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Acting Local, *Thinking* Global in Post-War British Anarchism[*]

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ABSTRACT

Internationalism has always been a major strand of anarchist political thought where it works on several levels. It has described their commitment to dynamic cosmopolitanism but also dictated revolutionary strategy and structured their social alternatives. In the post-war years, however, many anarchist thinkers, confronting the implications of the atomic bomb for state power and global governance, acknowledged the need for strategic revision. Retreating from the idea of revolution as a series of national armed uprisings, they shifted, instead, towards endorsing an 'act local, *think* global' approach to policy. But what did it mean to think global? This article focuses on British post-war anarchists and explores their spectrum of approaches to this strategy shift. While it recognises a common move towards more permeable notions of the local-global dynamic, it also argues for a richer differentiation among their responses than is usually acknowledged.

1. Introduction

Internationalism has long been 'one of the few clear and stable principles of anarchism.'[1] From the earliest formation of anarchism as a modern political discourse, it has operated on multiple levels. Firstly, as Ruth Kinna argued, it provided anarchists a way of describing the kind of dynamic cosmopolitanism they consider necessary to ensure maximum human freedom and security by preventing the formation of all static configurations of power (like the state).[2] Secondly, it offered a resource for thinking concretely about anarchist social alternatives. In place of the nation state, writers from Proudhon to Bakunin to Kropotkin, envisaged a global lattice of federated guilds or communes or cities, all spilling over formerly 'official boundaries' and co-operating in the free exchange of people, ideas, and goods.

Finally, it informed practical strategy. Most of the so-called 'classical' anarchists acknowledged that a single nation or region could not become anarchist alone. No neighbouring or hosting State powers would either tolerate the threat posed to its own stability nor resist the temptation to intervene during the vulnerable process of transition. As

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such, the need to fend off external aggressors would arise immediately, forcing the issue of border control and constraining the very mobility that anarchists considered definitive. Anarchism, then, had always to be a world movement with the ultimate aim of fully appropriating and redistributing the means of power.

By 1947, however, art critic, poet, and anarchist advocate Herbert Read declared that the absolute power which the atomic bomb handed to state leaders changed matters irreversibly. It meant that world revolution in the sense of a co-ordinated physical action followed by the global implementation of a federated system was now impossible. The movement, he continued, had to adapt, or become a romantic byway of history.[3] In one respect, this was only to accept that the world had long been shaped by complex multi-state economic entanglements and military alliances. The bomb only underscored this, confirming that the nature of political power had fundamentally changed. It was harder than ever to identify, let alone destroy, its centres and sources. What, then, were the options?

Read, along with Alex Comfort, Colin Ward and Nicolas Walter are often considered part of a British 'bridging generation' who, in the post-war years, helped usher in the 'new anarchism.'[4] The four men were all connected to *Freedom* the journal started by Kropotkin and Charlotte Wilson in 1886 and rescued from oblivion by Vernon Richards and Marie Louise Berneri in 1936. Although not formally affiliated with the *Freedom* anarchists, April Carter, an activist for the Direct Action Committee, also made an important contribution to anarchist rethinking at this time.

The broad features of the 'new anarchism' are generally described as: (1) a rejection of revolution in the sense of a domino-effect of violent national uprisings, (2) an emphasis, instead, on non-violent methods, (3) prefiguration,[5] or the reconciliation of means with ends (a peaceful society can only be produced by peaceful means), and (4) the promotion of gradual change through the transformation of human relationships.[6] Although none of this entailed any less commitment to world revolution, the stress on non-violence and individuals meant that direct action was necessarily more circumscribed in its scope and ambition. In this sense, 'new anarchists' turned eagerly to the maxim 'act local, think global' as a guiding principle of practice but faced the challenge of defining what it was to 'think global' in any meaningful sense.

In fact, there was little that new about either the 'new anarchism' or the ideal of 'act local, think global'. New anarchism had long been a feature of anarchist discourse, particularly strong within a Christian, pacifist, Tolstoyan, strand of the movement which emphasised personal, moral transformation as the root source of larger social change.[7] In a post-nuclear world, this element probably became more prominent simply because it seemed more plausible. Similarly, 'act local, think global' had long roots in British social thought. The phrase itself is usually attributed to urban sociologist Patrick Geddes who, along with Ebenezer Howard of the Garden Cities movement, knew and revered Kropotkin. Geddes read and admired *Mutual Aid*. Howard's *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* and Kropotkin's *Field, Factories, Workshops* were both published in 1898.[8]

In one sense, as Benjamin Pauli has argued, the main challenge for the post-war generation was more methodological than philosophical.[9] Many classical ideas – which, as noted above, never amounted to a monolithic body of thought – not only retained their value but increased in relevance. Appeals to the desirability of porous borders

made increasing sense in a rapidly globalising, technologically advancing world. More-over, as Lewis Mumford remarked in 1950, Kropotkin's humane communitarianism seemed prophetic as 'the mechanists and Marxists in the present hour of their triumph demonstrate the failure of their philosophies to do justice to either life or the human spirit.'[10] The question, then, was more *how* to adapt the classical tradition, what to retain and what to revise.

If the challenge was shared, the solutions were not. The idea of a 'bridging generation' is useful in so far as it describes a group of people, living at roughly the same time working on roughly the same problems, but the term glosses over fundamental differences at the levels of both theory and practice that divided the various protagonists directing them towards very different views of anarchism. These differences, by extension, connected with perennial fault lines in the movement which then conjoined with more specific debates occurring within the British post-war intellectual landscape.

In this essay, I examine the post-war anarchists' range of approaches to thinking global. I identify three key 'moments' roughly correlating with the late 1940s, the 1950s, and the early 1960s. While I approach these chronologically, they should not be thought of as stages. They did not supersede one another; rather certain emphases made more sense in one context and less in another. I first suggest that the two intellectuals, Read and Comfort, writing in the wake of a Labour victory and foundation of the welfare state, championed a resumption of what they considered to be Kropotkin's late programme of scientific anarchism to which they added insights from modern psychology and sociology. At stake was the idea that there were fundamental truths about human being which, when properly understood, proved anarchism to be the only rational political correlate. Globalism here was partly a methodology. The comparison and meta-analysis of individual case studies would, they believed, reveal deep, universal structures of human behaviour. In another vein, it also formed part of a renewed anarchist propaganda strategy. Revolution would be achieved through the spread of enlightenment which would initially occur through an international scientific community and gradually filter outward into wider society.

I then turn to Ward who, coming of political age at the peak of the Cold War, found the equation of freedom with obedience to natural laws too close to Marxism for comfort. He preferred Kropotkin's descriptive ethnographies of people's movements to his more explicitly theoretical work. Ward also drew upon a 'global anthology' of mutual aid case studies, but these were only intended to inspire, not direct, a popular movement.

Finally, I consider Walter and Carter who identified with Ward's affirmation of direct action and the popular movement, but, as peace activists in the early 1960s, worried his approach lacked urgency. They recognised the value of universalism for capturing public sympathies but wished to avoid reinstating Read and Comfort's formal scientific programme (which downgraded the creative role of popular direct action). Taking their cues from Gandhi, they crafted, instead, a poetic image of a transcendental humanity and deployed it as a vitalising counter-spectacle in a theatrical war of symbolism.

2.

Read's 1947 lecture, 'Anarchism: Past and Future' was a line in the sand. The atomic bomb had handed the state absolute power with 'decisive implications for revolutionary

strategy.'[11] What made matters difficult, he claimed, was that the movement had grown stale, there had been no important contribution to anarchist thinking since Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid,* his speculative comparative natural histories of insect, animal, and pre-industrial humans, written fifty years ago. What anarchists must do now, he argued, was turn their full attention to completing what he believed would have been Kropotkin's greatest project, *Ethics* (1922) (interrupted by his death in 1921). In *Ethics* Kropotkin had opened by arguing that 'Science and philosophy have given us both the material strength and the freedom of thought' required for progress, but ethics still lagged despite the need for 'a system of ethics worthy of the present scientific revival' being 'more necessary than ever', especially when faced with scepticism about the authority of science in ethical matters.

> The fact is, that while the mode of life is determined by the history of the development of a given society, conscience, on the other hand, as I shall endeavour to prove, had a much deeper origin, namely in the consciousness of equity, which physiologically develops in man as in all social animals.[12]

As the quote indicates, Kropotkin understood this project in terms of human 'physiology' but Read thought differently.

In his lecture, he ranked the disciplines according to what he considered to be their political usefulness. First came history which could supply useful facts about the federal principle as a constant, and even driving force, throughout human civilisation. Second came anthropology a field whose principal value, he believed, was in supplying data about 'primitive' peoples as representatives of a primordial humanity. Sociology, the next discipline in line, could then organise this data into an analysis of structures. At the summit, he placed psychology. Only here was the reconciliation between the individual and their social environment, between the rigour of science and the creativity of art, fully realised. By assembling a large enough range of data on human behaviour and expression, one could begin to see recurrent patterns and so identify the general laws regulating them, a firm basis, then, for Kropotkin's universal theory of ethics.

Read was not unique in placing his faith in psychology. The post-war years were a golden age across the social sciences, a period when university departments expanded and there were often genuine opportunities to inform public policy. In Britain this owed much to the Labour government and the ambitious programme of social reforms advanced through the welfare state. Psychology in particular flourished at this time.[13] As Mathew Thomson notes, there were several reasons for this. Firstly, the war had raised questions about the sources of the authoritarian personality, charismatic leadership, and the social mechanisms of political radicalisation which the renewed tensions with the Soviet Union were now reviving. Secondly, increased civil regulation during the war, and then again through the institutions of the welfare state, had generated more insight into people's private lives than ever before, as well as more opportunities to act upon social 'problems'.[14]

Although not a trained scientist, Read dabbled in psychology. In *Education Through Art* (1943), for example, he augmented Plato's claim that art should be the basis of all education by applying modern psychology to the interpretation of children's artwork. Without formal scientific training, Read was limited in how far he could develop his

own proposals. His role here was to call for change but to concede the legwork to others, like Alex Comfort. Comfort – fellow pacifist, author, and anarchist sympathiser – was a qualified doctor (MB (Cantab) 1944) with a PhD in biochemistry (1949). Like Read, he was ambitious. He did not just want to illustrate certain anarchist ideas with a selection of scientific findings, he wanted to make the case for anarchism as the only political philosophy correlate with a robust scientific understanding of human nature.[15] In this, he was zealous,

> a scientific attempt to ferret out the concrete factors in society, the family, and in the individual which lead to "crime" of the delinquent type is in itself a revolutionary activity, if by revolution we mean the attempt to alter inadequate social patterns by deliberate action.[16]

While sharing a political and intellectual ambition, there was a subtle distinction between the two. Read leaned toward Kropotkin's inclination toward seeing humans as innately sociable. Comfort (who claimed not to have read Kropotkin[17]) adopted a more sceptical view:

> I believe that man has one unique property, his power of intelligent foresight which makes him able to deal intelligently with his environment and at the same time gives him a great capacity for anxiety and fear. I believe that there is no evidence that any of the things which human beings value (freedom, beauty) have any objective reality outside of man […] I believe in one ethical principle, the solidarity of man against death and against the human allies of death—those who side with Power.[18]

In highlighting individual self-interest (rather than sociability) as the defining characteristic of human psychology, he came closer to Thomas Hobbes' pessimistic interpretation of human psychology than to Kropotkin's typically more generous one.[19] Like Hobbes, he accepted self-conservation as the primary human motivation, strong enough to promote co-operation when interests converged. He disagreed, however, with Hobbes' view that this sort of co-operation was unreliable and insufficient to sustain a stable society. He also rejected the claim that an all-powerful monarch was necessary to maintain social order arguing that power, in whatever guise, always became self-referential and reckless of its obligations to others. In other words, the mere possession of it constituted an innately disordered state.

He set this case out in full in *Authority and Delinquency* (1950). Over the course of human history, he argued, societies could be divided into power-centred and life-centred cultures. Leaders in the former prioritised and pursued their own interests, whereas the latter looked outwards towards to the well-being of the wider community. Modern Western society emerged from this model and largely retained its features and principles, but with a significant modification. Modern states, he argued, were defined by the rapid and elaborate expansion of a centralised administration. This swollen power base prioritised its own reproduction, a fact evident from the refusal to discriminate between crimes against the old mores of person, property, and sexuality, and 'crimes' against the policy and methods of administrators.

Modern societies existed on a spectrum. Where a robust civil sphere – including a free press, autonomous educational outlets and network of independent political and social associations – was able to hold power to account, as in Britain, the worst excesses could be held at bay. Totalitarianism, however, the defining threat of the twentieth century, demonstrated what happened when all remnants of an independent civil society were

destroyed and brought into line with government bureaucracy. As such, Comfort (anticipating Hannah Arendt's argument in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)), suggested that totalitarianism was best understood as a uniquely modern phenomenon, expressive of modernity's peculiar set of tendencies and inner contradictions.

Identifying 'power-centrism' as a key operative category within totalitarianism was one thing but it was neither adequate nor specific enough to inform a sensible response from would-be resistors. For this, it was necessary to know with greater precision the sort of power-centredness in question. For example, there was, he contended, a clear distinction to be drawn between Fascism in its Italian and German formulations and the Soviet regime. Both Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's German, he argued, derived from 'classical power-centred societies.' 'Its main public stereotypes were racialism, aggressive war, the Divine Leader identified with the prohibitive and hated, but also feared and revered, father, the depreciation of women, and the use of realised sadistic fantasies, including castration against unbelievers.' Stalin's Soviet Union, on the other hand, was entirely different, 'It's main stereotypes are civic duty, production, defence of the ideology, and extension of human control over environment.' Whereas Hitler was 'leader, warrior, superman, Jew-slayer', Stalin was 'leader, philosopher, prophet, scientist, victor in the Patriotic War, father of the people, patron of the arts.'[20]

Using comparative case studies of this nature revealed different registers of power-centrism. In doing so, they exposed the limits of the concept. Systematic analysis of this kind demystified power, cultivating the sort of intellectual detachment Comfort considered necessary to determine effective action. While activists still had a part to play, it was doctors – key mediators between the pure and applied sciences – he believed should take the lead in the movement,

> we have long since become so used to dealing personally and without anger with individuals whose conduct seems to us foolish, wicked or psychopathic that no patient, however obnoxious, seems quite inaccessible […] medicine is used to enter into the thoughts and even the friendship of delinquents and psychopaths without sacrificing its own orientation.[21]

Not all agreed. Writing in response, SE Parker remarked on one of its many problems, 'No, comrade Comfort, I am afraid that if we wish to see tyranny eliminated and the order of anarchy prevail, it will be futile to dispense with the masses and to rely on the well-meaning but unrealistic and, up to the present, undefined efforts of the psychiatrist.[22]

Parker was not the only one cynical about psychology's scientific status, the effectiveness of the psychiatrist in curing ideologues, or the likelihood of finding a coherent human personality that could be diagnosed and treated. Some preferred to look to Read's 'lesser' disciplines – anthropology and sociology – and to the comparative study of social organisation instead. Anthropology had long been important to the anarchists. Alongside Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* (1899), there was the pioneering the work of geographers Elie and Élisée Reclus. Later, Bronislaw Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islanders and Margaret Mead's *Growing Up in Samoa* (1928) became much cited favourites in the anarchist literature, prized for their accounts of their subjects' allegedly relaxed attitudes towards sexuality.

The discipline, however, had changed. As Ward noted in an article,

> Anthropology has developed its techniques and methods of analysis greatly. The anecdotal or anthologising approach, with its accumulation of travellers' tales and subjective

observation, is now frowned upon as unscientific. Nowadays, too, we view the simpler societies from a more objective standard of reference than that of nineteenth century western Europe, and can see that they are not simple at all.

'The anarchist', he continued, 'in making use of anthropological data today has to ask more sophisticated questions that his predecessors about the role of law in such societies.'[23] Ward alluded here to the 'functionalist turn' championed by Malinowski at the London School of Economics. Like Comfort's 'power-centrism', 'function' offered a conceptual scheme through which to organise and analyse the disparate data of human life. For Malinowski, 'function' described the adaptation of social institutions to the fulfilment of human needs: food, shelter, security, and sex, but for Alfred ('Anarchy') Radcliffe Brown, his close contemporary (and sometime rival), this definition lacked rigour and precision. Radcliffe Brown developed, instead, a distinct 'structural-functionalism'. Here, 'function' was freed from speculation about human need and confined to describing the interrelations of social structures. In the post-war period, structural functionalism gained ground as it offered scientists a more efficient method for analysing social systems as coherent wholes making it easier to produce typologies about them which, in turn, allowed for comparison and the formulation of general rules.[24]

One of the fruits of this project was *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems* (1958) edited by John Middleton and David Tait, Naturally, the book excited the anarchists but Ward, reviewing it for *Freedom,* urged caution. Anarchists wanting to extract any general principles from the study, could only say that small units with multiple, dynamic inter-relational patterns seemed to be the optimum design for sustaining a non-governmental society peacefully. They could not go further than this. Indeed, these factors alone were not even sufficient to declare that these societies were *anarchist.* They were still subject to forms of authority (such as custom) and there was no subjective data available about whether people felt free.

Ward was not appealing to return to the psychological approach advocated by Read and Comfort but signalling caution over the whole scientific anarchism enterprise, whether psychological or sociological in form. Science grounded imagination but it could not supply an alternative positive social vision, that had to come from somewhere else, preferably the people themselves. It was this instinct that prompted a critique of his two friends and informed his very different approach to thinking global.

3.

Of all the post-war anarchists, Ward is usually considered the most 'English'. Like most of the *Freedom* anarchists, he followed Kropotkin's emphasis on human scale action and on community as the optimum unit for social action but of all the *Freedom* group he developed these ideas the furthest.[25] This reputation was secured by his later publications, not least his series of British mutual aid ethnographies including *Arcadia for All* (1984) (with Dennis Hardy), which traced the history of Britain's southern plotland communities, *Goodnight Campers* (1986) (with Hardy) on British makeshift holiday camps and *The Allotment* (1988) (with David Crouch), an affectionate investigation of Britain's allotment culture. If that were not enough, his genial rural life columns in the 1980s and 1990s, including 'Fringe Benefits' in *New Statesman and Society* and 'People and Ideas'

in *The Town and Country Planning Journal,* confirmed him, for many, as the leading pundit of common-or-garden English anarchy.

He developed his distinct form brand of anarchism during the 1950s. As early as 1955, his revival of William's Godwin's 'parish pump' politics caused amusement among his comrades. Annoyed that *Freedom* had shown no interest in the local elections, he pointed out (with tongue firmly in cheek) that anarchists were so preoccupied with 'international problems, with great affairs, the psychology of the big-wigs[26] or with social organisation of the Trobriand Islanders and the Eskimos' that they neglected the stuff of everyday life. 'The first step', he argued, 'to the regeneration of the life of the town or village is a concern for and understanding of its functions.'[27] Fellow anarchist and orator Rita Milton replied with an equally teasing rebuttal. The narrowness characteristic of rural life was not conducive to the sort of co-operative politics her comrade had in mind. 'CW' she concluded, could 'continue to prod his local officials and kow-tow to the local gentry while I close my windows to the sound of my neighbours and absorb myself in the sex-life of the Trobriand Islanders.'[28]

Despite his apparent impatience with the Eskimos, international case studies were an important and recurrent theme across his work, but one he used in a carefully limited way. A flavour of this can be seen in his review of *Tribes Without Rulers,*

> The knowledge that human societies exist or have existed without government, without institutionalised authority, and with social and sexual codes quite different from those of our own society, is a comforting thing for the advocates of anarchy when they are told their theories run contrary to 'human nature' and you will often find quoted in the anarchist press some attractive description of a tribal anarchy, some pocket of the Golden Age (seen from the outside) among the Eskimo, innocent of property, or the sex-happy Trobrianders.

So helpful was it to have a stock of counterexamples, he continued, 'one could, and perhaps should, make an anthology of such items. Several anarchist writers of the past did just this; Kropotkin in his chapter on "Mutual Aid Among Savages", Elie Reclus in his *Primitive Folk'.* [29] Here, he casually categorised *Mutual Aid* and *Primitive Folk* as anthologies (assortments of items loosely linked by a common theme of the compiler's choosing) and referred to their creators as *writers*, not scientists.

Ward saw the value of curating such a 'global anthology' of ready-to-hand examples about human possibilities, but while this should form part of any serious anarchist's rhetorical repertoire, they should not try to extrapolate too much from them, especially not at the expense of the people they described. For this reason, he reacted against Read's dismissal of popular activity in his 1947 lecture. 'Are we so justified in setting-at-nought the activities of the last 50 years because they have not found literary expression?' he asked. There was, he believed a great danger in letting anarchism become only an intellectual project and forgetting that it 'began among the people and will only retain its vitality while it remains a movement of the people.'[30]

This gentle scepticism was a personal trait, but it also owed much to the pervasive Cold War atmosphere that permeated 1950s British intellectual life, characterised by hostility to ideology and all forms of 'utopianism'.[31] While he objected to the cruder, unreflective forms of liberal positivism (which failed to recognise its own ideological status), he identified with the more refined critique of figures like Isaiah Berlin to whom freedom always meant doubt, uncertainty, dissent, and discussion.[32]

In 'Anarchism and the Open Society' (1952), a review of Berlin's 'Freedom and it's Betrayal' lectures (BBC Third Programme, 1952) as well as Jacob Talmon's *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952) and Karl Popper's *The Open Society and It's Enemies* (1945), he summarised the three liberal commentators' main criticisms of anarchism as being: '[it] is an idealist and perfectionist philosophy of personal freedom stemming ultimately from Rousseau', and '[it] makes the same false assumptions about human nature as those eighteenth century French philosophers' (not least that there was such a thing as 'human nature' to make assumptions about). In his reply to them he simply said, 'people are justified in raising them, as a glance at the world's anarchist press will show'.[33]

It was this caution toward any grand, universalising claims about human nature that prompted his rebuttal of Comfort:

> [Alex Comfort] said that his scientific conclusions drove him to anarchism, and that if scientific investigation led him elsewhere he would abandon anarchism. I think he was wrong. I do not think the case for anarchism rests on science.[34]

Ward believed it stemmed from the 'aspirations of the heart' (not the 'deductions of the mind') for as much freedom as possible.[35] His job, as he saw it, was to massage those aspirations but not irresponsibly.

Consequently, he equipped himself with a stock of critical 'global parables' that could both inspire but also temper prospective radicals. He promoted the work of Vinoba Bhave, successor of Gandhi, and leader of the Bhoodan village movement which set out to restore small scale hand industry to some of India's most impoverished communities but warned how much its success and popular take-up relied on a set of shared religious convictions which he did not wish to see applied to Britain.[36] His review of the Israeli Kibbutz movement tempered praise for the original ideals of the movement with the acknowledgement that these had been compromised by the fierce nationalist politics of the region (a reminder that no intentional community could ever fully shut out the rest of the world).[37] His 1959 series compared efforts to set up workers' industrial councils in Yugoslavia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland in defiance of the Communist regimes (and asked why it was that in Britain, where conditions were more favourable, there appeared to be no demand, concluding that this was due to the aggression of the Trade Unions).[38]

These examples, whether inspirational or instructive, were good to think with but essentially worked as exotic analogues, translating problems familiar to his (mostly) British readers into unfamiliar settings which threw them into stronger relief. Furthermore, most of them described relatively homogenous groups which implied that successful popular co-operation was only possible between people with a pre-existing cultural common ground based on shared history, ethno-identity, religious or ideological conviction and so on. There was, however, another style of globalism in his repertoire, one more resonant with the multicultural spaces and dynamic populations found in a modern city like London.

An architect by profession, he gave considerable thought to modern urban community formation which could not rely on long-term shared histories but nevertheless connected people simply by the expedient facts of co-habitation and the need to fulfil the demands of everyday life. The best example of his thinking here was his early coverage of the 1958–9 Notting Hill riots prompted by the unprovoked, racially motivated

murder of Kelso Cochrane, a 32-year-old carpenter and Antiguan expatriate to Britain, in May 1959. Long term economic deprivation and general urban environmental decline, he argued, were drivers of prejudice, but not just in simple terms of competition for scarce resources. The teenage gang culture at the heart of the riots was more than a reaction to poverty. It was also a response to social marginalisation. Gangs offered members a means of regaining the status that society denied them. This was not offered as any sort of apology for racial violence, only as a context for comprehending it.

To an extent, this only followed the work of race relations researchers AH Richmond and Michael Banton who argued that inter-racial tensions were 'not to any significant extent the outgrowth of an irrational force deep down in the individual psyche' and that 'British behaviour towards the immigrants is a rational response to the customary meaning of colour, and that custom can be changed by conscious policy.' [39] This was encouraging news for community leaders, teachers, and policy makers: change was possible through a programme of public education. At the same time, it downplayed the issue of race by reconfiguring it into a question of insider-outside relations.

Ward did not entirely share their optimism, 'You can't sell tolerance like a soap powder. Moral persuasion is out too. As an American manual puts it. The brotherhood and do-good themes should be avoided. Most people abhor being uplifted.' [40] In place of vague notions of 'solidarity', he proposed real human friendships which

> should be strengthened through some constructive enterprise carried out in common. The humblest aims from an association for mutual help to a club where people meet to spend time together, can eventually lead to an association whose unwritten norms will actually inspire both the private and the public life of its components

Applying this to Notting Hill, he believed that plans to set up a neighbourhood carnival, build a children's playground, and form a group to carry out repairs on dilapidated houses 'may have an effect on the individual over and above the useful results. When he does something he becomes something.' 'The task', he concluded, 'is to carry over these good functional relations into social life.' [41]

On the one hand, Ward's 'functional localism' perfectly distilled the global into the local by rejecting the need for an overarching identity in group formation. It was not necessary for group members to permanently forfeit previous identities to some new 'higher' collective one, only to prioritise, perhaps briefly, a common goal. Indeed, these differences would allow them to produce a greater range of solutions for achieving that goal. Nor was it necessary to maintain exclusive membership, individuals could (and ideally should) come and go. They could also be members of many groups simultaneously, working towards as many goals as motivated then. On the other hand, 'functional localism' could be construed as downplaying cultural differences by (over) relying on function to surmount any potential conflict caused by colliding values.

4.

Ward's insistence on the primacy of the popular movement and the priority of persuasion over prescription was inspiring for a younger generation of anarchists, especially those 'emotional anarchists' [42] involved in the peace movement. Walter was a key figure here. He worked closely with Ward from the late 1950s and provided the most

sustained contribution to pacifism and anarchist theory. Walter believed that the struggle the movement faced was on two fronts 'the Warfare state and the Welfare state – difficult because they overlap so much. For the first we want revolution, and for the second devolution.'[43] He considered Ward the advocate par excellence for devolution. This was essential because 'the only real direct action by people is in their homes and workplaces.'[44] At the same time, the only way this could ever develop its full potential was if the threat of nuclear annihilation was neutralised.

While devolution – the permeation of anarchism into all aspects of everyday life – should be spontaneous and piecemeal, revolution – the seizure and redistribution of political power – could not be. It required a concerted effort to be effective. As such, Walter missed the uniting power of something universal to appeal to, a shared 'Truth' through which to bind large numbers of people into acting as one. This 'Truth' he considered primarily moral (what we ought ought) rather than strictly or necessarily scientific (what we are). As such, for Walter, and later, Carter, creating an evocative spectacle of a universal humanity was more important than proving the fact of it.

Walter outlined his theory in *Anarchy* (the journal edited by Ward from 1961). First, he contextualised the 'new pacifism' which, he explained, was not new at all. It drew on a mixture of existing ideas:

> From the old pacifism comes the flat refusal to fight; from the old anti-militarism comes the determination to resist war; and from Gandhi comes the use of mass non-violent direct action. There are other borrowings. From socialism comes the optimistic view of the future; from liberalism comes the idealistic view of the present; from anarchism comes the disrespect for authority.

Gandhi was important here, exemplifying, as he did, the non-violent 'warrior' par excellent.[45] His tactical deployment of the satyagraha principle ('insistence on truth') had allowed him to mobilise thousands into carefully choreographed clashes with authorities in which coming under attack was not failure but success:

> The way of doing this is to draw the opponent's violence onto oneself by some
>   form of non-violent direct action, causing deliberate suffering in oneself
>   rather than in the opponent. […] The object of satyagraha is to make a partial
>   sacrifice of oneself as a symbol of the wrong in question.[46]

Effective though Gandhi had been, he was not to be copied unquestioned. Indeed, the new pacifism was nothing if not selective:

> It rejects the sentimentality of the old pacifists, the vagueness of the anti-militarists, the religiosity of Gandhi, the authoritarianism of the socialists, the respectability of the liberals, the intolerance of the anarchists.[47]

In 'On Disobedience', Walter turned to the function of new pacifism within broader political strategy. The struggle for freedom, he argued, is always, in some sense, a struggle between the individual and society. This idea flowed from the romantics with their idolisation of youth as a creative force against social stagnation:

> The romantic view of life and death is the adolescent view. The sense of personal responsibility for good and evil is the adolescent sense. The taste for Shelley and Beethoven rather than Pope and Bach is the adolescent taste. It is adolescents who make mistakes, adults who avoid them – but the person who doesn't make mistakes doesn't make anything. It

> is bad to be infantile but it is worse to become an adult; we should grow up but we should never stop growing, questioning, agitating, disobeying.[48]

New pacifism was both active and demonstrative. Its primary weapon was spectacle which operated as a potent social ritual. In fact, as Pauli observed, this account of direct action was familiar to anarchists resembling, as it did, the older propaganda of the deed. This was theatrical in nature and relied on 'demonstrating' individual resolve. If correctly pitched, it was supposed to trigger a snowball effect of mass action.[49] The shift to non-violent means only underlined the importance of getting the performance right as this alone must now blast through the sediments of custom or apathy. As such, staging the new pacifism involved a complex dramaturgy.

In Britain, there were several experiments in this vein. The first Aldermaston March in April 1958, for example, was intended to demonstrate 'the people' taking and (in the process, becoming) the 'truth' to the Aldermaston air base over the Easter weekend.[50] By far the most ambitious initiative, however, was the San Francisco to Moscow march. On 1st December 1960 the American Committee of Non-Violent Action (CNVA), led by key organisers Bayard Rustin, AJ Muste, and Bradford Lyttle, set out, on foot, from San Francisco. After walking 4000 miles across America, they flew to London in June 1961, where they met their British counterparts, led by April Carter, who organised a welcoming rally for them in Trafalgar Square. It was decided here that the march would join with a European initiative, co-organised by Holge Stolle in Hamburg and Inge Oskarasson in Stockholm, which would have run at roughly the same time, albeit following a different route. Synthesising the two marches, organisers realised could have greater impact.

After the Trafalgar meeting, which drew a crowd of 6000, the march continued to Aldermaston, then to Southampton and on towards France. Here, however, they were twice denied entry as France, caught up in containing the Algerian uprising, had clamped down on political dissent. French marchers joined them on the Belgian border. A contingent of Dutch marchers joined them at Osnabruck. The march was permitted to enter East Germany but was kept under constant surveillance by local 'supporters' (possibly Stasi agents) and ultimately deported after attempting to evade their official minders. To the general surprise of all, they fared better in Poland (where they encountered the lowest number of explicit police) and the Soviet Union where silent vigils were successfully held (one outside the Ministry of Defence in Warsaw and one in Red Square outside the Lenin-Stalin mausoleum) and their literature distributed.[51]

Internationalism was the defining factor here and not just in terms of practical logistics. While promoting co-operation between national branches of the peace movement was extremely important, it was the impact of march as an idea realised through performance that mattered most. The marchers wanted to dramatise a human 'olive branch' carrying itself from one aggressor to the other, gathering up the peoples of the world along the way to form a transcendent chorus of humanity united, despite their ethnographic differences, in their call for peace.

Considerable behind-the-scenes effort went into achieving this effect not least by creating and stylising a certain 'international activist' persona. From the outset, members of the core march group were thoroughly screened before selection with large amounts of detailed personal data collected before they were accepted onto the

team. This included an invited autobiographical statement which organisers analysed carefully. Norwegian-born American Millie May Gilbertsen, 39, described becoming a pacifist following the death of her brother in the D-Day landings. John Krube, 26, told how he read his way through Gandhi, Thoreau, Tolstoy, the Gita, and the Loa Zu. German marcher Hellmut Temme, 23, was deeply influenced by a pacifist teacher from whom he learned to be critical.'[52] Jean Arthur, a 19-year-old from Derby, argued her case for selection (successfully) by saying,

> The main point in my favour […] is that I speak three languages. On this years' Aldermaston march I noticed how necessary interpreters were if organisation was to be at all successful. Another point is that I am young and I think that it's important for the youth of countries to be well represented, especially in the East European part of the march.[53]

There were pragmatic reasons for such intense scrutiny. Firstly, the organisers needed the information for the various visas they had to apply for. Secondly, the nature of the march meant that detainment by the authorities or even arrest was highly likely at points, and organisers needed to know whether individuals would be able to cope and who to inform in the event of arrest. More importantly still, the success or failure of the whole endeavour rested entirely on being able to carry off this powerful image of the human olive branch. Not only did they need to defend this goal from being infiltrated and sabotaged by potential enemies (whether local police or other hostile groups) they needed to be sure their marchers could always maintain the non-violent discipline.

As such, along with screening the applications, members of the core march team were also subject to pre-march training where organisers also scrutinised their behaviour. Of 21-year-old Johannes Meyer, Stolle noted 'he reacts to a new situation with strong vitality and – compared to the others – carelessness thus sometimes not being able to realise the full facts at once.'[54] Nevertheless, he spoke six languages and was urgently needed. Franziska Monteel, 24, by contrast, was, by contrast, 'calm and superior. Her way of thinking is clear and sceptical in plain lines. She has a level-headed uncomplicated judgement' and would be 'helpful for the group in her uncomplicated, settling way of behaving.'[55]

Reinforcing this, core marchers were asked to uphold the 'Basic Policy of San Francisco to Moscow Walk'. Alongside committing them to pursuing unilateral disarmament and various related caveats, it also stated that:

> 5. They will be appealing to the people in each country to take personal responsibility for working for unconditional disarmament by their countries […]

> 6. Their aim is to take their message to the people in each country, and they hope to do this with the cooperation of the authorities in each country. But should any country prevent the team's entrance, or should be admitted, but prevented from handing out their leaflets or carrying their banners, they will have no alternative but to protest through form of non-violent civil disobedience […]

> 8. All walkers pledge themselves to non-violence.[56]

In terms of social composition, the average marcher was middle-class, well-educated, holding college or university degrees, and often multi-lingual. In a high number of cases (especially among the Americans) they came from multi-cultural backgrounds and held strong religious or moral convictions (although these rarely aligned with firm

ideological commitments). With regards personal demeanour, they were calm, orderly, and non-violent but also resilient and determined.

If the international activist had to exhibit certain universal qualities, the team were nevertheless careful to emphasise their cosmopolitanism. Each of the weekly bulletins circulated to the American and European media contained a tally of their composition. On 6 August 1961, they reported that 'there are now 35 American-European March Team Members. 17 Americans, 5 British, 5 Germans, 1 Swede, 2 Norwegians, 2 Belgians, 1 Dutchman, 1 Finn, and 1 French woman. 12 are women.'[57] Occasionally they were joined by marchers from elsewhere, as Bea Herrick reported to *Peace News*:

> 7:30PM The team arrives at Freundschaftsheim at Buckeberg […] Devi Prasad from Sevagram Shram, India has arrived to join us four days. He is the second Asian to walk with us in Europe. Hemlata Devi, the first, joined us July 25. Hemlata looks so lovely in her saris. When Astrid Wollnick, a school teacher and mother of two, dons her national costume for us, we will not only BE an international group but will look international.[58]

Another way of stressing internationalism was sensitivity to different political geographies. Organisers deliberately selected significant national sites for protest: Trafalgar Square and Aldermaston for the British leg, the Ministry of War in Warsaw, Red Square in Moscow. Indeed, the importance of marching through Berlin and protesting outside of key military bases in East Germany led to the marchers' defiance of official instructions (legitimised by their previously agreed group protocol) and their eventual deportation. This sort of risk-taking was not merely foolhardy. Both the marchers and their adversaries understood well that the whole exercise would have no impact unless performed in these all-important settings.

It was not just the mise-en-scene that was important, the scripts mattered too. As part of the protocol there were an agreed set of slogans that the team would shout on each leg of the march. These included:

> We urge All Nations abandon nuclear weapons now
> We urge All Nations abandon military pacts
> We urge All Nations disarm unilaterally
> We urge All Nations to solve conflicts through Non-Violence not War
> We urge All People to work for disarmament [59]

Naturally, these were translated into the various national languages of the countries they were marching through. The team had to learn them by heart with the correct pronunciations. Carter, working from the march's British headquarters, went to great lengths to ensure that these slogans were not just translated literally but done with cultural awareness. This mattered because in many cases there was no one-to-one translation to be had. As the partner of the Polish translator pointed out there were 'a number of words and expressions used which will not be readily understood by Polish people.'[60] Similarly, Hilda Klenze, responsible for checking the German translations could not accept them because 'they did not make sense and in some instances were completely incomprehensible […].'[61] Russian speaker 'Tatiana', altered the first slogan to read 'disarmament without conditions', because 'in Russian the word unconditional is used in the sense of absolute or definite, as in, say, the phrase "it was definitely not his fault."'[62]

In some respects, the sheer length of the project, not to mention the complicated bureaucracy it entailed, undermined its overall potency as a coherent spectacle. It was

too drawn out and scattered across too many arenas to hold a mass public attention especially when most of the mainstream media, if they covered it at all, buried it as a curiosity on their second or third pages. In another sense, overall coherency was only ever the secondary goal. What mattered more was the series of site-specific moments they curated. These moments skilfully adjusted the image of the 'human olive branch' to fit the relevant national idiom.

The most notable successes they had on this count were in East Germany, Warsaw, but above all in Moscow. They were the first group to go behind the Iron Curtain and publicly criticise Soviet policy.[63] In Moscow, they not only hosted their vigil, but they also handed out over 23000 leaflets to an eager crowd of local people. Whilst they were banned from addressing the crowd and prevented from protesting outside of the Soviet Ministry of Defence, they were granted an audience spoke with Nina Khrushchev, Nikita Khrushchev's wife. Later, the group defied official orders and visited Moscow University where some of them spontaneously addressed a packed auditorium of students for several hours. The local director of the Associated Press later remarked 'Never in all my years in Moscow have I seen anything like this.'[64] In this instance, at least, they achieved their goal of a producing a spectacle capable of making a lasting impression.

5. Conclusion

Anarchism has always faced the challenge of reconciling the local with the global, the individual with society, the empirical person with the universal human, the spontaneity of popular action with the organisation of a world movement. The post war world only exacerbated these tensions. On the one hand, advancing globalisation further eroded the power of nation states to political or economic self-determination. On the other, as Read acknowledged, the bomb, handed decisive power to State governments, dramatically constraining how far any social uprising could seriously progress. This gave impetus to British anarchists, 'the bridging generation', to abandon ideas of world revolution as the sum of national armed uprisings, and revive interest in non-violent, gradualist methods of social transformation. As such, this invited reconsideration of the dualism implied by the terms 'local' and 'global', and a turn toward more flexible ideas of permeable spaces and inter-penetrating scales of action.

Beyond sharing a time and set of problems, the term 'bridging generation' is misleading. There were fundamental differences between the protagonists. These picked up on long-standing fault lines within the movement and married them with contemporary events. Read and Comfort, working in the late 1940s, a time of high confidence in scientific social planning (carried through from the 1930s, and, arguably, already waning) were most attracted to anarchism's rationalist legacy. The benefit, as they saw it, of this approach was that it would, in the end, dispense with any need for a formal 'Anarchist' movement. Anarchism could be reduced to the exercise of individual private preferences once these were comprehended within the rich but ultimately finite psychical framework of the human animal. When properly understood, intelligent social arrangements could be designed to avoid the destructiveness caused by constraining or denying those preferences. This, in effect, dissolved any firm distinction between the global and the local entirely.

Ward, writing during the sceptical 1950s, shared neither their assurance in natural laws, their faith in the scientifically planned society, nor their belief in the role (or efficacy) of intellectuals as its mediators. In this notoriously apathetic decade, his first concern was to regenerate and re-empower a vibrant popular movement by providing carefully curated examples of it in action around the world. In doing so, he used the global imagination to reignite the local one. In addition, he examined the practical challenges of the modern multi-cultural community and its cohesion. His concept of 'functional localism' similarly eroded any rigid local/global binary by confronting the global within the local. While the great promise of Ward's work lay in its naturalisation of anarchist principles, it suffered for want of scale. His everyday anarchism remained limited so long as it existed within an authoritarian system.

Picking this up, Walter proposed a two-pronged attack: devolution and revolution. The former should cultivate the necessary anarchist mindset and skillset while the latter should force open the space too allow this to happen on an ever-increasing scale. He used the idea of performance to 'upscale' Ward's direct action. Borrowing the concept of satyagraha – insistence on truth – from Gandhi and attaching this to the romantic idea of creative youth, he proposed a poetic representation of universal, transcendental humanity: small, weak, and intensely vulnerable but refusing to be annihilated quietly. It was Carter, however, who worked this out in practice. As co-organiser of the European leg of the San Francisco to Moscow peace march, she came to appreciate how universality required re-representation in distinct national idioms to achieve the desired impact on the respective publics being courted. This, in effect, reversed the old maxim altogether (further proof of its flexibility) by thinking locally while acting globally.

Notes

1. Bantman, "Internationalism without an International?" 961–81.
2. Kinna, "What is Anarchist Internationalism?" 976–91.
3. Read, "Anarchism Past and Future," 117–26.
4. Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds*; Honeywell, *British Anarchist Movement*.
5. Franks, *Rebel Alliances,* 13.
6. Pauli, "The New Anarchism," 134–55.
7. Morland, "Anti-Capitalism and Poststructuralist Anarchism," 23–38.
8. Stephen, *Think Global, Act Local*.
9. Pauli, "Pacifism, Non-Violence," 61–67.
10. Mumford, "Mumford on Geddes".
11. Read, "Anarchism Past and Future," 117–26.
12. Kropotkin, *Ethics: Origins and Development,* 13, 18, 22; Adams, *Kropotkin, Read and the Intellectual History of British Anarchism*, 50–61.
13. Backhouse, *The History of the Social Sciences*.
14. Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*.
15. Goodway, *Writings Against Power and Death,* 16–17.
16. Comfort, "Delinquency and Authority".
17. Gibson, "Interview with Alex Comfort".
18. Comfort, "Philosophies in Little".
19. Carter, *The Political Theory of Anarchism*; Martel, *Subverting the Leviathan*.
20. Comfort, "The Social Psychiatry of Communism".
21. Comfort, "Social Psychiatry of Communism".

22. Parker, "The Psychiatric Approach".
23. Ward, "Tribal Anarchies".
24. Mair, "Applied Anthropology (1956)," 18–19.
25. Honeywell, *A British Anarchist Tradition*; Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds.*
26. Comfort, *Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State.*
27. Ward, "The Parish Pump".
28. Milton, "Leaning on the Parish Pump".
29. Ward, "Tribal Anarchies".
30. Ward, "Anarchism Past and Future".
31. Smyth, *Cold War Culture.*
32. Ward, "Mr Berlin".
33. Ward, "Anarchism and the Open Society".
34. Ward, "From the Outside Looking In".
35. Ibid.
36. Ward, "The Bhoodan Village Movement"; "An Indian Socialist".
37. Ward, "Kibbutzism".
38. Ward, "Workers' Councils".
39. Richmond, *Colour Prejudice in Britain*; Banton, *White and Coloured*, 187.
40. Ward, "Walls of Prejudice".
41. Ibid.
42. Hall, Lovell, and Whannel, "Direct Action," 16–27; Tynan, *Declaration.*
43. Walter, "On Disobedience and the New Pacifism".
44. Walter, "Direct Action and the New Pacifism".
45. Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West.*
46. Walter, "Direct Action and the New Pacifism".
47. Ibid.
48. Walter, "On Disobedience and the New Pacifism".
49. Pauli, "Pacifism, Non-Violence".
50. Nehring, *Politics of Security*, 190–229; Arrowsmith, "Marching the Ban the Bomb".
51. Wernicke and Wittner, "Lifting the Iron Curtain," 900–17; Carter, *Peace Movements*; Lyttle, *You Come With Naked Hands;* Lehmann, *We Walked to Moscow; Peace News,* October 1961.
52. 'Marcher Biographies', CWL NVA/5.
53. Arthur, "Application," CWL NVA/5.
54. Stolle, "Johannes Meyer," CWL NVA/5.
55. Stolle, "Franziska Monteel," CWL NVA/5.
56. 'Basic Policy of San Francisco to Moscow Walk', CWL NVA/2.
57. 'CNVA PRESS', CWL NVA/7.
58. Herrick, "Letter to Hugh Brock," CWL NVA/7.
59. Carter, "Memorandum," CWL NVA/3.
60. Hayman, "Letter to April Carter," CWL NVA/3.
61. Klenze, "Letter to April Carter," CWL NVA/3.
62. 'Tatiana', "Letter to April Carter," CWL NVA/3.
63. Robbins, "A Very Unusual Love Story," *Redbook,* 112.
64. *New York Herald Tribune,* 4 October 1961, 3.

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