

In the concluding part, sustainable development is seen as involving sound commonsense adjustments to our activities, not entailing social disruption. Lobby groups have influenced government policies on environmental issues. Industry and business generally endorse sustainable development. We are asked to adjust the system by small-scale reforms to cater for environmental concerns. Although deep-green environmentalists fear the worst, it is hoped that further real commitment to sustainable development will protect the environment to the satisfaction of future generations.

Michael Bess, Realism, utopia, and the mushroom cloud: four activist intellectuals and their strategies for peace, 1945-1989: Louise Weiss (France), Leo Szilard (USA), E. P. Thompson (England), Danilo Dolci (Italy) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 321 pages.

Reviewed by Brian Martin,
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The title of this book describes well what it is about. The author chose four -activist intellectuals+ and analysed their lives and strategies for human survival in the nuclear age. Each of the four is prominent in context, but none of them has been so famous as an Einstein or Gandhi.

Louise Weiss (1893-1983) was an energetic journalist who in the 1920s and early 1930s was a champion of internationalism and feminism. Chastened by the collapse of internationalist ideals, after World War II she became a supporter of a united Europe as a world superpower, retaining its civilising mission in the ruthless game of power politics. She presided over the opening session of the first elected European Parliament in 1979.

Leo Szilard (1898-1964) was a scintillating Hungarian physicist who first conceived of the nuclear chain reaction. He wrote the famous 1939 letter (also signed by Einstein) to US President Franklin Roosevelt suggesting the importance of nuclear weapons. But after working on the Manhattan Project, he became a dynamo for arms control through cooperation of the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union.

E. P. Thompson (born 1924) is a British historian and social activist. Most famous for his book *The Making of the English Working Class*, he was active in the Communist Party and then, breaking from the orthodoxy in the 1950s, as an independent socialist. He was the most prominent figure associated with the 1980s British movement against nuclear weapons, channelling his energy especially into the initiative called European Nuclear Disarmament.

Danilo Dolci (born 1924) at age 28 dropped out of his bourgeois life and moved to a poor village in Sicily. He helped local people develop projects to improve their conditions. He became famous through a series of books which documented the life of

Italians oppressed by poverty and the Mafia. His approach, which systematically uses techniques of nonviolent action, inspired numerous people to join his projects.

These are four interesting characters. Bess does an excellent job in telling their stories, judiciously mixing information about their activities with analysis of their strategies. These are small-size biographies. An enormous amount of work went into each story, undoubtedly more than many a full-scale biography.

The four figures span a range of approaches to peace and security. Weiss became a subscriber of what is called *realpolitik*, a reliance on powerful states to maintain world order. Szilard sought greater international cooperation, mainly by relying on action from government leaders. Thompson looked first and foremost to action by people to challenge the superpowers. Dolci sought to develop methods for people to take control over their own lives, as a foundation for a peaceful world. The four approaches can be called, briefly, peace through strength, peace through cooperative diplomacy, peace as grassroots internationalism and peace through social transformation, to quote the titles of Bess's four main chapters.

Interestingly, Bess has chosen a woman as representative of the most typically -masculine+ position of the four, and men as representatives of the more cooperative and people-oriented approaches where women are more commonly found as activists.

The stories are fascinating whether or not one agrees with the strategies of the different figures, and this is enough to make the book worthwhile. But what does it all mean? Bess concludes the book with a comparison of the positions of the four figures on three issues: global governance, the capacity of humans to change, and ideas about power. Unfortunately, this comparison doesn't lead to much that wasn't already covered in the chapters on each individual. The three issues are much wider than the careers of the four figures, but Bess doesn't have the opportunity to bring a wide range of new material to bear. Nor is it obvious why these issues are especially well addressed via the ideas of these figures. Perhaps, though, there is an advantage in presenting strategies for peace via the lives of activists: the author does not have to preach. Rather, it is up to the reader to judge the strategies.

Personally, I would have been interested in an analysis of how these and other intellectuals have been effective or ineffective as social activists. For example, what is the role of personality, intellectual orientation, hard work, and historical circumstance in their careers? Are there lessons to be learned about what makes an effective activist? The author does not address such issues explicitly. I'm quite aware that reviewers should review the book that was written, not the book they think should have been written. But even if Bess does not address these issues, the reader can do so. Most members of Scientists for Global Responsibility are activist intellectuals at some level, and there are some who might aspire to be as

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Report from SGR Townsville

By Dr. Jane Fromont, President

We are still functioning as a branch in a very low key manner. We usually undertake local issues in conjunction with affiliated local groups such as ACAAT (Australian Campaign Against Arms Trading), PACIFIC (the local peace group) and NQCC (North Queensland Conservation Council). The first two groups along with SGR are very small, each composed of a half dozen or so concerned individuals who continue to work for issues they consider to be important even though the workload stays solely with them. SGR Townsville has a core group of 8 scientists, a staggeringly small percentage of the total number of scientists who inhabit Townsville and are employed by James Cook University, Australian Institute of Marine Science, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Dept of Environment and Heritage, CSIRO, etc. We have frequently pondered our lack of members who also fail to join any of the above associated groups (although NQCC attracts some Uni. students) and we conclude that scientists in Townsville do not consider local issues, or environment or peace issues in general, to be important enough in their outlook on life to warrant joining groups like ours. It's a frustrating truth that nevertheless goes a long way to explaining why there are so many problems facing us today - people educated sufficiently to understand the issues, and lobby the politicians, can't be bothered doing so.

This year (1993) SGR made appearances at both the Palm Sunday Rally in March and a City Council sponsored Ecofiesta in May. We had displays in issues we wished to highlight: the atomic tests conducted in Australia and their impact on Aboriginal Australians (this issue to coincide with the Year of Indigenous Peoples), the nuclear power program in Indonesia and continuing friendly welcomes by the Mayor of Townsville to nuclear-capable ships visiting Townsville despite the council-declared nuclear free zone status of the city. Also in May, I represented our branch on a visit by local environment groups, to the Rainbow Warrior to meet Greenpeace executives when the ship docked in Townsville on the cities and coasts campaign. Our secretary/treasurer, Shirley Sorokin, met the secretary of the British branch of the World Court Project while in England earlier this year. In June I was invited to address a UN Youth Group conference and spoke about the World Court project to make nuclear weapons illegal and nuclear issues in general. This was in conjunction with an ACAAT member who spoke on Australian Arms trading. Both talks generated a lot of discussion by students. Shirley spoke about general nuclear issues, in particular the number of countries capable of building, or already with, nuclear weapons at a Hiroshima Day Rally in the town centre in August. This rally was held in conjunction with PACIFIC and received local TV coverage. In September another member, Bill Laing, presented an invited lecture on SGR to Stage I Social Science students at JCU.

Our biggest branch meeting was in June when all our members attended, and Shirley was retained as Secretary/.Treasurer and I as President/Convenor.

We do not currently have plans for 1994 except to continue to keep the Townsville branch functioning.

**We still need a
new editor.**
