



Motivated by our different religious traditions, we believe that attitudes, priorities, and institutions can be changed to reflect a just and democratic use of the universe's bounty; we believe in the value of work that contributes to the common good; and in the healing influence of respect for the differences as well as the commonness of human experience.

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Religious Socialism

THE JOURNAL FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH AND SOCIALISM

Capturing the Flag

MAXINE PHILLIPS

In the late spring of 2002 I was with a group of people who wanted to explore their feelings about patriotism and nationalism in the post-9/11, post-Afghanistan War period. Like me, many in the room had lived abroad as students and had been forced to examine their feelings about the United States after encountering anti-Americanism. They'd seen their country from afar, with the warts in high relief. They could no longer accept the uncritical history they'd been taught in school. But much as they appreciated the countries they had lived in and whose languages they learned, they, like me, had realized that **this** is where the heart is. One woman cautioned us: if you have ambivalent feelings about patriotism, deal with them between now and July 4, because coming off of 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan, "It's going to be a hell of a Fourth."



I repeated that warning to my 17-year-old daughter, who was preparing to spend July in the Navajo Nation. I was sure that out West patriotic fervor would be at a high pitch. "Not where I'm going," she snorted. "We stole their country; I don't think they'll be celebrating." She was in for a surprise. She ended up staying with a Navajo family of Republican Mormons who flew the flag, thought welfare had ruined their people, took her to a Mormon Sunday School, and yet maintained their ties to the native religion, insisted on living on the reservation, and worked only with Navajos. When the homestay was over, my daughter knew that her assumptions about what "oppressed" people did or didn't think had been off, but she still thought her host family suffered from what an old leftist might call "false consciousness."

Whether we call it that or not, many of us who consider ourselves progressive think the same of our fellow Americans. We know too well the sins of our country, sometimes so much so that we dismiss the founding myths as having been formed by white, male slaveholders and therefore unsalvageable. I haven't been able to fly the flag or say the pledge of allegiance since the

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editor's notes

This issue of *Religious Socialism* is long overdue, and brings with it an urgent call to our readership and members of the Religion & Socialism Commission to help us continue the good work that has been done with this publication for more than 25 years.

Without going into great detail, suffice it to say that the people who have been working to put *RS* together over the past year or so have found their own lives to be much busier than they might have anticipated, and have been unable to meet the production schedule that we set out for this year.

Alex Mikulich, who receives our thanks for his effort and his work on the publication, has found that the time demands of his career and his family are such that he is unable to continue as an editor of *RS*. We wish him all the best, and he has left us with an interesting review of Margaret Kohn's *Radical Space* on page 12.

Similarly, this editor has become consumed by a schedule of writing, speaking, organizing, and traveling in his other political capacities that has made it impossible to give this publication the attention it needs unless he receives help from Commission comrades.

Maxine Phillips, whom I have taken the liberty of listing as an editor on the masthead because of the amount of work she does to help proofread and contribute generally to the process that makes this happen, is better known as the managing editor of the excellent political journal *Dissent*. That speaks for itself when it comes to the amount of free time she has to devote to this publication.

These are particularly tough times for the American Left. Granted, it has never been a profitable venture to be either a leftist publication or organization in this country, but our problem is really not a matter of money. With our subscriptions, volunteer help and your contributions, we are able to pay for printing and postage.

The problem we are having is one of time. Half of the job in putting together any organizational publication is finding good writers who have the time and are willing to write for no compensation, and then having the time oneself to keep reminding those writers to come through with the articles they have promised. And then keep reminding them again. This becomes nearly impossible if the editors are either working on deadlines for other political projects or are halfway round the world organizing other religious socialists.

For those of us who have worked on this publication, it has always been a labor of love. What we need now is for some of you who love this publication to give us your labor. Over the coming months we will be looking for articles that address the 2004 elections, the divisive issue of gay clergy as seen from the perspective of different faiths, and the actual experiences of democratic socialists in working with politics in their own communities. It's pretty hard to imagine that the readers of *RS* have no opinions whatsoever on these issues, and we are actually opening the floodgates in order to solicit your opinions for publication, with the time-honored caveat that there is no guarantee that we will publish everything we receive.

The idea here is that *RS* is *your* publication, as much for you to write for as to read. DSA's Commissions are meant to be active parts of the organization, and ours is



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**UNION MADE
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ILRS Congress Launches Campaign Against Extremism

At their triennial Congress in Lucerne, Switzerland in August, the International League of Religious Socialists (ILRS) kicked off a new campaign against the spread of religious and political extremism in society. The ILRS is the international political association of religious socialists, representing over 200,000 members of socialist parties worldwide. Mirroring the Socialist International (SI) by organizing within SI parties, the ILRS is an associated organization of the SI, in the same category as the Party of European Socialists. DSA's Religion & Socialism Commission has been a member organization of the ILRS since 1989.

Established in 1925, the amount of activity in the organization has increased dramatically in the past decade, as it has expanded its membership beyond social-democratic Europe, and has sought out ways in which its members can become more actively involved in both their parties and their communities.

The Campaign Against Religious and Political Extremism, starting off with a project called *Hand to Hand*, is an attempt to engage religious socialists in

hands-on projects that go beyond discussions between people of different faiths to genuine political actions aimed at confronting intolerance and building understanding. The text of the project follows below, and each member organization is asked to take the idea and make it their own.

In other news from the Congress, Swedish Member of Parliament Pär-Axel Sahlberg was elected the new President of the ILRS, after twenty years of service in the position by former MP Evert Svensson. Our own Andrew Hammer was re-elected as Secretary General, and our Judy Deutsch was re-elected as a Substitute (alternate) Member of the Executive Committee.

HAND TO HAND: A Project of the ILRS Campaign Against Religious and Political Extremism

The ILRS Campaign Against Religious and Political Extremism emerged out of the recognition that intolerance and the voices of extremism have become
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editor's notes

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the largest and oldest commission in DSA. If we also want it to be relevant to the future of the organization, then we have to have a lot more involvement from our "silent majority," starting with *Religious Socialism*.

When it comes to *RS*, don't wait to be asked to write something. Step right up and let us know what you're thinking. If you have suggestions for articles or issues we should be addressing, drop us a line, either by regular mail or by sending us an e-mail at religioussocialism@socialist.org. We need more than your subscription checks. *We need to hear from you.* Otherwise we're just talking to ourselves.

—Andrew Hammer



www.dsausa.org

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Religious Socialism
are available on our web site,
in Acrobat PDF format.
www.dsausa.org/rs

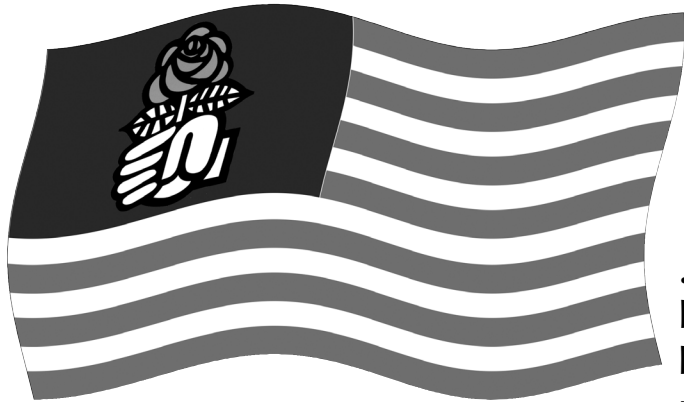
The image shows three overlapping covers of the journal 'Religious Socialism'. The top cover features the title 'The (Not-So) Hidden Agenda of Charitable Choice' and a portrait of a woman. The middle cover features the title 'Marx & Pasca' and a portrait of a man. The bottom cover features the title 'You Shall Not Steal?' and a portrait of a man. The journal is described as 'THE JOURNAL FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH AND SOCIALISM'.

Capturing the Flag

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Vietnam War years. Still, I wouldn't live anywhere else.

The current administration has hijacked American myths and language for its purposes, and we've responded with such slogans as "Peace is patriotic" or "Dissent is patriotic." But deep down, I think many of us feel such distaste for flag-waving and patriotic pieties that we don't sound convincing to our compatriots. And until we can communicate with others who love this country as deeply as we do, we can't hope to present a politics that will counter the politics of fear coming from Washington.



This problem for the left was put front and center for me last fall when *Dissent* magazine sponsored a panel on "Patriotism and the Left." Our panelists argued that even though as leftists we subscribe to universalistic principles and seek justice and peace for everyone in the world, we wouldn't get far in our own country unless we spoke in the American idiom. They invoked Frederick Douglass, Walt Whitman, William Sloane Coffin, Martin Luther King, Jr., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mother Jones, Eugene Debs, Jane Addams, Cesar Chavez, Harvey Milk, and said that the great social movements of class, gender, and race would never have gained momentum without appeals to patriotic ideals. *And almost no one in the room got it.* What they thought they heard was that we on the left had to adopt the symbols of the right in order to play the game. They didn't hear that we had to **rescue** the symbols **from** the right. We were accused of being self-serving and dishonest if we chose to use patriotic symbols rather than universal ones. Some people cancelled their subscriptions.

One reason why the right's slogans and ideas have been so compelling is that they're usually framed in

terms of war. The songs are often of a country bought in blood. And even though they might have been "good" wars, as with the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," which was written in support of troops fighting slavery, we're uneasy. We know the back story, that the blood was not only our forebears', but that of the people who were here first and the ones who came in chains. And we know what came later—the imperialist ventures, the betrayal of African Americans after the Civil War. But I want to raise the thought that our difficulty here could be another form of the cultural imperialism we claim to detest. It's as if no other country has as much to be ashamed of as we do. As if only **we** have sinned on such a grand scale.

I was in Milan, Italy when we invaded Iraq. I stood in the square in front of the Duomo and watched the crowds wave the rainbow flags that proclaimed *Pace*, or Peace. There was a lot of music, and much of it was American. People were swaying and clapping to "Down by the Riverside" and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" as a protest against U.S. policies.

Recently I saw a documentary about Dietrich

...until we can communicate with others who love this country as deeply as we do, we can't hope to present a politics that will counter the politics of fear coming from Washington.

Bonhoeffer, I learned that he took inspiration from the black churches in the United States. When he founded his own seminary, he made the students listen to the recordings of gospel songs that he had brought back.

In other words, songs that grew out of a religion imposed on the oppressed by the oppressor became universal enough to inspire a small band of resisters in Nazi Germany, thousands of antiwar protestors in an Italian city, and hundreds of thousands in our own country during the civil rights movement.

It **is** possible to take the symbols of a country we love, to struggle with them, to ask ourselves what we truly love, and from that love to fashion a patriotism that speaks to an inclusive and universal vision. ▀

Revised from a meditation by Maxine Phillips, delivered at Judson Memorial Church, New York City, July 6, 2003

ILRS Congress

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louder in our societies in recent years. The Hand to Hand project is an attempt to confront intolerance and extremism by trying to find common ground between people of different faiths, and more important, common plans of action which allow for members of different faith groups to come together in building a stronger and more united community.

We offer five common principles that we feel are shared by all faiths, and five ideas to act in common across religious lines to demonstrate those principles. In and of themselves, these points are only words. But when taken up by members of the community, they can become the beginning of the end of intolerance and social exclusion. We in the ILRS invite you to take these ideas, and to let us know how you use them.

Common Principles

- As religious socialists, we believe that it is possible for people of different faiths to live together in peace, and that all should have freedom to worship openly without fear of oppression or persecution.
- As religious socialists, we support the inherent equality of humanity before creation, and the abolition of poverty throughout the world.
- As religious socialists, we affirm the equality of women in all spheres of life. We seek to draw out that belief in our communities of faith until it becomes a visible reality.
- As religious socialists, we seek the liberation of the human spirit through just laws and the practice of social justice in civil society.
- As religious socialists, we teach the integrity of creation and our stewardship of the environment.

Common Actions

- Communities of faith should set aside regular times throughout the year when believers can tour the various religious houses in their cities. A day trip, where each of the houses of worship are visited, and the participants are allowed to witness how others worship, is one of the best ways we can overcome stereotypes about each other's beliefs. In this way, people can learn about each other's beliefs by meeting

and talking with people who have those beliefs. That makes the believers real, and not just subjects of a book about their faith.

- Communities of faith should come together as religious believers to support issues that correspond to the common goals defined above. For example, hate crimes are an injustice to the entire human family; when a hate crime occurs, members of the religious community, of different faiths, should co-ordinate common responses and statements to the public condemning the crime and offering solutions to combat hate.
- Communities of faith should consider ways in which their social outreach can be joined with those of other faiths. For example, rather than using their charity work to proselytise for one particular religion, different congregations could work together to address a social need in their community that is crucial for people of all faiths.
- To connect the local with the global, leaders of the religious groups in the community could discuss common work on one or two international issues, to demonstrate the interdependence of humanity and its religious groups. Having Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus working together in one place on an issue that affects Buddhists in another place sends an important, tangible signal that each of our faiths teaches us to care for the other in our midst.
- An interfaith women's group should be organised to identify issues of concern to women of different faiths, and allow for support in the community across religious lines. Often times women's issues are suppressed or hidden by reactionary currents within faith groups. Having a place where women can share those concerns regardless of their individual faiths is empowering and at the same time allows for the true role of women within a faith to be expressed openly.

We encourage groups to think of their own ideas on how to work together and find common issues between their religious groups. Let us know about new ideas and methods that apply to your area. Working to fight religious and political extremism is everyone's responsibility, but for religious socialists, it is also our obligation. We welcome your comments. 📌

More information on the ILRS is available from their website: <http://ilrs.org>. They may be contacted by e-mail at secretariat@ilrs.org



PETER LAARMAN

At the United Nations, this has been declared the year of fresh water. Which is to say that the world community is supposed to be not just reflecting but also acting on issues related to the supply of fresh drinking water for more than six billion human beings.

Water used to be understood as something that was free and plentiful in all but a few desert climes, but it hasn't worked out that way. So many places now lack the proper infrastructure to deliver fresh water. But what is still more striking in recent years is that fresh drinking water is no longer viewed as a basic condition of life and thus one that should be free to all who live and breathe. Water has been commodified. In most of the developing world, water will now be bought and sold, and there is already a fierce battle raging among big multinational corporations for ultimate control of the world's water markets. Water is going to be the oil of the 21st century—with all of the attendant power struggles and bitter wars—unless we can reclaim the idea that water belongs to everyone and should be freely shared. In the words of Jesus, if your brother is thirsty, give him something to drink. That was never a very controversial teaching before. Now it is. Now it's give him something to drink—and make sure he pays you enough to turn a tidy profit.

Our religious traditions are filled with poetry and prophecy equating water with God's grace, flowing freely and rising up out of the dry ground, appearing in bountiful pools in the midst of wilderness, creating life and peace and contentment. "He maketh me to lie down beside still waters, he restoreth my soul."

But the Bible's meditation goes much further than the obvious metaphor of water as refreshment. Other ancient Near Eastern religions had gods that were linked to water and thus to fertility. What is distinctive in Israel's ethical monotheism is the astonishing claim

that when human beings choose to live in just community, the earth itself will rejoice in that and participate in that. Earth itself will be healed when we do justice and love mercy; springs of cool water will begin to flow where none have flowed before. The trees themselves will clap their hands, and the land will yield its increase as neighbor love increases. The Bible's picture of restored community is thus also a picture of planet happiness. This is wonderful, vital information. We shouldn't dismiss it as just so much poetry. We ought to think about what it might mean for us now, as water wars and other resource wars begin to cloud the dawn of a new century.

We have strayed so far from our agrarian roots by now that it is hard for us to hear the groaning of Mother Earth under all of the oppressions and insults heaped upon her by our heedless overconsumption. Our deafness now comes at a cost, because to miss the earth's cycle and to miss the earth's rhythms is to miss a big part of human happiness.

But there is another cost to our deafness besides its spiritual cost, and this is the imminent ecological catastrophe itself, a catastrophe that is directly linked to greed and injustice.

In Cancun [at the economic summit in September 2003] the big economic powers wrangled over the so-called "Doha Round" of international trade relations. But it wasn't just the usual wrangle this time. A remarkable thing happened. A coalition of countries representing more than half of the world's people rose up to say, in effect, "No more trade agreements until you Western countries stop subsidizing your farmers in a way that makes it impossible for our peasants to survive."

All virtue is never on just one side of these disputes. But it is safe to say that the basic divide here is between subsistence agriculture in places like East Africa and the massively mechanized mega-agriculture practiced in places like Texas and California.

What moral sense does it make for Texas to grow subsidized cotton and for California to grow subsidized rice when consumers could get these things more cheaply from Africa and Asia and thus also prevent the peasant economies of those places from imploding completely? It makes no sense, except that the cotton growers of Texas and the rice growers of California are powerful interests in those states, politically well connected.

Even the French and the Germans, who normally like to champion Third World claims in a way that irritates and embarrasses the United States — even they can't escape blame on this one, because they heavily subsidize their own farmers and protect their domestic markets from cut-rate imported food and fiber.

While these disputes continue, Mother Earth cries out for mercy. The peasant farmers, driven to despair, abandon traditional cultivation and start slashing and burning lands that should be protected. Whole ecosystems are ruined in the struggle of the poor merely to survive. Meanwhile, the rich farmers of the American West suck up still more scarce water — taxpayer subsidized water — from rivers and underground aquifers. They dump still more chemicals — pesticides and herbicides — on the land, and they dump still more antibiotics into the animal food supply to expand their yields despite already glutted markets. Under the insane rules created by NAFTA and the WTO, even subsidized U.S. corn — genetically modified corn, at that — is now shipped into Mexico and ground there to make tortillas, while Mexican peasant farmers — the *mestizos* and Mayans for whom the maize is sacred — are forced off of land they have cultivated from time immemorial.

These distortions do not simply constitute an economic and environmental disaster. They also portend a spiritual disaster, a very deep and grievous spiritual wound that the Scriptures accurately diagnose. In the end, unless human beings mend their ways and their doings, earth will finally withhold her bounty completely — and the beautiful land will be turned into desert. But also in the end, the human spirit will wither and dry up along with the earth's water.

Instead of treating Earth as our mother or our sister, or as our dearest friend, we allow her to be brutalized and raped as if she were a hated enemy. And so a little bit of us is brutalized and raped as the destruction of our home planet's ancient life continues to gather force.

Judaism, much more than Christianity, is beginning to find its roots again in the soil and in the cycles of nature. Fall and harvest begin the Jewish year, and younger Jews in particular are exploring in more and more depth what that means. Christians for the most part have not yet begun to retrace their steps to the vineyards and the groves and to the wheat fields and orchards that form the basis of our common life, both materially and spiritually.

There were once two notions of the American Sublime, but now only one survives. The order and reserve of the Eastern countryside — rolling hills, lush meadows, well-kept farms — once held its own against the more singular glories of Yellowstone and Yosemite and Bryce Canyon. But no more. Simple rustic scene of cows grazing on the hillside, apples ripening in the orchard, the reapers going out under the booming sky to gather in the golden grain: such scenes have lost their claim on most of us. We don't sense the deep-level *rightness* of them, and I fear we are significantly poorer as a result.

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In this respect we should give at least some credit to the bureaucrats of Paris and Berlin and Brussels, who in seeking to maintain traditional farming in their countries at least recognize the connection between agriculture and *culture*. They understand culture as a unity that takes in the soil that supports us, the food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, even the quality of the landscape that feeds the hunger in our eyes for beauty and completeness. We here don't care much about such matters. *Food is food* — *no big deal*, we say. We don't care where it comes from or how it is produced. We have become almost totally desensitized to the spirit of the place where we live. It's part of our growing deafness to the cry of the earth.

I may be naïve, but I hope we will be able to recover some of the sublimity of ordinary landscape and some feeling for the ordinary things of earth. I hope we will be able to reconnect with and support local food production, and in that important way to begin to listen to the good earth again.

It may even be that this will become one of the ways we begin to take back power from corporations that see everything — water, air, all natural life, and even human life — as mere commodities to be bought and

JAMES LUTHER ADAMS AND OUR SOCIALIST HERITAGE

REV. JUDITH DEUTSCH

The mission statement on the front page of *Religious Socialism* — the quarterly publication of the Religion and Socialism Commission of the Democratic Socialists of America — says:

Motivated by our different religious traditions, we believe that attitudes, priorities, and institutions can be changed to reflect a just and democratic use of the universe's bounty; we believe in the value of work that contributes to the common good; and in the healing influence of respect for the differences as well as the commonness of human experience.

James Luther Adams, a Unitarian Universalist minister and theological ethicist, was an active member of the Cambridge-based chapter of this Commission, and he was considered "Member #1" in the UUs for Socialism group that Bob Hemstreet started, and that held meetings during the 80's at our UUA General Assemblies.

During his lifetime (1901-1994), Jim inspired theologians, ethicists, ministers, parishioners, lawyers, businessmen, artists and countless others in the many areas of living to which he gave his support.

Jim's socialist ideas are clearly stated in his 1978 sermon, "God and Economics" wherein he says:

Democratic Socialism ...urges that the democratic principles that have obtained in politics should be applied to the economic sphere...the aim is that of combining the prophetic sense of responsibility for the character of society at large with the social ideals that came to birth in congregational polity — the consent of the governed, participation in the process of making social-institutional decisions, the "bearing of each other's burdens," the dispersion of power and responsibility, the achievement of a just relation between the parts.



These values are now shared by people whose rootage is not in the explicit tradition of congregational polity, and they require application not only in the sphere of industry but also in education, in health services, and in the control of natural resources. The participation of the governed here would be calculated to repersonalize the individual participants in a pluralistic society which is now threatened by the giantism endemic in the culture...

Twenty-five years later we see that what Jim called the endemic giantism of 1978 is dwarfed by the giantism of today.

In this sermon, "God and Economics," Jim derives democratic socialism partly from the Old Testament concept of covenant and partly from the concept of covenant that emerged from 17th century Puritan congregations.

Referring to the Old Testament concept of covenant, Jim says: *covenant involves a deeper kind of personal relationship than a contract and should not be confused with any form of bargained pact... [covenant is] a means whereby a transnatural, transcendent deity is represented as binding his worshippers to himself by a sovereign act of grace eliciting a moral agreement and calling them to obedient allegiance and faithfulness... [covenant is] an agreement ostensibly entered into in voluntary consent, an agreement which forms a bond of loyalty for the sake of fellowship with God and of harmonious living – righteousness and peace.*

Jim maintains: *The basis of the covenant is not so much law as it is affectionate response to liberation from bondage arousing trust and faithfulness on the part of the individual as well as of the collective, and that: Violation of the covenant is not so much a breaking of the law as it is betrayal of trust — a violation of relatedness.*

About the concept of covenant that arose from the 17th century Puritans who, in their self-governing churches, wished to be self-supporting and "liberated from the hierarchical authority of bishops or clergy and from the

association of the church hierarchy with the state and the monarch," Jim says:

"It has been argued that the self-governing congregation with its radical laicism and its emphasis on literacy became the model for democratic political theory, that the idea of the democratic state was born by analogy from the conception of the self-governing congregation. The self-governing congregations became also the seed of a pluralistic, multi-group society... [which represented]...a radical dispersion of power and responsibility, the dispersion of the capacity and freedom to participate in the making of social, institutional decisions."

Jim notes that there is good reason to believe that members of these covenanted churches were "independent folk and small employers" in search of greater freedom against chartered monopolies.

He says: *it is a striking thing that the pattern of meaning adopted later in laissez-faire economic theory (depending upon free market and not upon status) was analogous to that of congregational covenant theory. In both spheres the assumption apparently was that if the parts are authentic (or efficient), the whole will take care of itself by virtue of "providential" automatic harmony...The parts are not, as in earlier prophetic theory of covenant, responsible for the character of the society as a whole. They are responsible rather, for promoting the kind of society which protects freedom for the parts.*

In this same sermon, Adams cites some nineteenth-century Unitarians who addressed this very subject:

William Ellery Channing, the Unitarian minister of what was then Boston's Federalist Church (and is now the Arlington Street Church), as cited as saying in 1832: "the old principles of property are to undergo a fiery trial...the monstrous inequalities of conditions must be redressed..."

James Freeman Clarke, a Unitarian minister and Professor of Natural Religion and Christian Doctrine at Harvard is cited as saying in 1844: "The evils arising from want of organization appear most evidently when we consider this other great principle of modern society — freedom in the direction of industry. We have adopted the free trade principle in its fullest extent. We say, leave trade and industry to regulate themselves... On the let alone principle capital will always be able to take advantage of labor."

William Henry Channing, also a Unitarian minister and William Ellery Channing's nephew, is cited as saying in 1845 and somewhat later:

The charity we need is justice...justice in production, justice in distribution... The error of the modern doctrine of liberty has been its tone of selfish independence; its idol has been individualism... liberalism cannot stop short of socialism...and Horace Mann, a nineteenth century Unitarian and reformer of education, as calling for: a laborious process of renovation sustained by the power and resources of the government and as maintaining: wealth...by force of unjust laws and institutions is filched from the producer and gathered in vast masses, to give power and luxury and aggrandizement to a few. Of production there is no end; of distribution, there is no beginning.

Knowing that Jim admired Paul Tillich a great deal, and that he had translated and edited many of Tillich's writings, including Tillich's essay "Religious Socialism," I was astonished to find that there is no mention of Tillich in the version of "God and Economics" that is available to me. Possibly Jim had the good sense to realize that Tillich's ideas on socialism are too complex to be conveyed in a sermon. However, in his memoir, *Not Without Dust and Heat*, Jim states that, when he came upon Tillich's religious socialism, "I felt that I had arrived at a new haven."

Tillich says, in his 1930 essay "Religious Socialism," "Religious socialism is distinguished from utopianism by the fact that its goal is...born concretely in history" and he says that socialism's goal is theonomy (the "commanding element in the unconditional demand for the ultimate good, for truth and for justice").

Roger Shinn, a theological ethicist and former student of Adams, quotes Tillich as saying about religious socialism: "It is more than a new economic system. It is a comprehensive understanding of existence, the form of theonomy demanded and expected by our present Kairos...[that is, the demand for truth and justice demanded by our present moment of opportunity and decision]."

Shinn points out, however, that "...Tillich's socialism is not merely abstract. Its sharp bite is evident in two ways. First, deriding "moralistic" and "intellectual socialism," he took seriously the class struggle and sided with the proletariat. Second, the Nazis quickly recognized its power and its threat. They

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suppressed...[his 1933 book *The Socialist Decision*.] And, when Tillich criticized the Brownshirts for roughing up students, authorities dismissed him from the faculty at Frankfurt. A little later...an official of the Nazi ministry of education offered Tillich a chair in theology at the University of Berlin, if he would repudiate *The Socialist Decision*. Tillich laughed in his face."

And Adams followed in that tradition.

Born into a poor family where his father served for a time as a Baptist minister and later joined the Plymouth Brethren, an anti-worldly group that believed in the inerrancy of the Bible and the importance of each member striving for holiness, Jim's reading in and out of high school introduced him to the larger world. At about the age of fifteen, his father's illness prompted him to work full-time to support his family. After taking a night-school course in legal shorthand, Jim started working as secretary in the local prosecutor's office, and afterwards he became the secretary of the superintendent and then chief clerk of the Northern Pacific Railway. Desiring to expand his knowledge, he left that position to attend the University of Minnesota, working at the railroad in a different capacity eight hours every night so as to be able to continue supporting his family and to pay his college expenses.

Jim also took a full schedule of courses, attended the local Baptist and Unitarian churches, and participated in a discussion club that asked many questions about the fundamentalist religions in which the participants had been raised. Strongly influenced by the advice of his professor of public speaking who recognized and said that Jim — who was talking against religion all the time — had religion as his major passion and should therefore be a preacher Jim enrolled in Harvard Divinity School.

His experiences with his professors and with the materials of the courses that he took at Harvard stayed with him throughout his life. These experiences included exposure to The Social Gospel — the preaching that said that people must work to improve social conditions so as to obtain or at least approach the Kingdom of God on earth. But Jim says in his memoir: "...for me the big change came when I read in the early thirties...Rudolf Otto's book, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man: A Study In the History of Religion*.... [Otto]...argues with great acumen, that the Kingdom of God is breaking in now...Otto gathered evidence to show Jesus proclaiming not only

something in the future but something emerging in history now, of which he was a part."

Jim was ordained by the Second Church in Salem on May 25, 1927 and was called to serve that church. During the first year of his ministry there, Jim became involved in a labor strike at the Pequot Mills. He preached at a joint Protestant service, saying that the workers' side, as well as the mill owners' side should be circulated; and that impartial judges should assess the claims and statistics of both sides. Hitherto, the newspapers had printed only the owners' side. Jim took his sermon to the local newspaper which, starting on the front page, published it in its entirety the next day. On that same day, the mill owners met with the workers at 5:00 P.M. By 7:00P.M. the strike was settled in such a way that at least a thousand mill workers paraded to Jim's home and thanked him. Not one member of his church reproached him, even though some of them were mill executives.

Jim made his second trip to Germany in 1936. His first, funded by a prize he had won in a sermon contest, was in 1927. During that first trip, he found himself in an argument about Jews with some Nazis at a National Socialist Rally. Jim was rescued by a German bystander who was grateful to Americans for the treatment some Americans had afforded him in his earlier merchant-marine days. This man whisked Jim away and took him home to dinner, explaining, "...in Germany these days, if you talk like that, you'll be beaten up."

Prior to his 1936 trip, Jim had ascertained that in the United States "the major religion in churches was pietistic, emphasizing interpersonal relations and not collective responsibility." He found the same thing in Germany but noted, "The muscle of Hitler's totalitarian regime went even further and eliminated any organizations with some independence and established voluntarily by citizens."

When he described to faculty members at Marburg the role of the American Civil Liberties Union in trying to keep the government obedient to the Bill of Rights, Jim was met with shock at the actuality of members of organizations being allowed to criticize the government.

Jim found that opposition to Nazism was stronger in the churches than it was in the universities, but that most of the opposition existed in a small percentage of the Protestant churches, those that were called the Confessing Churches.

Members of the established churches, called German Christians, affirmed the validity of the Nazi regime. William Pauck, a German-born theologian who afterwards worked with Jim in the United States, commented, “the German Christians are willing to adjust themselves to Nazism even when its principles have a religious flavor.”

Jim later reflected: “the churches that opposed the Nazis were too late. They had not shown concern with the problems of the masses, the problems of insecurity and unemployment. Thus they prepared the way for revolution. [that is, the Nazi revolution].”

During his 1936 trip, Jim had: “carefully cut cardboard the size of the drawers of...[his]...desk, placed them on the bottom, thus hiding beneath them secret papers from the underground” (the anti-Nazi Confessing Church group). The Nazis searched through the papers in his room and did not find the hidden ones.

Jim was interrogated by the Gestapo at their headquarters for two-and-a-half hours and his passport was kept by them for three weeks. The Gestapo had a detailed list of his activities during his 1927 and 1936 trips, but it didn't seem to know that he was smuggling money out of the country for the Jewish owner of a Frankfurt bookstore.

Upon his return to the United States, Jim found that, filled with memories of his acquaintances among German theologians and members of the Confessing Churches in Nazi Germany, he had, “an almost irrepensible desire to change any injustice... [he]...encountered, [an almost irrepensible desire] to set things right.”

For twenty years Jim and his family lived in Chicago while he taught at the Unitarian Meadville Lombard Theological School and the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago, and lived the life of a scholar, a professor, a husband, a father, a music lover and a social activist. He also obtained his Ph.D. during this period. (1945)

As chairman in the field of Ethics and Society at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Jim found that his political experiences which had been greatly affected by his earlier exposure to Nazism “fed into [his] classes.”

Believing strongly that it was necessary for ministers and theologians to know the institutions of the society

in which they worked, just as the Old Testament prophets had known the institutions of their society, Jim required that his doctoral students pass examinations in four social sciences.

He worked against the rampant racism he found in Chicago in the fields of housing and employment and in hospitals and schools.

In November 1943, Jim was among those who formed the IVI (the Independent Voters of Illinois) — ‘to galvanize into action the intelligent, but unorganized liberal voters.’ He was co-chair of the IVI at its inception, and, in an effort to engender the interest of undergraduates in political activities and responsibilities, Jim co-led courses at the University of Chicago on Religion and Politics, Power and Democracy, Voluntary Associations and Citizen Participation together with Kermit Eby — the IVI's first executive secretary (who was then CIO National Director of Education and Research and later CIO National Director of Education and Community Responsibilities).

After it organized precincts the IVI was able to demonstrate its power, showing selected politicians that it had effectively gotten out the votes on their behalf. On one of Jim's visits to him, Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes told Jim, “I've been saving the literature of the IVI as the best damn political literature in the United States today.”

The IVI supported the candidacy of Paul Douglas for senator from Illinois and of Adlai Stevenson for governor. It was the first organization to propose Adlai Stevenson as candidate for the office of president of the United States.

At the reception given for Jim when he left the faculty of the University of Chicago, Rabbi Jacob Weinstein recognized Jim's efforts in the “social battlefield for better schools, better politics, civil rights and the abolition of restrictive covenants.” Professor Rheinstein of the Law School commented on how Jim “had spent the last twenty years in attempting to tell the American people the meaning of Nazism and its internal threat in the U.S.A.”

Jim was not a supporter of utopian socialism, the movement in which groups of people volunteer to live together in socialist communities that are outside of the mainstream of society. Jim lamented their lack of participation in the larger community's political



Radical Space: Building the House of the People

Margaret Kohn

Cornell University Press, 2003.

ALEX MIKULICH

Does physical place and the constitution of space matter for social, political, and economic change? Do particular built environments and spaces serve disciplinary regimes or transformative social and political projects? How do we discern the difference between environments built for social control and those designed for nurturing resistance and emancipatory projects? Margaret Kohn thoroughly addresses these questions through a historical and spatial inquiry into the Italian-socialist *case del popolo* (houses of the people) that transformed the social, political, and economic landscape of late 19th and early 20th century Italy.



The lively narrative and creative spatial analysis of *Radical Space* deconstructs past assumptions concerning Marxist socialism and liberalism and, by drawing heavily upon Italian practices of reform socialism and cooperativism, suggests a renewed vision and practice of radical democracy. Initially, Kohn assumed that an examination of the Italian cooperative movement would gain insight into the feasibility of market socialism. However, as she combed through Italian archives she was puzzled by what she found and stumbled upon an unexpected insight—that the distinctive social space and buildings created by the cooperative movement facilitated a major transformation of working class life in late 19th and early 20th century Italy.

The *case del popolo* (houses of the people) did not suggest careful social engineering or reflect socialist utopian fantasies. Although the vernacular

architectural style of the building fit into the town, Kohn found its presence disconcerting because it “complicated the tourist’s map of Florence on which the Church, the state, and the bourgeoisie had only left traces of power.” In opposition to these established sites of power, the houses of the people, chambers of labor, and cooperatives “served as a reminder that under adverse conditions, the subaltern classes created political spaces that served as nodal points of public life.”

Kohn effectively retrieves how “subaltern classes”—Gramsci’s term for popular excluded classes who include industrial workers, artisans, laborers, technical workers, landless peasants, home-based workers, and women—literally created the physical spaces that harbored, birthed, and linked together diverse struggles that resisted oppression, nurtured solidarity, and facilitated novel political participation.

Unlike prisons, factories, or houses of fascism, houses of the people did not facilitate police surveillance or mass meetings designed for propaganda and control. A detailed comparison between these diverse sites illuminates how a radically democratic political vision was expressed through particular architectural styles and buildings. These sites of resistance provided basic needs for food and drink, created autonomous places of workers’ sociability free from factory owners and managers, facilitated political circles, and connected producer and consumer cooperatives, mutual aid societies, and taverns where people could discern economic change, discuss strategies, and plan an alternative politics. Kohn illustrates how other socialists and cooperatives throughout Europe expressed alternative political visions and practices architecturally, including the architect Victor Horta’s *Maison du Peuple*, inaugurated on “red Easter” 1899 in Brussels and the *Ons Huis* (Our House) built in 1902 by the *Vooruit* cooperative (founded in 1881 by enterprising Belgian textile workers).

Radical Space reveals how these overlooked places and spaces of resistance have been historically obscured by the myths of the factory, the proletariat, and scientific socialism. Against Marx and Gramsci, Kohn asks: “how can the factory, the site of disciplinary power and exploitation par excellence, serve as a nodal point in the struggle against workers’ subordination?” Partly because their version of the factory was idealized, Marx and Gramsci did not go far enough in their analyses of the factory as a system of power and exploitation that could not harbor sites of resistance. For example, citing how a socialist

newspaper in Naples criticized factories that literally locked workers inside and used dormitories to intensify control, Kohn wryly notes how these workers did not need Michel Foucault's analysis to understand that the factory was a primary site of disciplinary power.

Spatial analysis, through Kohn's historical-archeological approach, is not an alternative to traditional social and political theory but an overlooked dimension that opens new insight into working class movements. By its focus on the interpretation of texts, traditional social and political theory tends to miss how material resources — such as buildings — leave traces of the social and political vision and practices of a people in a particular place and time. Even critical social theorists, such as Walter Benjamin, Theodore Adorno, and Michel Foucault, who sought to identify underground forces and practices capable of resisting domination, could mask emancipatory movements because of their overemphasis upon practices of domination. Spatial analysis uncovers new knowledge about past practices that suggest "submerged possibilities for thought and praxis" for contemporary proponents of equality, solidarity, and democracy.

The rhizomatic quality of the alternative social spaces and buildings created by Italian resistance movements suggest insights for contemporary resistance to globalization. The word "rhizome" literally refers to a creeping, horizontal stem that grows aerial leaves and a system of roots at, or just below, the earth. Like rhizomes, houses of the people lacked a center and hierarchy and did not arise from a single root but from "diverse social formations linked through a web of multiple connections." This rhizomatic quality of houses of the people distinguished them from bourgeois associations and paternalistic societies for the betterment of working classes.

Kohn extends this rhizomatic analogy through five key elements that describe the power of these spaces of resistance. First, they brought together diverse organizations and groups who could meet in a safe place to identify commonalities, bracket factional identities, and build solidarity. Second, these protected spaces fostered "oppositional practices" and a culture of resistance. Third, as coalitional structures, they were able to mobilize participants for political projects that

transcended parochial concerns while maintaining democratic accountability at the base. Fourth, they were managed democratically by members themselves with rules and by-laws that ensured democratic voting and deliberation. Fifth, they sustained enduring commitments from members because of the density of social, political, and economic ties.

Radical Space advocates radical democracy "as a struggle against economic subordination" and as an inclusive arena in which citizens can debate, apply, and revise diverse perspectives of the polis.

In addition to providing material benefits, shopping in the co-op or drinking in the *case del popolo* connected people's daily routine to broader projects of political and economic resistance. Kohn warns that in the current age of globalization, while the internet may be a critical tool for resistance, the electronic web itself cannot fulfill the criteria met by the houses of the people in face to face organizing.

Kohn's argument for radical democracy also draws upon less recognized Italian socialists, like Antonio Vergnanini and Filippo Turati, who became overshadowed in history by Antonio Gramsci. Opposing purely economic co-ops, Vergnanini's integral cooperativism emphasized the social and democratic roles of the cooperative. She highlights Vergnanini's vision of the cooperative as a site of

struggle that reflected a culture or "microcosm of socialist polity." Filippo Turati articulated a socialist municipalism similar to Eduard Bernstein's thought. Turati sought to avoid extremes of violence and quietism, build alliances between workers and middle classes, and utilize the power of social ties in the commune to resist the dominant powers of church and state and build consensus for social legislation through solidaristic initiatives.

RS readers will find Kohn's discussion of communitarian arguments helpful, especially through her critique of the influential work of Robert Putnam, the Harvard sociologist famous for studies of civic life such as *Bowling Alone*. Putnam claims that non-

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political organizations like bowling leagues, choral societies, sports clubs, or bird watching groups help citizens develop the trust and cooperation that is a precondition of effective democracy. Kohn's intensive scrutiny of Putnam's research on Italy (see *Making Democracy Work*) reveals how Putnam's "strangely apolitical and conflict free" vision of civic life fails to notice how practices of resistance create democracy.

Among several other insights, Kohn's research demonstrates that "regions of Italy with the highest density of socialist membership in 1914 and 1920 are the ones with successful democratic practices today." In sum, sites of political resistance nearly a century ago were far more effective at leaving a legacy of effective democracy than non-political associations.

Radical Space advocates radical democracy "as a struggle against economic subordination" and as an inclusive arena in which citizens can debate, apply, and revise diverse perspectives of the polis. Neither Marxist nor liberal, Kohn integrates deliberative, democratic processes with a reformist socialism that recognizes the need for multiple, pluralistic, and interconnected movements and projects that subvert the dominant social, political, and economic systems.

In an interesting theological twist, Kohn concludes:

These struggles, which are now at best hazy memories, are forgotten parts of who we have become. Why disturb the past, forcing that which is reluctant to speak to us? Walter Benjamin wrote of the cognitive and political power of "involuntary remembering of a redeemed humanity." This strategy is based on the conviction that momentarily disrupting the certainties of the past may open upon the

possibility of reconfiguring the future. Perhaps achieving this goal requires the voluntary remembering of an unredeemed humanity.

Bravo! As Reinhold Niebuhr argued, the human inclination toward justice makes democracy a *possibility*, while the opposite inclination toward injustice makes democracy *necessary*. Kohn's otherwise insightful analysis and critique of the institutional Roman Catholic Church tends to dismiss the ways that Catholic faith, beliefs, and rituals may have contributed to the creative social, political, and economic practices of the houses of the people. Given the pervasiveness of Italian Catholicism and Kohn's universal dismissal of the relevance of Catholic subculture for sites of resistance, perhaps the culture of Catholicism slightly influenced the alternative worldview of the Italian houses of the people. *Radical Space* fails to examine how Italian socialists—even those who may have rejected the institutional church—may have drawn upon their Catholic worldview to build the houses of the people. *RS* readers might recall, for example, that even though Michael Harrington rejected Roman Catholicism, his thought and practice of socialism heavily reflected his Catholic worldview.

More important, religion and religious worldviews played an enormous positive role for in nearly every major independence movement for social change in the twentieth century, including India, El Salvador, the Philippines, the Polish solidarity movement, South Africa, and the American Civil Rights movement. Do we notice how an unredeemed humanity, through all these sites of resistance may reflect God's action, luring us individually and collectively to build the house of a transformed and redeemed humanity? ▀

Alex Mikulich is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at St. Joseph College and a former editor of Religious Socialism.

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Planet Happiness

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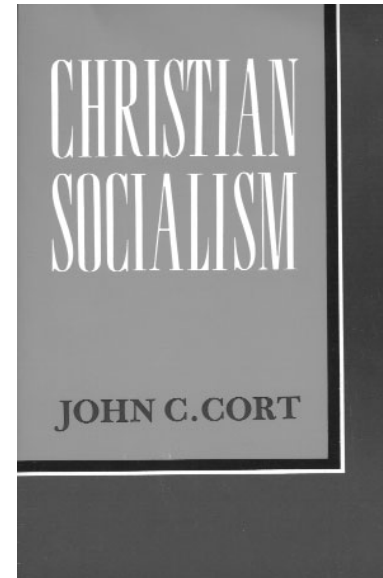
sold. This was not the way it was supposed to be. Not at the beginning. *I gave you earth as a vineyard, says the Lord God, and you were to be my own vineyard — a community of justice and mercy and mutual respect. And look what you have done to my pleasant planting? The earth itself is grieved because of your greed and your incessant warring. What shall I now do with this ruined vineyard?*

After the terrible and bloody 20th century, we can hope that this 21st century will at last give us the turning point we desperately need to envision the earth once again as an abundant garden with enough and more than enough to share. We can hope that we will find the strength and courage to do God's will and make that sharing a reality. Justice for all who dwell upon the earth, and justice for earth itself as our sister and friend and home.

This is the beatific vision we need to focus on today. Not the Second Coming of a savior from the sky, but just the first coming of true earthly and earthy consciousness. A messianic age but with no messiah: just a time of peace in which each will be able to sit under his own vine and under her own fig tree, feeling nothing but planet happiness and in that enormous sense, merely enjoy. ▀

This article is adapted from a sermon preached at Judson Memorial Church in New York City on September 14, 2003.

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James Luther Adams

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processes and felt that they weakened the democratic structure of, and the possibility of justice in the larger society.

He was, however, a firm believer in and supporter of voluntary associations, the non-governmental, non-profit, public-regarding associations which members of a democratic nation can form and to which they can belong. About voluntarism, Jim said: "It refers to a principal way in which the individual through association with others 'gets a piece of the action.' It is the means whereby the individual participates in the process of making social decisions. This process, particularly when it affects public policies, requires struggle, for in some fashion it generally entails a reshaping, and perhaps even a redistribution of power."

And it is power with which Jim was ultimately concerned — the power of each individual, the power of each group in society. In his 1969 essay, "*Blessed Are the Powerful*," Jim tells us: "power must be newly defined as a creative innovative relationship between those who have the freedom to participate in making social decisions and those who do not have that freedom. Obviously, the Christian cannot be content with philanthropy, for

philanthropy may be a means of keeping others powerless; nor can he be content with simple majority rule. Conventional philanthropy and majority rule can be a means of still further alienating the marginal man, and thus increasing his self-hatred and resentment. There is a good deal of evidence to show that the deeper the sense of alienation the greater the sense of hopelessness, and the more likely the resort to violence. In this context, the people with power engender the violence...The authenticity of power is determined by the ends it serves and the means it uses. The truly powerful are those who serve large purposes and can accomplish them. This kind of fulfillment requires "power with," not "power over;" it requires love."

You may remember that in the section of his sermon "*God and Economics*" quoted toward the beginning of this article, Jim says that in both laissez-faire economic theory and in congregational covenant theory, the parts are responsible for promoting the kind of society which protects freedom for the parts.

"Power with" is an essential part of that freedom.

That is largely what modern day democratic socialism is about. ■

Judy Deutsch is a contributing editor to RS.



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