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Two Book Reviews from Peace News

The Anarchist Past - Emma Goldman

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Nicolas Walter & David Goodway (ed), **The Anarchist Past and other essays** (Five Leaves, 2007; ISBN 1905512163; 192pp; £9.99)

Sharon Rudahl, **A Dangerous Woman: The Graphic Biography of Emma Goldman** (New Press, Fall 2007; ISBN 1595580646; pound11.99)

Reviewed by: GABRIEL CARLYLE

"Peace News ... [is] always being accused of anarchism", observed Nicolas Walter in 1963, and even today the charge retains much of its force.

Indeed, as Walter notes in this posthumously-collected book of his essays, the First World War - and the resistance to it - "brought a permanent pacifist element into anarchism", and whilst "[t]he campaigns for nuclear disarmament, racial integration and workers control do not belong to the territory of classical anarchism ... there is no doubt that [it] belong[s] to them."

In fact Walter was well placed to make such a judgement, for he played a significant role in the post- WWII British peace movement.

As David Goodway recounts in his introduction, Walter was part of the famous 1963 Spies for Peace action, in which a handful of peace activists broke into a secret government headquarters near Reading, and used information gathered there to expose the Government's preparations for nuclear war.

In 1966 he was arrested - and sentenced to two months in prison - for demonstrating against British complicity in the Vietnam War, during a church service attended by Harold Wilson (who later described this as "one of the most unpleasant experiences of my premiership"), and in the 70s he sheltered a deserter from the British army during his involvement with the British Withdrawal from Northern Ireland Campaign.

Unfortunately, this collection includes neither his celebrated essays "Direct Action and the New Pacifism" nor "Disobedience and the New Pacifism", nor his own account of the Spies for Peace action, and - apart from Goodway's introduction itself - will mainly interest students of anarchist history.

One of the figures touched on in Walter's essays - the extraordinary feminist, speaker, writer and revolutionary activist Emma Goldman - is now the subject of a comic book biography by long-time peace activist and artist Sharon Rudahl. Goldman's courageous opposition to WWI - which led to her imprisonment and subsequent deportation from the US - is only one of the remarkable stories recounted in this marvellous book.

Though Goldman was no pacifist - early in her political career she conspired to assassinate the manager of a steel plant in Pennsylvania - this account of her life can and should provide inspiration for every nonviolent activist. For, as Rudahl notes in a moving "Author's Note", in this era of the sell-out she "deserves special praise for completing the arc of her life with undiminished passion and integrity."

Reviews from Peace News > Issue > 2492-93 >