism with contemporary authors who write appreciatively about things like soap operas and MTV). Jacoby points out that this gradual de-radicalization is accompanied by changes in the relationship of intellectuals to society. He treats the chilling professionalization of intellectuals along with trite claims of 'marginality' made by well-paid, high-status academics. If professionalization integrates intellectuals into the market, then claims of marginality often boil down to a demand for better salaries or more prominent teaching positions (that is, 'market share'). Jacoby also takes issue with forms of cultural study that trade objective for subjective standards of truth, and thus abandon the utopian capacity to assert truths and uni-

versals against the existing social order. He argues that relativistic trends in academia facilitate a turn toward conservatism by discarding the right (and obligation) to pass judgment upon the world. Jacoby concludes his book by trying to refute common arguments against utopianism and pleas with us, as Theodor Adorno once urged, to 'contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption.'

Jacoby's book is a trenchant indictment of left academics and he gives substance to a feeling shared by many (including myself) that the whole academic establishment – even its purportedly radical wings – is deeply conservative. It is certainly refreshing to see celebrated thinkers such as Richard Rorty, Charles Taylor, and bell hooks taken to task for a

Jacoby wants to see a utopian left - an Antonio Gramsci, a Herbert Marcuse, groups with a bold critique and a politics for realizing it

lack of vision, self-indulgence, or accommodation. This is good material for anarchists who would like to see the reemergence of an embattled anti-authoritarian intellectual culture, especially those of us who have spent some time around the university.

But there are also real problems with Jacoby's book. While he shows the consequences of the retreat from a utopian commitment – the absence of critical standards, accommodation to injustice, inanity, etc. – he lacks a utopian vision of his own. He faults others for lacking affirmative ideals, but Jacoby doesn't advance any either. Jacoby wants to see a utopian left – an Antonio Gramsci, a Herbert Marcuse, groups with a bold critique and a politics for realizing it – but all he really gives to this project is his bitter elegy. Unfortunately the power to complain is not also a creative power.

Jacoby not only fails to advance a uto-

pian vision but also abandons the terrain upon which one could be formulated. Utopianism asserts that the existing society can be criticized according to the standards of reason and ultimately rendered rational. It thus assumes a strong connection between the realm of ideas and the world as a whole: it criticizes 'the real' for failing to embody 'the ideal' and fights to reconcile the two. Jacoby could have helped legitimate this strategy by theorizing the relationship between the intellectual culture that he describes and larger social structures. This could have affirmed, at least implicitly, the possibility that ideas and the world can be brought into accord through a utopian synthesis. Although Jacoby does not deny a connection between ideas and other dimensions of social existence – and clearly believes that they are connected – he does not formulate this in any way. Jacoby's defense of utopia thus neglects the basic precondition of a utopian stance. For this reason his book is more of a protest than an act of vision and, while valuable in many respects, it will ultimately disappoint anarchists who are committed to both critique and reconstruction. We can only hope that in the future Jacoby will join those of us who want to reconstruct a strong affirmative vision and apply his formidable intellectual skills to this task.

The End of Politics: Corporate Power and the Decline of the Public Sphere

Boggs shares Jacoby's preoccupation with the loss of cultural resources in America that would enable a confrontation with the status quo. Whereas Jacoby focuses on changes in the realm of ideas, Boggs focuses on politics. He contends that Americans have become mired in a political culture (or anti-political culture) that prevents us from challenging the sources of our social and ecological problems, despite the fact that we enjoy greater access to information and education than ever before. Whereas Jacoby points to changes in the

intellectual arena, Boggs traces this development to the expanded influence of corporate power and economic globalization. Boggs' effort to connect the diminution of the political culture to larger changes in the social structure renders his project a little more ambitious than Jacoby's.

Boggs alleges that economic globalization and the expansion of corporate power produce two related crises for those who want to build a democratic movement against social injustice. First, the corporate invasion of social life turns American party politics into a façade, undermines the capacities necessary for civic engagement among citizens as a whole, and produces a mass media that consistently conceals or avoids substantive social issues. This leaves us with a hyper-alienated political consciousness structured by a hyper-antagonistic social order. Second, Boggs explains how this produces cultural and quasi-political trends that militate, at their essence, against a real confrontation with power. Boggs explores things such as therapeutic fads that cast self-actualization in utterly asocial and anti-political terms, collective outbursts of anger (such as the 1992 Los Angeles riots) that lack real political direction, and post-modern intellectual orientations defined by a spirit of withdrawal and pessimism.

These related developments shape what Boggs describes as a wholesale retreat from the public sphere, something Boggs seems to imagine as a common arena in which citizens can openly discuss shared problems and develop common solutions. It is only here, according to Boggs, that citizens can begin to confront the world's problems, and the loss of this realm suggests bleak outcomes. Moreover, the major ideological tendencies of the past – liberalism and Marxism – are incapable of facilitating a recovery of the public sphere. The liberal emphasis on private strivings over the general interest and the Marxian reduc-

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Book Review: The Ends of Politics and Utopia

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tion of politics to economics gives these traditions a deeply anti-political character that renders them more impotent than critical.

Boggs makes a powerful statement against our contemporary culture, and one that should resonate with many anarchists. While his description of the joke that party politics has become and the complicity of the mass media is common coin among most Americans, his critique is nonetheless a welcome corrective to the omnipotent calls for 'renewed citizen's participation' bandied about by academics who refuse to acknowledge the deeply undemocratic and corrupt character of our political system or the endless emptiness characteristic of American political discourse. Likewise, his treatment of anti-political cultural fads should speak to those of us who believe that our personal development could be linked directly to a project of political transformation.

Boggs also treats anarchism rather sympathetically in several sections of the book and he clearly wants to align himself with popular movements against social injustice, although unfortunately he never fully commits himself to this project. The ambiguity of his commitments is first apparent in the difficulty he has defining the public sphere, a difficulty so grave that it is ultimately impossible to determine exactly what he means by the term. For example, he tells us that corporate behemoths "restrict the development of an open, dynamic public sphere", which seems feasible, but then on the same page he tells us that these huge corporations start "to constitute a new public sphere of their own"(69). But, wait, what about the "decline of the public sphere" mentioned in the subtitle? This sort of confusion is compounded when he states that he wants "an enlarged public sphere", that "the public sphere is broken down into a host of rival interest

groups"(233) (so, how could you enlarge it?) or, in other places, that we need a "recovery of the public sphere"(135) or a "reopening of the public sphere"(113). Is the public sphere declining, broken up, lost, closed, or being refashioned? It does not seem unreasonable to demand that Boggs provide a better treatment of an idea so central to his book.

only popular anti-statist movements can muster the deep strength necessary to confront the forces of capital.

However, it ultimately becomes clear that his equivocations camouflage the retrograde nature of his political proposals. While he would like to side with radically democratic social movements, his conception of politics is utterly state-centered. In fact, it appears that what he means by the decline of the public sphere is only the decline of a political space through which citizens can influence government policy. For Boggs, government is the one public arena "that can effectively resist corporate hegemony"(258) and hence the solution to the expansion of corporate power and globalization. Boggs does not defend or explain this view of government, but merely asserts it and evidently believes that such a declaration alone is sufficient. That there has *never* been a just state, one that genuinely represented the will of the people, even according to the liberal democratic standards, is a fact that Boggs neither acknowledges nor denies, but yet it remains a mystery why he thinks the historic character of the state might suddenly be transformed. But, besides this, his argument that the state is the only institution capable of restraining global capital is hardly affirmative: nuclear war could also stop globalization, but does this make it desirable? And, even if a state-centered politics was attractive for some reason, it is far from evident that the state can in fact restrain the power of global capital. I happen to believe that only popular anti-statist movements can muster the deep strength necessary to confront the forces of capital. In any case, his panegyrics for the state make a morbid specta-

cle and it is here that those of us with truly democratic convictions must part company with Boggs.

The End

Both of these books struggle with important issues for anarchists, issues that we will have to confront in the course of building an anarchism for today. Surely we will have to transform the disposition of the intellectual culture if anarchist ideas will ever be fairly evaluated, not to mention embodied in popular movements. Likewise, anarchists will have to contend with the forces in our political culture that frustrate collective resistance and empowerment if we are to become a serious presence on the political landscape once again.

The failures of Jacoby and Boggs' books are instructive. It is not enough, like Jacoby, to critique without also reconstructing. Works of this sort may exert a spirit of tragic intransigence in the face of an unwanted world, but such posturing offers little to those who want to build an alternative. It is also inadequate, like Boggs, to damn our political culture while remaining so restrained in one's affirmative ideals. It is up to anarchists to build a radical social criticism that is grounded in the real world and yet deeply utopian. If we do this, then we will have emulated the most exemplary aspects of the classical anarchist tradition while also making an invaluable contribution to the realization of new liberatory potentialities. ~

Russel Jacoby's book, *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy*, is one of the many great books available to IAS donors from Raven Used Books. See the following page for more information on how to support the IAS and get great books.

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have to admit that you are, how do you feel about historians?

I have a problem with historians. I refused to be interviewed by Avrich. I read some of those interviews – there are so many inaccuracies. I realized that history is a lie, in a sense, because it's a contemporary interpretation of something that happened in the past. I especially detest what I'm doing right now, which is a kind of oral history because memory is a very convenient thing. I can try to be as objective as I can but I forget what I don't want to remember. So does everybody else. It was in one of [Avrich's] interviews that the guy said that we ostracized people who joined the army. Well, what he was doing was justifying the fact that he went into the army, loved being an officer, came out, stopped being a practicing anarchist, and enjoyed his middle class life. So he was justifying himself. If I were to write anything about my life I would not write it as history. I have in my head, and I may be too old to do it, an idea of writing short sketches, stories based on fact... That's the only way I can see it...[and then there's] Avrich's insistence on "accuracy" to show that some anarchists were involved in violence to the point that he thinks that either Sacco or Vanzetti were probably involved in the robbery. So, my question is, what good does that do? Of course, I leave out my absolute dismay at what was happening to people who were involved in direct action and how people were being sacrificed and dying for really not that much reward. I don't mean personally, but to the movement. I personally knew two people who were involved in bombings, anti-fascist bombings and they both got blown up by a bomb [including] my uncle who was 21 years old. It was devastating, especially since I felt that I was partially responsible in the sense that in the back of my mind was the idea that I might have helped him make the bomb. He had asked me for a piece of metal and I found it for him and later I realized what he was using it for...Am I being dishonest if I don't talk about the fact that my uncle and his friend were involved in "terrorist" activities...they were making bombs that killed people. And, yet, if I see my [uncle's friend] in my head, and after all I was only 11

when he died, I don't see a bomb maker. I see this soft-spoken gentle man who had a bar to support himself, ostensibly. But the bar was full of homeless old men who had no pension and no way to live. He fed them and made them sleep there and took care of them. Never raised his voice, never angry...In his mind he was part of the war against the capitalist system and fascism.

What role does historical awareness play in social change?

It's fundamentally what used to be called "nature vs. nurture." In a sense, what anarchists are trying to do is change the nature of the human beast. Human's developed in small groups so society is changing the nature of the human beast too. Small groups are, I think, a necessity in human life but with that goes the fear of the stranger, territorial rights, power within the group – those are all things that nurture, history, has to change. There's been a lot of change but now, of course, the corporate world might be changing human genes. Maybe they'll be able to create race of satisfied slaves. How much does history mean? I know that's what we repeat, knowledge of history is necessary. But, look at the killing. This is the part that I have difficulty with. We all know about the holocaust and it was horrifying but it was one of many. This human race has had one holocaust after another. The wiping out of one race by another has gone on for a long time. Look at what's happening in Indonesia. Interestingly enough, people react to what's happening in Indonesia like they're a bunch of headhunters, but the literacy rate in Indonesia is one of the highest in the world. That's another one of the things that I used to believe, I was disillusioned by this pretty soon, but I really believed that the reason why everyone wasn't an anarchist was because they didn't know. If they knew, if they were told the history, they would change so I would go make speeches in these bars. Of course, I was a child, I was ridiculously naïve. But, it's true; education hasn't changed anything in a certain way.

What keeps you working towards a free society?
John Schumacher [colleague of David Wieck at RPI] used to say you just have to keep doing it because change will

come dramatically and it's probably true because a lot of the change that happened in the world came dramatically. Women have been fighting for their rights since the 18th century. Did anyone expect that the feminism movement would come to a some kind of a peak in the mid to late 20th century? No, I think it took everyone by surprise. So, would it have happened without these two centuries of activities, I doubt it...I'm still in the same position: the world is unlivable to a feeling, thinking person, it's unlivable so I have to not be part of it as much as I can.

*Where ere I am,
There let me be.
Be home to me,
Where ere I be.*

*Black diamond hills of Jessup coal,
Flat barren streets of Philly,
Raucous towers of New York's city
Endlessness of Brooklyn and the Bronx,
Or here, in Troy's decaying solitude.
There I have been
There have I lived.
Always anticipating
Lovely things to be.
Sometimes fatigued
Trying to be me
And free.*

*Now, in Beechwood's genteel boredom,
I weave remembrance and desires
Into threads of endless dreams.
Surrounded once by eyes
Of mostly amber tints,
Now, I swim in a sea of boundless blue.*

*What am I doing here?
I often think.
Certainly, not passively awaiting
That legendary reaper sure to come.
No, no. Not the idle weaving of remembrances
But the active search that is never done...
To find the me...now.*

*Like Wordsworth, let my heart leap
When I behold
Some rainbow in the sky
Or let me die.
But I am here.
Where ere I be,
Here I shall be,
Still me. ~ by Dina Agostinelli*

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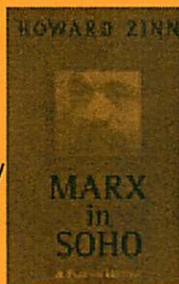
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