

Barry Commoner: Where Science Meets Terrorism

Italian Communists were treated to an unlikely speaker last month at the party's *Unità* festival in Bologna: Washington University (St. Louis) biologist and leading U.S. environmentalist Barry Commoner, who interrupted his "investigation" of the mysterious toxic gas cloud which recently appeared over Bologna to deliver a tirade against nuclear energy to the startled Italian workers attending the festival. Drawing on his connections to the "radical leftist" and "counterculture" networks in Europe controlled by the Washington D.C.-based Institute for Policy Studies, Commoner — the recipient of millions in grants from the U.S. government and some of the nation's most heavily endowed private foundations — was touted in press throughout Europe as a "radical leftist."

At the same time, Commoner's byline was appearing under a featured article in the Sept. 25 *New York Times Magazine*, in which he painted a lurid portrait of the alleged threat to the environment posed by the petrochemicals industry, focusing heavily on his contention that many, if not most, of the synthetic materials being produced in that industry are highly carcinogenic.

Commoner's schedule of activities highlights a development in the so-called environmentalist movement that besieged industrialists and businessmen have been slow to point out: the open collaboration between self-styled environmentalists — even those sporting such apparently respectable credentials as Dr. Commoner — and the world's most notorious terrorist groups and defenders of terrorist tactics.

Commoner, for instance, is a featured speaker for the "Mobilization for Survival," an antinuclear umbrella organization run by the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) and including such avowedly terrorist groups as the July 4 Coalition. The "Mobilization" is the U.S. end of an internationally organized and coordinated year of violent disruptions against nuclear power plants and development projects, which in other countries has included riots, bombings, and several deaths. Commoner has also become a favorite of IPS-linked columnists James Ridgeway and Alexander Cockburn, authors of "The Greasy Pole" column in the *New York Village Voice*, who recently praised him along with Ralph Nader as one of the country's two most consistent nuclear energy foes.

A closer look at Commoner's career discloses that his apparent alliance with terrorists is not so surprising: Commoner's history and accomplishments are more those of an intelligence agent and professional propagandist than a reputable scientist, and his scientific credentials, such as they are, are mediocre and eccentric.

In biology, Commoner is an advocate of the British-engendered doctrine of "holism," a theory concocted by late 19th and early 20th century British politician-intelligence agents J.B. Haldane and racist J.C. Smuts, which teaches that since the ecosphere is a harmony of all its elements, fundamental change in the environment is impossible. Therefore, holism claims, any particular alteration in the environment will produce a reaction elsewhere.

While it is unclear whether Commoner adopted "holism" while studying biology as a graduate student at Harvard from 1937 to 1940, at the same time that British Fabian agent Bertrand Russell was on the Harvard faculty, or after taking his post in the biology department at Washington University, a nest of British Fabian activity since the 1860s, "holism's" impact on his thinking is apparent. Among biologists, Commoner is notorious for his carping and eccentric attacks on the "authenticity" of the Watson-Crick breakthroughs in DNA research, which, he claims, overrate the importance of DNA as an individual determinant of the characteristics of organisms.

True to his "holism," Commoner believes that the environmental balance is so delicate that all tampering by technological progress must be repaid in the future. In 1970 he wrote that "The environmental peril now upon us is a grim challenge; from it we may yet learn that the proper use of science is not to conquer nature but to live in it."

Molding a Movement

Apart from this, Commoner's own research has been focused throughout his career on narrow projects on tobacco mosaic virus functions.

As an environmentalist propagandist, however, Commoner's career is richer. Since the 1950s he has functioned as a leading pioneer in importing "environmentalism" to the U.S. from its place of origin — Britain — where it was developed by leading Fabian operatives including Julian Huxley and Bertrand Russell.

During this period, Commoner sides with anthropologist Margaret Mead in the debate within the American Association for the Advancement of Science over the role of science in shaping culture. While her opponents contended that scientists' primary role must lie in basic research, Mead, herself a World War II psychological warfare specialist and a leading exponent of British "cultural relativism," which objects to the interference of modern technology into underdeveloped nations' "right" to "their own" backward culture, argued otherwise. Scientists she said, must downgrade

basic new research, and mold themselves into a propaganda force to alert the nation on the potential dangers and drawbacks in the new technologies evolving in the postwar world.

This debate was finally resolved when Meade, Commoner, and others organized a Conference on Scientific Information at the Rockefeller Institute in New York in 1963, where they launched the Scientists' Institute for Public Information (SIPI) to promote environmentalism. Commoner continues today as the chairman of SIPI.

Margaret Mead set out the terms of the conference in her keynote address to the nearly 100 scientists and observers gathered, calling for the type of psychological conditioning used during World War II to shape U.S. opinion:

We had a good deal of experience at that time (World War II) in how to mobilize the responsible groups in the community for a short-term effort.... We developed in World War II some knowledge of what was necessary if you were going to have nationwide movements of any sort, either of small groups or of large, that would be effective in the United States.

Immediately after World War II as you all know we had the efforts, primarily by physicists, to arouse public opinion, and they developed the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

... our solution ... it is the duty of science to inform the public of the issues, (from) among the solutions to which, then, the public must choose.

Barry Commoner followed with an account of his personal experience in organizing a pilot project for SIPI, the St. Louis Committee for Nuclear Information, which he started in 1958:

No scientist needs to be convinced that science and public affairs are closely coupled.

... We have the distinction of being the first generation of scientists to live with the knowledge that our work, our ideas, our daily activities impinge with a frightening immediacy on national politics, in international conflicts, on the planet's fate as a human habitation.

Commoner also masterminded the structure of the Scientist's Institute which came out of the conference, laying out a plan for a centralized core group which would disseminate propaganda to local groupings researching and organizing around various environmental issues. The center would also set priorities and control the information flow out to local bodies and the public.

High-Level Support

This founding SIPI conference was closely observed by two prominent foundation officials: Raymond Rubinow from the J.M. Kaplan Fund, identified in 1967 by *Newsweek Magazine* as a conduit for CIA funds to covert operations, and Raymond Platig from the Carnegie Endowment, who was also a member of the Wall Street

policy-making body, the Council on Foreign Relations. Rubinow spoke near the end of the conference, fully endorsing its aims and methods, a statement which has been reaffirmed each year with thousands of dollars in grants to SIPI.

After the conference SIPI established its headquarters in New York, although day-to-day operations were run directly out of Commoner's base at Washington University.

(Not coincidentally Washington University is a nexus point for several interrelated British Fabian networks, most notably the *Telos* "left" terrorist propaganda operation. *Telos*, a publication linked to the Institute for Policy Studies, provides and shapes the belief structures of numerous "left" terrorist countergangs internationally. Originally founded at Trento University in Italy, the spawning ground of the terrorist Red Brigades, by Francesco Alberoni, *Telos* regularly features linguists, sociologists, and philosopher controllers of the terrorist and environmental "movements" including Noam Chomsky, Jean Paul Sartre, and Andre Gorz among many others.)

In 1968 Barry Commoner expanded his operations by founding a research center at Washington University to "study the effects of man on the environment" and generate pseudoscientific arguments for deindustrialization, while simultaneously training an environmentalist cadre force. This venture received a phenomenal \$4.25 million grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare then under the direction of one-time OSS operative John Gardner, renowned for his Ford Foundation-funded counterinsurgency projects including Common Cause.

By 1970, Commoner's activities had prepared the groundwork for what he and his allies hoped would become a mass environmental movement. During the 1969-1970 period, numerous environmentalist operations sprang up, the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) was railroaded through Congress (detailed in *Ralph Nader: Nuclear Saboteur*, a pamphlet published by Campaigner Publications, 1977), and Commoner began cranking out popular antitechnology tracts in various liberal and fabian journals, including *The Progressive*, *Saturday Review*, *The Humanist*, etc. At the same time Commoner was moved into a post on the editorial board of the World Book Encyclopedia, legitimizing his zero-growth quackery as "objective scientific fact."

Beginning in early 1975, Commoner escalated his deindustrialization crusade with a nationwide speaking tour, accompanied by United Auto Workers vice president Irving Bluestone, to educate workers on the dangers of advanced industrial technology, especially nuclear energy, and the benefits of "environmentally safe" slave-labor programs and "renewable energy source" solar power. The lunatic solar energy non-technologies advocated by Commoner would require either plunging the U.S. to Third World standards of living, or virtually covering the nation with reflecting mirrors.

Soon after completing this tour, Commoner initiated a new SIPI publication with the hearty endorsement of the UAW officials, titled *Job Health News Service*, a weekly

update on the latest industrial accidents, rumors of new toxic substances, and other "proof" of the hazards of modern industry. Commoner now tours the country, and occasionally Europe, speaking wherever he can get an audience to listen to his charges that technology-intensive production creates things "rejected by Nature in her wisdom."

— Stuart Pettingell

Schlesinger's 5th Column

James Schlesinger has been quietly slipping leading terrorists and environmentalists into select posts inside the Carter Administration, to enhance his already broad — and potentially near-dictatorial — powers as Energy Secretary. Using codewords such as "energy conservation," "environmental protection," "health safety," and "soft energy technology," Schlesinger and his crew of "zero growth or else" partisans are a fifth column dedicated to reducing the industrial economy of the United States to "natural" rubble.

Among those who are working in coordination with Schlesinger:

John Froines:

Head of the Office of Toxic Substances, Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Froines began his career as an Institute for Policy Studies terrorist provocateur, and was arrested at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago as one of the indicted coconspirators in the famous "Chicago Seven" trial. In the early 1970s Froines shifted his "radical" cover and became an environmentalist, working closely with Institute for Policy Studies fellow Lee Webb in Vermont on antitechnology organizing projects in the New England area. Froines' job in his newly formed OSHA post will be to set standards to "protect" workers from "cancer-causing industries" based on the nostrums for a "safe environment" expounded by quacks like Barry Commoner.

Marvin Durning:

"Enforcer" at the Environmental Protection Agency
Durning is an important environmentalist lawyer from Seattle who has handled most of the antinuclear and "environmental protection" cases in the area for the Wall Street-created Natural Resources Defense Council. Named "Environmentalist of the Year" in 1967 by President Lyndon Johnson, Durning has never changed his course, running three unsuccessful electoral campaigns over the past two years on an environmentalist platform. His responsibility with the Environmental Protection Agency is to enforce pollution standards against industry and other "polluters" set by the Council on Environmental Quality.

S. David Freeman:

Chairman, Tennessee Valley Authority
Freeman has been a top think-tank planner specializing in energy and deindustrialization since the 1960s. After a

short period in the President's Office of Science and Technology in the early 1970s, where he worked with James Schlesinger — then in the Bureau of Budget — Freeman fully elaborated his zero growth programs as head of the Ford Foundation's Energy Policy Project. This project produced a 21-volume study on energy, a virtual how-to manual for implementing a zero-growth "postindustrial" society, ranging from pricing policies to nuclear terrorism. In February 1976, a year before his appointment to the TVA, Freeman gave a speech in Nashville calling for the TVA to be used as a model for "a low-growth non-energy intensive" policy.

David Bardin:

Head of the Economic Regulatory Administration in the Department of Energy

Bardin is a specialist in "crisis management" and enforced rationing plans. A former assistant to the Attorney General of Israel, David Bardin administered the 1975 "water crisis" in Trenton, N.J. caused by the suspicious bursting of a crucial valve which could not be repaired for nearly a week. Bardin brought in the 309th Civilian Affairs Unit of the Army Reserves to distribute water; this is a unit trained in population pacification operations and normally used in advance of a full military occupation.

Brian Jenkins:

Paid consultant to the State Department Cabinet Committee for Combatting Terrorism

Jenkins is a top-level terrorism scenario planner at the Rand Corporation, a preeminent Wall Street economic warfare think tank. Jenkins was one of the first to develop the "prediction" of a "nuclear Pearl Harbor" terrorist incident capable of stopping nuclear energy development "overnight." Jenkins' career began with a project to infiltrate and profile left-wing groups in Latin America.

David Rosenbaum:

Energy Advisor, Government Accounting Office
Rosenbaum is a leading specialist in nuclear terrorism and is the author of the important MITRE Corporation report on nuclear terrorism. Rosenbaum's most recent work is reflected in the winter issue of *International Security* magazine forecasting in detail the "most likely" nuclear terrorists' extortion demands against the U.S. Government. Rosenbaum has also been a principal conduit of the line that the Soviet Union is behind all terrorism.

J. Gustave Speth:

Member, Council on Environmental Quality
Speth was formerly a leading lawyer with the Natural Resources Defense Council, specializing in antinuclear technology lawsuits. He worked closely with Schlesinger during the Carter Administration's transition period, and has been an outspoken purveyor of the "nuclear Pearl Harbor" scenario for nuclear terrorism developed by the Rand Corporation. Last month Speth publicly called for the shut-down of the entire nuclear industry until the "problem" of nuclear waste disposal has been resolved.