

Carlo Tresca: The Dilemma of an Anti-Communist Radical

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A major gap in the radical history of the United States has at last been filled. Nunzio Pernicone's *Carlo Tresca: Portrait of a Rebel* (2005) strongly argues for Carlo Tresca's inclusion in the pantheon of the country's venerable American revolutionaries. Carlo Tresca (1879-1943) is best remembered as a labor agitator and journalist who played a major role in the pre-World War I labor uprisings in Pennsylvania's coalfields, in Paterson, New Jersey, on Minnesota's Mesabi Range, and elsewhere. Less well known is Tresca's courageous and effective leadership in the anti-Fascist struggle within the Italian American community. As an organizer and a journalist, Tresca fought in the front trenches of the fiercest battles of class struggle in the United States. Repeatedly, Tresca came face-to-face with the country's elaborate and unrelenting repressive apparatus – and sometimes won.

By recovering Tresca's story, Pernicone's work sheds light on the critical role of immigrants, both as leaders and as foot soldiers in creating and, at least for some time, consolidating a mass base of the Left. Pernicone also reminds us that, at least until the late 1920s, the eddy of anarchism (though never reaching the force of socialism or later communism) influenced events in the United States. After Emma Goldman was deported in 1919 by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and William [Big Bill] Haywood converted to Communism, Tresca continued to carry the message of anarchism to masses of Italian immigrant workers and the radical community at large. A very large change occurred in the late 1930s: his opposition to the Popular Front and, as a consequence, his increasingly insistent anti-Communist outlook led to his political marginalization and a series of actions and associations contrary to

his life-long revolutionary affirmations. Nothing better illustrated Tresca's fading political influence than his death. On January 11, 1943, Tresca was gunned down at Fifteenth Street and Fifth Avenue in Manhattan – not by the Fascists or Communists, whom he had come to equally loathed, but by a mid-level *mafioso*, Carmine Galante, acting on behalf of his boss, the notorious gangster, Frank Garofolo, whom Tresca had publicly insulted. (Though still disputed by some, Pernicone and other scholars now uphold this thesis.)

This paper, while giving Pernicone's *Carlo Tresca: Portrait of a Rebel* the close attention it deserves, will also call on some other works, including those by Pernicone, to arrive at a more troubling portrait than presented in his biography. Tresca's turn from a courageous and consistent anti-Fascist toward an ever-more insistent anti-Communism, while not negating his earlier contributions to the labor movement and the cause of anti-Fascism, caused Tresca to compromise his core values and commitments. His story shows, as well as any, the dilemma of the anti-Communist radical, one that was repeatedly played out in Europe and the United States: if they continued to work with the Communists, more often than not, they were outmaneuvered and subordinated; on the other hand, when they broke with and fought against Communists and those willing to work with the Communists, repeatedly this caused them to join those whose best energies and prestige were devoted to fighting Communism instead of capitalism.

Nunzio Pernicone's interest in Tresca was sparked by his father's, Salvatore Pernicone's, association with Tresca. Salvatore was active in the Filodrammatica Moderna (a component of the subculture of theatricals, lectures, reading groups, and social events, such as dances and picnics) that sustained the Italian immigrant anarchist movement. Salvatore Pernicone both acted in and directed a number of politically oriented plays written by Tresca. First performed in New York City in 1925, *L'Attentato a Mussolini* (*The Assassination Attempt against Mussolini*) – which takes place in 1924 immediately after the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti by a squad of the Blackshirts – satirized the Fascists and their supporters. In 1934, Salvatore directed and performed in *Il Vendicatore* (*The Avenger*), another anti-Fascist play written by Tresca. In a sense, Nunzio Pernicone dedicated his book to Salvatore, who so often told him stories about Tresca. Over the years, the resulting tribute grew into a 1,100-page manuscript, from which Pernicone carved this highly readable and immensely significant 350-page biography.

Carlo Tresca is constructed on a deep foundation of scholarship: Pernicone's highly regarded *Italian Anarchism, 1864-1894* (Pernicone, 1993) equipped him with a broad perspective on the anarchists and the movements they constructed. His strong background in Italian history gives this study a strong transnational character. He shows how the Fascist government worked closely with the United States government in the 1920s to repress anti-Fascist

activity in the Italian American community. In 1926, the Italian ambassador to the United States placed Tresca at the top of lists he prepared for Mussolini of Italians living in America whose deportation to Italy would most benefit the Fascist regime. In addition to a careful reading of Tresca's voluminous writings, Pernicone combed through the Archives of the Ministry of the Interior and other Italian sources as well as the extensive files collected on Tresca by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New York Police Department.

Pernicone narrates Tresca's courageous – and sometimes highly effective – work in combating Fascism in the Italian American communities. While the Fascists' influence in the Italian American communities grew steadily until it became hegemonic, Tresca never ceased his opposition to these «brigands, slavers, and cutthroats». The author notes that «fighting Fascism became the great crusade of Tresca's life» (Pernicone, 2005, pp. 147, 135). In recounting Tresca's anti-Fascist crusade and the favorable response it met among working-class Italian Americans, Pernicone contributes to recent historiography that has revised the bigoted and inaccurate portrait of Italian Americans as politically inert familists who were, and continue to be, inherently reactionary.

Born in 1879 to an impecunious bourgeois family in Sulmona, a provincial town in Abruzzi, Tresca was one of a handful of radicalized intelligentsia who joined the extraordinary exodus from Italy in this period. When he left Italy for the United States in 1904, it was not to escape the deplorable economic situation in Southern Italy, but to avoid imprisonment on a libel suit arising out of his truculent polemics with a political opponent. This was to be the first of many instances when plaintiffs, charging him with defamation and libel, chased Tresca around the legal system.

Following the example of his beloved older brother Ettore, Tresca joined the Socialist Party of Italy, which had a strong base among the railroad workers in Sulmona. Tresca's experience as an editor and writer for Sulmona's Socialist newspaper, *Il Germe (The Seed)*, caused the leaders of the Federazione Socialista Italiana del Nord America (FSI) to ask him to assume the directorship of their organization's publication, *Il Proletario*, in Philadelphia. So, almost from the first day he set foot onto American soil until the day he died, Tresca functioned as an editor, journalist, and orator for the radical, and especially the anarchist, segment of the Italian-speaking community in the United States. Although his writing and, for the most part, his oratory was in Italian, Tresca fairly quickly was drawn into the world of American radicalism, where he gained recognition for his courageous leadership.

During thirty years in the United States, Tresca's political activities and writings were unmistakably anarchist *and* Italian, most notably in their tenacious anti-clericalism. Pernicone punctuates Tresca's biography with instances where he castigated the Roman Catholic Church, often in the most

lurid manner. Until the end of his life, Tresca referred to Catholic clergy as the *maiali neri* (the black hogs) and the Catholic Church as «the home of all lies». In his newspapers, he featured a column entitled «In the Black World», where he chronicled the misdeeds of the Catholic priests throughout the world, often in salacious detail. Another column, «Without Priests», periodically announced the birth of Italian children whose parents chose neither to baptize nor to allow them to be otherwise subjected to «the perverted education of the priests», but instead pledged to raise them to become «champions of free thought» (Pernicone, 2005, pp. 24, 111, 45).

Tresca's extreme anti-clericalism was a product of Italian soil, where the purported sanctity of the Papal States prevented the establishment of a unified republican Italy. A republic of one sort or another became the dream longed for by almost all Italian liberals and socialists. «Viva Italia Unita» was scrawled on the ruins of the Forum and shouted from the balconies at the opera. Even after the dissolution of the Papal States in 1870, the Vatican's hostility to the Italian state perpetuated widespread anti-clericalism. More generally, radicals of every imaginable stripe as well as liberal republicans harbored deep resentment caused by the widespread (though not universal) tendency of the Catholic clergymen to ally with, and consequently place the prestige of the Church, the large landowners. The Catholic Church's enthusiastic and ever increasing support for Mussolini and his Fascist state, especially after the signing of the Lateran Treaty in 1929, helped perpetuate this Old-World attitude.

While Tresca's hostility to religion and the clergy bespoke the Italian experience; it also signified anarchism's linking opposition to religion to the fight against great wealth as part of a general struggle against «Authority». Anti-clericalism was widespread among Socialists and Communists; however, it was not inherently part of their ideology. Instead of attacking «Authority» per se, Marxist-influenced parties specifically attack the bourgeois state. Moreover, they did not consider «Authority» as innately evil. Instead, they shifted the loci of «Authority» to the party, and where socialism existed, to the «workers' state». Despite their reverence for Marx, who dismissed religion as a secondary («super-structural») phenomenon, many Italian Socialists, in somewhat diluted form, also expressed extreme anti-clerical sentiments. The popularity of Free Masonry among middle-class men and the rejection of Protestantism as a substitute for Catholicism also fed into Italy's endemic anti-clericalism.

The Italians' experience upon arrival in the United States was potentially radicalizing. The Italian immigrants met with outright rejection by the Democratic Party's big-city organizations (almost invariably led by Irish-Americans) – which while lining the pockets of its leaders and activists, were of genuine help to the immigrant masses – evidenced little interest in coalescing with their co-religionists from Italy. The trade unions ignored these largely

unskilled workers and vilified them as strikebreakers. Most shocking perhaps, the Catholic Church showed little sympathy, and considerable hostility, to these unpastored, often totally bereft, co-religionists. (The chilly reception Mother Cabrini received from the New York Archdiocese is one of many egregious examples of this un-Christian behavior.) Discouraged from participation in both political and trade-union activities, adherence to an amorphous mass movement depending on mass action advocated by anarchists, of various tendencies, made sense (Pernicone, 2003a, pp. 77-92). Many comprehended Tresca's message: «Social revolution proceeds only through the economic struggle of labor unions». (Pernicone, 2003a, p. 46) Here Tresca was referring *not* to the highly structured trade unions of the American Federation of Labor, but to unions, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which favored direct action.

Tresca's affiliation with the FSI and editorship of *Il Proletario* was brief. Within one year of his arrival, he resigned his editorship of *Il Proletario* and adopted the mantle of revolutionary syndicalism. Eschewing elections, Tresca concurred with Arturo Labriola's declaration that «five minutes of direct action are worth as many years of parliamentary chatter» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 29). Throughout the remainder of his life, Tresca always maintained the anarchists' core beliefs in addition to anti-clericalism and abhorrence of Authority. Tresca rejected participation in both electoral politics and involvement with conventionally organized unions. Pernicone explains the difficulty of locating Tresca on the broad spectrum of anarchist ideology, because «Tresca evidenced little interest in abstract theory and ideology». He concludes that Tresca's thinking is closely related to Errico Malatesta's «pragmatic, nonsectarian approach to the struggle against the state and capital». In any case, Tresca was not in the camp of nonviolent anarchists, such as Leo Tolstoy. Nor was his brand of anarchism of the apocalyptic variety associated with Mikhail Bakunin. Unlike many anarchists, Tresca never advocated the use of terror (the assassinations of figures of authority, or the bombing of symbols of authority), as did his archrivals, the followers of Luigi Galleani. Nonetheless, Tresca never renounced the need for violence in the revolutionary process. Pernicone details a number of such instances. During a funeral peroration over the coffin of a striker who was killed by the police during the historic general strike in Paterson, a small textile manufacturing city that in radical circles was known as «the world capital of anarchism», Tresca intoned: «Fellow workers, don't ever forget the principle of the toilers who came from Italy: «Sangue chiama sangue!» («For blood you must take blood!») (Pernicone, 2005, pp. 64, 70-71). (Carey, 1990) The Industrial Workers of the World, founded in 1905, was the organization that most closely matched his own beliefs, Although he never officially joined the IWW's ranks, in 1914 he declared himself an anarcho-syndicalist. Pernicone states «anar-

cho-syndicalism best describes Tresca's position on the spectrum of revolutionary ideologies and movements (Pernicone, 2003b, p. iv). Tresca simply did not neatly fit into any category within the typology of anarchism. According to Pernicone, Tresca was «anarchist *sui generis* and so was his newspaper». Tresca was truly a «freelancer of revolution» (Pernicone, 2005, pp. 106, 34), or had he lived in other times and other places, «a stormy petrel».

The most continuous aspect of Tresca's political career was his role as *direttore* (editor-in-chief) of a series of Italian-language anarchist weeklies, which became Tresca's personal platform. In 1907, one year after his resignation as the director of *Il Proletario*, Tresca launched a new weekly, *La Plebe* (*The Masses*), which went bankrupt in 1909. *La Plebe's* masthead proudly announced: «Neither in the service of personal cliques nor subject to the tyranny of a party, but in combat for “the Ideal” against priests, bosses, and the *camorre*» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 34). The *camorre* for Tresca meant «the rackets», that is, the alliance between the *prominenti* of the Italian American community and the consuls and other officials of the Italian government operating in the United States. *La Plebe* was later resurrected as *L'Avvenire* (*The Future*), which continued publishing until 1917, when the Federal government cancelled its third-class mailing privileges because of the paper's anti-war stance. *Il Martello* «*Giornale politico, letterario, ed artistico* (*The Hammer: A Newspaper of Politics, Literature, and the Arts*), which first appeared in 1917 (the year of *L'Avvenire's* demise), the last and longest lived, of these publications, continued to be published until two years after Tresca's death in 1943. Most frequently, the journals that Tresca directed were weeklies, but depending on finances, the time span between issues could expand to two, three weeks, and sometimes they appeared on an irregular basis (Pernicone, 2001, pp. 7-56).

Il Martello, which he owned and directed, was the apotheosis of Tresca. Its pages documented Tresca's beliefs and opinions, and enabled him to maintain a base of support: it legitimized his status as a leader of anarchism and of the wider radical community. By 1924 *Il Martello* boasted a circulation of 10,500, making it the premier Italian-language radical newspaper in the United States. By 1939, however, Tresca was forced to publish *Il Martello* irregularly and placed it on a biweekly schedule; its readership had declined to a miniscule 2,100 by the time of Tresca's death. A handful of aging *sovversivi* produced issue after issue to the dwindling band of first-generation Italian anarchists, until its last issue was printed in 1946. The success of *Il Martello*, relative to the other Italian-language radical publications, can be ascribed to its fairly liberal editorial politics. In one article, Pernicone describes *Il Martello* as an «iconoclastic publication that hued to no doctrine, or dogmas, or party line» (Pernicone, 2001, p. 18). *Il Martello* supplied a platform

for Tresca. Nonetheless, it published articles from a wide range of positions on the broad spectrum of anarchism. It was not the mouthpiece of a sect, and so could appeal to a wider range of readers in this small world.

Tresca's message was further disseminated by his oratory, at meetings held at the Rand School (a Socialist Party-related school in New York), Cooper Union, and other halls in New York City as well as at open-air rallies and humble meeting places within Italian-speaking communities throughout the United States. Over time, his speeches (the bulk of which were in Italian) at public meetings also decreased somewhat. Max Eastman told a friend, «[Tresca] does not speak English with an Italian accent; he talks Italian with English words» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 83).

Pernicone's political biography of Tresca's remarkable career reveals the (albeit, often sporadic) radical resistance of Southern Italian immigrants to the harsh exploitation and unyielding oppression they encountered in the United States (Vecoli, 2003; Winslow, 2003). During the Westmoreland coal strike, which began in Western Pennsylvania on March, 1910, and lasted until July, 1911, Tresca first confronted industrial warfare in his country of adoption. He spoke at meetings in innumerable small coal-mining towns, which he called «the oases of our propaganda». Tresca repeated the same uncompromising message to as many as possible of the sixty-thousand Italian coal miners: fight to the end against the mine owners and switch allegiance from the United Mine Workers of America to the Industrial Workers of the World. Whatever immediate effect his speeches made on his audiences, Italian American coal miners in Pennsylvania and other states became the backbone of his support and the most loyal subscribers to his newspapers.

Tresca was unable to play a key role in the Lawrence, Massachusetts, General Strike of 1912, one of the most important events in the history of American labor, because at that time he was in jail. After his release, the FSI, which had taken a turn toward syndicalism, invited Tresca to go to Lawrence to spearhead the fight for the exoneration of the two major leaders of the strike, Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti. These fellow Italian radicals had been charged with «indirect responsibility» for the murders of two strikers, who had been killed by the police and the militia! His successes in organizing their defense earned him prestige as the most important radical in the Italian-immigrant Left and a figure of note within the wider radical community.

Something else happened at Lawrence of great importance to Tresca. There he met the legendary working-class leader, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, an organizer from the IWW, whose stirring oratory and boundless courage combined with her flaming red hair and alabaster skin made her one of the most beloved and charismatic heroines of the American radical movement. (Joe Hill composed a song, *The Rebel Girl*, about her, and Theodore Dreiser called her, «The East

Side [of New York City] Joan of Arc».) After sharing the same platforms and dangers for so many weeks, Tresca and Flynn were soon sharing the same bed. The following year, they became the principal leaders of the 1912-1913 general strike in Paterson. Tresca and Flynn worked together in the extremely violent, and yet again futile, strike of the ironworkers in the Mesabi Range in Northern Minnesota. At that time, Tresca left his wife of ten years, Helga, and began living with Flynn and her family in a cold-water railroad flat in the South Bronx. There he learned some additional English and became aware of the miserable conditions under which even native-born American workers lived. Their thirteen-year-long love affair did not end over politics, but rather because of Tresca's open and notorious womanizing. (In 1922, Tresca fathered a son with Sabina Flynn, Elizabeth's eight-year-younger sister.)

It is unlikely their relationship would have survived Flynn's decision in 1939 to join the Communist Party. In 1951, Flynn was convicted, along with the Communist Party's second-rank leadership, under the Smith Act for «conspiring to advocate the overthrow of the United States government», and served twenty-six months of a three-year term, from January 1955 through May 1957, in Alderson Federal Penitentiary. In 1961, she was elected the first woman to serve as the Party's national chairperson. She died in Moscow in 1964, where she was honored by an immense state funeral. Half of her ashes are buried under the Kremlin Wall and half in Waldheim Cemetery, in Chicago, the final resting place of scores of the best leaders of the American Left, including the Hay Market martyrs, Big Bill Haywood, and Emma Goldman.

Flynn drew Tresca into the wider world of American radicalism. Through her he was introduced to major intellectuals on the Left: John Reed, Upton Sinclair, Scott Nearing, Lincoln Steffens, Roger Baldwin, Margaret Sanger, Norman Thomas, John Dos Passos, Mike Gold, and many others. For these radical luminaries (who almost invariably came from privileged backgrounds), Tresca personified the authentic people's leader, who risked all for the cause, and not so incidentally, was colorful, eloquent, and charming. For Tresca, these Leftist intellectuals and activists represented access to resources that he would time and again solicit for the struggles waged by the *sovversivi* within the Italian radical community. Tresca's ability to act as a broker between the elite of the American Left and the embattled Italian American radicals greatly enhanced his importance in this community.

Tresca used his new-found influence to positive effect in two major cases involving Italian American anarchists. When two anarchists, Donato Carillo (an ardent *Treschiano*) and Calogero Greco, were charged with premeditated murder for the deaths of two Blackshirts who were on their way from the Bronx, dressed in full regalia, to a Fascist demonstration in 1927, Tresca spearheaded the organization of a defense committee. The committee retained

Clarence Darrow for the defense of the two young anti-Fascists. The jury's «not guilty» verdict resulted in *The Nation* electing Tresca to its 1927 «Honorary Roll» (Pernicone, 1997-1998, pp. 20-45).

Circumstances limited the scope of Tresca's contribution to the campaign to save Sacco and Vanzetti. The Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee was completely controlled by followers of Luigi Galleani, an anti-organization anarchist tenaciously committed to the use of «propaganda of the deed», that is, violence, who were relentlessly hostile to Tresca. («The good shoemaker and the poor fish peddler», who after becoming anarchists in the United States, had affiliated with the *Galleanisti*) (Pernicone, 1979). Pernicone ascribes the antagonism of the *Galleanisti* toward Tresca as a function of the cult-like organization of this anarchist sect, which could only countenance one «deity». The hostility of the *Galleanisti* to Tresca continued beyond the grave. In this and so many other instances on the Left, the internecine warfare among the Italian American anarchists reflected the frustration arising from their inability to overcome the far superior forces they encountered, so that they could effect change on behalf of the downtrodden people they so sincerely wished to help. The anger that logically should have energized their actions against «Authority» was instead directed against their rivals in this small and dwindling movement. The damage from this type of behavior, of course, was (and where this behavior persists, is) inflicted not the movement's enemies, but on the movement itself by contributing to its further fragmentation.

Pernicone's explanation for the decline of anarchism in the Italian American community is inadequate. Unquestionably, the United States government subjected the anarchists to continual repression, which, at times, became quite brutal. Deportations of anarchists to Italy, which entailed indeterminate sentences in Fascist prisons, constituted *de facto* death sentences. However, the Federal government imposed repressive measures on the Communists at least as harsh as those it inflicted on the anarchists, and the Communist ranks actually grew in the Italian American community during this same period (Meyer, 2003; 2001). In noting that first-generation anarchists failed to transmit their beliefs and commitments, he speculates that the tight structure of the Italian family, where powerful religious women managed to undermine the family's adherence to their husbands' radicalism, caused this phenomenon. There is no way to access this hypothesis without some cross-ethnic studies are written. Some recent studies indicate that many Italian American women also embraced anarchism and other radical identities (Guglielmo, 2003; Salerno, 2003).

The author seems unwilling to come to grips with the failure of the anarchists, including the anarcho-syndicalists in the United States, to produce results for the workers. All the major anarchist-led strike movements they were identified with failed (often miserably), and the gains from the one fairly suc-

successful strike they led, Lawrence, in 1912, were snatched away by the owners within a fairly short period of time. Eschewing organization meant starting from scratch each time. The anarchists simply had no means of consolidating and defending any improvements their efforts achieved. Their refusal to participate in elections meant that there was no center around which their supporters could rally. Increasingly, radicals, and especially workers, viewed Tresca's announcement that «I am a soldier of the ideal» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 155) as not so much heroic as quixotic.

Most seriously, Tresca's opposition to the Soviet Union and the Communist movement, isolated him and other anarchists from fellow revolutionaries and the most radicalized constituencies. As early as June 1918, while hailing the Bolshevik Revolution, Tresca eloquently made the anarchists' argument against Communism: «like all dictatorships, even the dictatorship of the proletariat has its dangers. [...] Lenin and Trotsky with the other Bolsheviks may be the dominators of tomorrow» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 123). Unlike most anarchists, who believed that the crushing of the anarchist sailors' revolt in Kronstadt in 1921 precluded all cooperation with the Communists, Tresca had worked together with the Communists. Pernicone points out that «Carlo Tresca stood much closer to the Communists on most issues than to the social democrats... the communists were revolutionaries and the social democrats were not [and therefore, the Communists] were much more committed and effective anti-Fascists than their reformists rivals...» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 177). Tresca had sided with the Communists in the fractionalized Anti-Fascist Alliance of North America (AFANA) and became a member of the board of the Communist-led *New Masses*, the most prestigious cultural journal on the Left. AFANA and *New Masses* allowed Tresca to exercise his talents in wider arenas and acquire some genuine celebrity within the wider Left community. Also these associations, by making Tresca a part of this larger community, decreased the ever-pending threat (at least, until the election of FDR in 1932) of deportation.

The high point of Tresca's collaboration with the Communist Party coincided with the period in Communist Party known as the Third Period. In 1927, under Joseph Stalin's leadership, the Soviet Party inaugurated the Third Period. The strategic premise of this period was that the collapse of the capitalist economy was imminent. Consequently, the Comintern now demanded that the world Communist movement embark on a systemic «revolutionary offensive». The tactics of the Third Period featured street fighting, the violent distribution of public assemblies of their rivals on the Left as well as groups identified as fascist, spontaneous strike actions, and a diminution of electoral and conventional trade union activities. The Communists specifically directed their venom and sometimes force at the social democrats, whom they now called «social fascists», because they viewed them as the major obstacle to revolutionary action

by the proletariat against the failed system of capitalism. The boundaries between Communism and anarchism faded considerably during the Third Period.

The two periods preceding the Third Period were War Communism and the New Economic Policy. The first used force to consolidate Communist rule in Russia and supported revolutionary movements abroad. Exhausted by the Civil War and the Intervention and discouraged by the defeated revolutions in Germany, Hungary, and China, in 1921 Vladimir Lenin declared the conclusion of an ultra-revolutionary period. In its place, he inaugurated the New Economic Policy, which permitted a private sector of the economy to re-emerge. Based on the appraisal that there existed little or no possibility for socialist revolutions abroad, the Communists now were conciliatory with the social democrats and worked within the existing workers' organizations.

The conclusion of the Third Period and the implementation of the Popular Front in 1935 by the Comintern effectively separated Tresca from his erstwhile Communist allies. In this new stage, Communist Parties everywhere sought to build coalitions with social democrats and non-socialist forces, such as New Deal Democrats in the United States, and the Soviet Union sought to build alliances with Western democracies. The Communist movement's primary goal now was not the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, but an all-out struggle with fascism. The argument between the anarchists and dissident Communists (Trotskyists, Bukharinists, etc.) and the Communists and their socialist and radical republican allies was, in reality, the contrast between the strategic models of the Third Period and the Popular Front. The Third Period, which advocated revolutionary action of the «vanguard», had fragmented the anti-Fascist forces. Its activities failed to establish socialism anywhere, but they contributed greatly to the rise of the Nazis to power. The Popular Front led to the establishment of Popular Front governments in France, Spain, Belgium as well as the New Deal in the United States, which brought about substantive and palpable benefits for the workers and the small farmers. The reforms it sponsored (and most especially, the strengthening of the trade unions and other popular organizations) erected bulwarks against fascism in these countries. However, the Popular Front failed to bring about an alliance, on even an informal basis, between the Western democracies and the Soviet Union. This unbridgeable breach and the fall off the Spanish Republic set the stage for the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in 1939.

The advocacy of a type of social democracy and the abandonment of social revolution played itself out most dramatically during the Spanish Civil War. Spain had the last mass anarchist movement in the world and elements of it soon came into conflict with the Popular Front government, the success of whose strategy depended on the maintenance of the loyalty of some sectors of the middle class. The anarchists refused to accede to the Republican govern-

ment's demand that they cease land seizures and the occupation of factories and accept the authority of the Republican government's unified command of the war. This led to a Communist-led suppression of the anarchist movement in Barcelona, and subsequently in all of Catalonia, in 1937. Although his ties with the Communist-oriented had already been attenuated to the breaking point, events in Spain caused Tresca to break irrevocably with the Communists.

The depredations of the Communists did not repulse – as they had Tresca, among other intellectuals – the great majority of Leftists and millions of workers influenced by the mass Communist and Socialist movements. Faced with the immediate threat of Fascism, what most mattered to them was the defense of Madrid and the survival of the Soviet Union. To the vast majority of the Left, these goals seemed unachievable without the participation of the Communists in the anti-Fascist movement. In the United States, the Left was preoccupied with expanding the social gains of the New Deal, and assisting the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO), which to some large extent were the results of mass movements encouraged by Communists and their allies. These were viewed as being of much greater consequence than the suppression of the anarchist movement in Catalonia or for that matter show trials of Communist dissidents in Moscow. Most on the Left, either consciously, or perhaps much more often unconsciously, shunted aside these colossal breeches in decent, humane behavior.

In great contrast to the mood of the masses, Tresca (and what remained of the anarchist movement) dismissed the New Deal as a «salvaging operation for capitalism» and Franklin Delano Roosevelt as «a constitutional dictator». Somewhat more baffling, Tresca belittled the greatest achievement of the American Left – that is, the creation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations – as «much an auxiliary of capitalism as the unions of the American Federation of Labor» (Pernicone, 2005, pp. 213-14, 216). The affiliated unions of the latter, unlike those in the CIO, were organized according to trade and therefore excluded the unskilled, regardless of their racial or ethnic backgrounds, the African Americans, and the masses of immigrants, and specifically Italian Americans. The CIO organized all the workers – regardless of skill levels, race, nationality, gender – in the heart of the country's heavy industry – automobile and farm-equipment manufacturing, steel, rubber, electrical, maritime – as well as simultaneously beginning to organize white-collar workers in the public and private sectors. The CIO was of enormous importance to the Italian Americans, who were the most proletarianized of the European immigrant communities. Predictably, Tresca, and the anarchists generally, became isolated from the great historical movements of this tumultuous period. They devolved into inbred, mutually hostile, affinity groups busily keeping alive newspapers whose circulations inexorably melted away. Unable to participate in the mass popular

movements of the time, no less to challenge capitalism, their elaborate subculture continued to provide meaning to many of the initiated, but they were impervious to newcomers, including the children of their members.

Pernicone seems unwilling fully to confront the contradictions in Tresca's choices during this period of his life. Isolation was unacceptable to Tresca, so he joined the anti-Communist Left, a hodge-podge of small and rarified groups (anti-Communist social democrats, sympathizers of Trotskyism, embittered ex-Communists), an unstable coalition held together primarily by their shared antipathy to the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. Tresca was now aligned with individuals alien to his long-held beliefs and associations, and who repeatedly evidenced a willingness to join with «the class enemy» to defeat the Communists. Most startling was his newborn comradeship with Luigi Antonini, the leader of Local 89, the huge Italian-language local, of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (Zappia, 2003). Despite his socialist representation, Antonini personified the anti-democratic trade union bureaucrat considered anathema by anarchists and Communists alike. In the post-war period, he worked hand in hand with the CIA to isolate the Communist Party of Italy. Within the Italian labor movement, Antonini helped engineer the walk-out of the Socialist component of the Communist-led Italian General Federation of Labor (CGIL), which had the effect of dividing the labor movement and strengthening the Christian Democrats – and for that matter the hard Right of the Italian political spectrum (Filippelli, 1989).

This unlikely duo, however, did not always collaborate on the same political agenda. For example, unlike Antonini, Tresca continued to insist that Generoso Pope, the publisher of *Il Progresso Italo Americano* (the largest Italian-language newspaper in the United States), who had ardently supported Italian Fascism in the pre-war period, be excluded from progressive circles. However, in tandem with Antonini, Tresca invariably sided with those who opposed the inclusion of the Communist in an Italian coalition government, which was the most urgent political question of that moment on Italy's political agenda. One explanation for the unlikely alliance between Tresca and Antonini is money. Although this is hinted at by Pernicone, Dorothy Gallagher – author of the only other biography of Tresca – bluntly states that Tresca «called continually on Luigi Antonini [...] for donations to “companions that deserve help”. The persecuted, those defeated by the storm of fascist and Stalinist reaction» (Gallagher, 1989, p. 178).

Once Tresca broke with Communism and consequently with the Popular Front, he became marginalized. Worse, he started to act in ways that corresponded to the worst accusations of his anarchist opponents, as well as the wider Left movement. Pernicone shows how Tresca personally discouraged individuals from going to Spain to fight Franco; he even attempted to dis-

suaide John Dos Passos from traveling to Spain to make a documentary film to aid the Loyalist cause. One could persuasively argue that, whatever his case against the Communists and their allies, these actions directly helped the Fascists. Indeed, there were Leftists who publicly made this argument.

Girolamo Valenti, the editor of *La Stampa Libera*, accused Tresca of «devoting his time to the fight against... Loyalist Spain». Pietro Allegra, Tresca's closest collaborator since pre-World War I days, said Tresca's attacks on the Communists made him «an enemy of anti-Fascism», and penned an extended, savage pamphlet entitled *Il Suicidio Morale di Carlo Tresca*. Vito Marcantonio – the sole Congressman from the American Labor Party, who represented East Harlem, which at time contained the largest Little Italy in the United States – castigated Tresca as «completely discredited in the eyes of the population of New York... Therefore, it is no wonder that the reactionary forces use him for their dirty jobs against the people» (Pernicone, 2005, pp. 234-35).

In the final years of his life, Tresca mobilized his energies to exclude Communists and their sympathizers in the Mazzini Society and the Italian American Victory Councils, two organizations dedicated to ensuring the establishment of a democratic government in post-war Italy. Tresca simply overlooked the obvious: without the participation of Communists and their allies in the post-war government, liberated Italy was destined to fall into the hands of the Christian Democratic Party, which worked closely with the Vatican and the United States. This eventuality was antithetical to everything Tresca had ever said or written. Tresca squandered his personal prestige by bartering it in return for inclusion in a long series of anti-Communist initiatives.

For others on the Left, Tresca went beyond the Pale when he testified, and gave names of Communists, who he believed could help the grand jury investigating the disappearance in 1937 of Juliet Stuart Poyntz, a Communist leader who had been recruited by the Soviet Union for secret work. By cooperating with the government in this way, Tresca made himself *persona non grata*, not only in the large and, at that moment, growing Popular Front, but also among his own core group of Italian American anarchists, who intensified their drumbeat of «spy» to vilify Tresca. The Italian Commission of the Communist Party hurled at Tresca the most devastating epithet of the Left – «police informer» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 234). Gallagher paints an even more disturbing picture of Tresca than Pernicone. She reports that United States Attorney Francis Mahony told reporters Tresca gave «names, dates, and places» in his testimony on Poyntz to the grand jury. Moreover during his talks with Inspector Joseph Genco of the FBI, he regularly talked about «Fascist activists». However, the subjects under investigation were no longer the Fascists but the Communists and those willing to work with the Communists. Tresca sided with those who were opposed to the inclusion of the Garibaldi Federation (the Italian section

of the Communist-led fraternal organization, the International Workers Order) into the Italian American Victory Council (IAVC), whose application was supported by the Office of War Information (OWI) and opposed by the FBI (Pernicone, 2005, pp. 201, 172-73). A biographer of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn outright states «Tresca became an FBI informant, regularly sweeping into their New York offices and pouring out hours of radical gossip» (Camp, 1995, p. 142). The revelation of a life-long anti-Fascist's cooperation with the FBI to exclude anti-Fascist workers in a coalition dedicated to the liberation of Italy – on the eve of the Soviet victory over the Nazis at Stalingrad, no less – was disconcerting to his erstwhile comrades.

Tresca further isolated himself by becoming enmeshed in the relatively small world of supporters and admirers of Leon Trotsky. In 1936, he joined the «Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky»; in 1937, he became prominent in its successor, the John Dewey Commission, which investigated the trumped-up charges against the supporters of Trotsky and other dissident Communists during the Moscow purges. Tresca's defense of Trotsky led to a total break with the anarchist community. After all, it was Trotsky who, during the Civil War, had organized the suppression of the anarchist forces of Nestor Makhno in the Ukraine (Carr, 1966, pp. 307-10) and crushed the Kronstadt Rebellion led by the anarchist sailors.

Tresca's association with Trotsky's cause had much to do with his latest and last relationship, Margaret De Silver. The daughter of wealthy Quaker parents from Philadelphia, Margaret married Albert De Silver, who along with Roger Baldwin, founded the American Civil Liberties Union. Upon De Silver's death in 1924, Margaret inherited his considerable wealth, significant amounts of which she donated to Left causes. In 1933, soon after becoming a steady contributor to *Il Martello*, she became Tresca's «devoted companion until his death» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 246). Tresca got a lot from Margaret. Together they resided first in a mansion-sized townhouse in Brooklyn Heights and then in a commodious apartment in Greenwich Village within walking distance from *Il Martello*'s office. There were vacations in Martha's Vineyard; but best of all, Margaret not only didn't object to his philandering, but found it «amusing» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 246). Tresca also inherited Margaret's family of three children, whom she woefully neglected. The children appreciated his attention, and they compensated for the loss of his two abandoned children.

Margaret was a devotee of Leon Trotsky and a major contributor to the Dewey Commission. Tresca quickly became socially and politically integrated into these circles, which featured anti-Communist intellectuals – such as Sidney Hook and Herbert Solow, and John Dos Passos – all of whom later became apologists for McCarthyism (Wald, 1987). These circles also included some less obsessively anti-Communist figures, such as Edmund Wilson

and Norman Thomas. From these widely respected figures, Tresca obtained «admiration, respect, and appreciation», all of which, by this time, he had lost from his erstwhile comrades and the larger American Left. The day he was murdered, Tresca had had lunch with Margaret, and she remained the most fervent supporter of the Tresca Memorial Committee, which held annual meetings in his honor until 1954.

Pernicone's book convincingly documents that, throughout his life, Tresca displayed enormous physical courage and outstanding oratorical and journalistic skill, which were deployed on behalf of the Italian American community and the working class as a whole. Tresca was no armchair radical. He repeatedly confronted physical violence: he narrowly escaped being lynched, deportation to Fascist Italy (the equivalent of a death sentence); he was stabbed in the face, viciously beaten on a number of occasions, and was the target of an attempted bombing. With his comrades, who were often joined by Communists, he held anti-Fascist street meetings in communities dominated by the Fascists, raided Fascist headquarters, dispersed Fascist meetings and assemblies, and in the streets of many Little Italies fought the Blackshirts in hand-to-hand combat (Cannistraro, 1999). Even after a massive campaign resulted in the commutation in 1925 of an order of deportation to Fascist Italy against him, this penalty remained the logical, and almost inevitable, consequence of his political activities. Yet, he persisted. In the fight against Fascism, Tresca was also an eloquent writer and orator. In 1930, when predicting the ultimate defeat of Fascism, Tresca said that Mussolini would go to war because war was inherent to Fascism. «Fascism», he stated, «is violence erected into a system [that] requires war for its own sake as a self-sustaining mechanism» (Pernicone, 2005, p. 126).

Carlo Tresca had been a courageous tribune for the workers of every nationality and a fearless anti-Fascist. Tresca had a darker side, one that Pernicone does not hide. Unfortunately, Pernicone does not connect Tresca's bad behavior sufficiently with his uncanny ability to transform erstwhile and potential admirers into lifelong enemies. Tresca's behavior towards women was habitually shabby and dishonorable. Tresca went beyond garden-variety womanizing. He fathered a child with Gurley Flynn's younger sister, and after his sexual passions cooled treated his endless succession of lovers with grand indifference and contempt. His behavior with money was similarly reprehensible. He incessantly «borrowed» money from family, friends, comrades, and the ultimate radical betrayal, from movement funds. He did this not to buy bread or pay the rent on a garret room, but to finance a fairly comfortable lifestyle.

Tresca's enemies eagerly filled these large chinks in his armor with slings and arrows, which not only drew blood but also weakened the radical cause. Pernicone is too quick to give credence to Tresca's explanation for all the enmity directed toward him, viz. «Sheer professional jealousy». Here and elsewhere, it seems appro-

priate for the author to speculate whether there exists some sort of logical (dare one say dialectical) relationship between the self-sacrificing courageous persona of leaders in popular movements and an indifference and even cruelty to family members, friends, and comrades. Do popular leaders assume that they are entitled to ignore «ordinary» morality because they have foregone opportunities to form stable relationships or advance themselves financially and professionally?

Carlo Tresca: Portrait of a Rebel, which so successfully draws a vivid picture of a major leader of a neglected tradition of radicalism, leaves open yet another question. At a time when the motives and morality of Communist intellectuals and popular leaders who coalesced with Communists, during this and later periods, is routinely questioned, is it also not time to further reassess the deleterious consequences to the workers' movement of those self-proclaimed Leftists who joined with the avowed enemies of the Left to fight Communism? (Saunders, 1999).

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