

# Reviews

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## The Salvation Army Farm Colonies

CLARK C. SPENCE

Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985; 190pp.; bibliography; index; \$19.95 hardcover.

This is the first major study of the three Salvation Army farm colonies begun in the United States in 1898. Fort Romie, in central California; Fort Amity, in southeast Colorado; and Fort Herrick, in northern Ohio relied on the example of numerous European and American farm colonies. But, Spence claims, they differed from earlier colonies in that they aimed at providing a " 'national remedy' for the problem of poverty," through improved living conditions, reformation of criminals, and an end to the breakup of families.

The farm colonies grew out of William Booth's "Darkest England" Scheme, proposed in *In Darkest England and the Way Out* in 1890. He would end unemployment by moving the urban poor "*back to the land*" in three stages: from (1) city workshops, to (2) English farm colonies where they would be trained in agricultural skills, to (3) overseas colonies where they would farm small plots under the Salvation Army's tutelage until they could manage the farm on their own. While his plan drew on numerous Euro-American ideas, its genius was in its immense scale and in Booth's ability to capture support from progressive reformers who espoused back-to-the-land movements, scientific social and agricultural reforms, efficient business methods, and imperial-colonial ideas prevalent in the late 1880's to 1920's.

Spence provides a careful study of the three colonies' management and finances, the choice of colonists, and the colonists' work, income, social relations, problems and successes. The principal problem was

capital. Spence agrees with the conclusions of Commander Frederick Booth-Tucker (General Booth's son-in-law and sponsor of the American colonies) and of H. Rider Haggard (an investigator commissioned by the British government), that only governments had resources to support a plan to move millions of the urban unemployed to farms. After Sen. Mark Hanna of Ohio died before Congress considered his "Booth-Tucker Bill," and Haggard was unable to convince a shaky Tory government and rival social agencies to support his plan, the curtain came down on the scheme in 1906. Due a lack of capital compounded by irrigation and drainage problems, all but a few of the Army's colonists left the land. After 1906 the Army found its success in schemes to move English emigrants to Canada and in "city agencies to uplift the poor."

In addition to his careful study of Salvation Army colonies, Spence enlightens the reader on the nineteenth century back-to-the-land mentality of Europe and America. But he fails to distinguish clearly pre-Civil War Utopian farm colony schemes from small-scale individual land allotment colonies established by social-religious-governmental organizations at the end of the century.

While Spence claims that the Army's "plan was cooperative," but, stopped " 'at the door of each man's home,' " this is not quite true. As Spence admits the Army wrote a "morality clause" into each contract barring the manufacture or sale of alcohol; nor did any colony have a dance hall. Each colony had a Corps with week-night and Sunday services and the Army took pride in the number of colonists who became Salvationists.

Spence does not tell us how William Booth, an English revivalist preacher, with little love for any remedy for poverty other than individual soul salvation, became a social reformer in the 1880's. Still, this title acquaints students of colonization with this important historical episode and places it securely in its nineteenth-century context.

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## Red Star: The First Bolshevik Utopia

**ALEXANDER BOGDANOV**

Edited by Loren R. Graham and Richard Stites. Translated by Charles Rougle.

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984; (Soviet history, Politics, Society and Thought); 257pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, \$22.50 hardcover, \$12.50 paperback.

In addition to *Red Star* (1908), this volume includes the later prequel,

*Engineer Menni* (1913), and the poem, "A Martian Stranded on Earth" (1924), prefiguring the never-written sequel. I found Rouble's translation easier to read than Fetzer's. The editors have provided a good bibliography, a thorough preface (Stites), and a thoughtful afterword (Graham). The result is an excellent introduction to a writer too long neglected by Utopian scholars.

Following the belief still prevalent at the turn of the century that Mars, an older planet with great works of technology evident in its "canals," was obviously the home of a race of beings more advanced than ours—Percy Greg's *Across the Zodiac* (1880) and Kurd Lasswitz's *Aufzwei Planeten* (1897) were based on similar misconceptions—Bogdanov presents a generally optimistic view of the results of the socialist and scientific revolutions that, as one of the original Bolsheviks, he favored on Earth. The Great Project, the building of the canal system in the seventeenth century (described in *Engineer Menni*), had been the catalyst for creating the new society. As revealed (in *Red Star*) to Leonid, a Russian revolutionary chosen by the Martians to provide liaison between the two planets, Martian society is cooperative, advanced technologically, and imbued with a deep belief in the sanctity of *all* life. Property is communally owned and shared; scientific principles have been applied to education, the economy, and political activity; relations between the sexes are free, open, and equal; labor is voluntary, frequently changed according to the individual's desire, and mechanized to reduce routine and fatiguing operations.

But what should be the ideal society is fraught with dangers that even cooperation among men has not yet overcome: diminishing natural resources, factories so dangerous they are placed underground, nervous disorders as a common form of illness, population expanding beyond the planet's capacity to sustain, and too many accidents caused by frequent changes of jobs and consequent unfamiliarity with factory machinery. In both novels there are interesting characters whose relationships add interest to the plot, but more importantly, it is through the clash of their personalities and their disagreements about proper courses of action that Bogdanov is able to demonstrate many of the problems of a Utopian community, both in the making and after it has been accomplished.

Martian society is certainly like the one he fought for, but in numerous references to Earthly mankind as a younger, more violent race, Bogdanov is clearly concerned with the consequences of replacing a backward society with an advanced one, however ideal, for which it is inadequately prepared. He shows equal concern with the unpleasant results of some Martian advanced technology. In numerous pessimistic passages he raises questions about the relationships of technology, and the future of the society it serves and seems to suggest that neither science

nor socialism will necessarily solve all the problems of mankind. At times the problems of his new proletarian-driven scientific society appear to be so overwhelming as to suggest second thoughts on his part. Such concerns may well have contributed to Bogdanov's early quarrel with Lenin and to the lack of attention paid him during the Stalinist regime. In any case, students of historical communes will find Bogdanov's careful consideration of these problems useful aids to understanding why such communes have so often failed.

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