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The Globalization Movement Comes to Town

MAGNUS WENNERHAG

The "Battle of Seattle" only entered the main political agenda of Sweden with its European reprise in September 2000 when the so-called anti-globalization movement—from here on called "the globalization movement"[1] —invaded Prague during the IMF annual meeting. From a phenomenon on the margins of public discussion of concern to activists and journalists with a special interest in international questions, criticism of "corporate globalization" was catapulted to the centre of Swedish political debate.[2] "It's time to stop the Hooligans," cried several influential politicians, economists, and writers on the Right and Centre-Right. Holding high the banners of free trade and liberalization, the critics claimed the protesters were a kind of "red-brown" alliance, united in a will to "build walls restricting the free movement of people, goods, capital, technology or culture," and in a hatred towards "different regional or global agreements and organizations facilitating a more free flow of resources, individuals and ideas across the national borders."[3] The reaction from Social Democratic quarters was swift.[4] While distancing themselves from the more violent protesters, the Ministers of Finance and Foreign Trade argued the issues raised by NGOs and activists should be taken seriously, and that, indeed, the Swedish government has done this. The archbishop of Sweden and other prominent leaders of different churches in Sweden, speaking as representatives of an important NGO—the "Jubilee 2000" campaign for Third World debt cutting—also rose to its defence.[5]

In what follows, I will examine the roots and development of the globalization movement, focusing particularly on the

relation between it and "older" and more established popular movements in Sweden, particularly the Labour movement.[6] I will begin by tracing its roots in various new social movements then take up the question of the extent to which it can be considered a single movement. I then probe the complex relation between the globalization movement and Social Democracy. The final section discusses the movement's success in placing its concerns on the agenda. As we shall see, subsequent events—from the "violence" in Gothenburg and Genoa to the aftermath of 11 September—appear to have altered the movement's ability to make its concerns heard.

The Roots of the Globalization Movement Historically, many of the Swedish parties were firmly rooted in civil society, often in class-based movements. The example *par excellence* is, of course, Swedish Social Democracy, tightly knit to the trade union confederation LO (Landsorganisationen), but also acting as a hegemonic nexus for different social movements of the late 19th and early 20th century, such as the temperance movement, the workers' education movement, and also, to some extent, the Free Church movement. Connections between parties and social movements, including the Social Democrats and the LO, may have diminished but, mainly in the aftermath of '68, new connections have also been made. And new parties with movement connections have entered parliament (the Christian Democrats and the Green party). In most cases, this development is not an exclusively Swedish phenomenon, but rather a part of broader patterns, shared by many OECD countries. I argue that it is here, in the field of "new social movements," that one can trace the origins of the globalization movement.

The Swedish environmental movement rose during the seventies. The referendum on nuclear power, held in 1980—almost exactly one year after Three Mile Island—put environmental issues on the political agenda, and was also central in the formation of the Swedish Green party, which entered the national parliament 1988 as the first new party in over fifty years. The next major movement arose in preparation for the referendum on EU membership in 1994. As in the other Scandinavian countries, the anti-EU movement was

rooted in established parties, as well as in the social movements. In Sweden, the Green and the Left (former Euro-Communist) parties, together with certain LO unions, were the most powerful actors of the movement. Significant minorities in the Social Democratic and Centre parties also played important roles in the "no" camp. Although the referendum yielded a "yes" result, the anti-EU movement has continued to work against most forms of deeper integration efforts and adjustments to EU policy, recently focusing the proposed Swedish membership in the economic and monetary union of EU, (EMU).

Parallel to the EU referendum campaign there was an upswing for the Left as a reaction to the politics of the Right government 1991-94. The neoliberal politics of the government, in combination with recession, resulted in a level of unemployment not experienced in Sweden for decades, rising public debt, and cuts in public spending. Since the Social Democrats were not in office, they managed to channel public discontent, and to gain popularity among intellectuals and activists who, after the fall of world communism, were prepared to embrace social democratic welfare politics. When the Social Democrats resumed office and chose to focus on "sound public finance," however, support from the Left diminished.

The nineties also witnessed the rise of racism and xenophobia in Sweden as elsewhere. In Sweden, however, none of the parties of the parliament has a hidden or semi-xenophobic agenda[7] and racist/xenophobic movements are confined to the margins. More importantly, the rise of xenophobia resulted in a strong and successful counter-movement, using direct action methods. As in other European countries, the anti-fascist movement, like Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) grew as a sub-cultural part of the Left. In recent years its agenda has broadened to include issues like anti-sexism and anti-capitalism, as well as globalization related issues. A similar ideological development affected the animal rights movement, which in the nineties mobilized young people, especially in Umeå, the university town of north Sweden. From animal rights, this movement's horizons have broadened to include anti-sexism and anti-capitalism.

The strengthening and widening of the "the extra-parliamentary Left" also includes newer sub-cultural groups and

groups more explicitly committed to globalization questions. Among these are "Reclaim the streets/city," arranging "street parties" as a form of protest against the commercialization of urban space, or "Globalization from below," a socialist group refusing to accept any nostalgia for the nation state. These groups often take their inspiration from organizations or modes of struggle elsewhere like the Autonomia movement of Italy or the Zapatistas in Chiapas. Contrary to the small Left groups of the seventies, they look less to Leninism than to Syndicalism, Anarchism and Autonomist Marxism. They are critical not only of global capital but also of the state, use civil disobedience and direct action tactics, and are often organized in loosely connected networks. They constitute the core of what is often called the "Black Bloc" (i.e., the often masked section in the demonstrations of the globalization movement).

Another group with influences from abroad is Attac, founded in France in 1998. Established in Sweden in 2000-01, in the form of local affiliates as well as a national organizational structure, Attac seems to have attracted younger radical people as well as old Leftists, aiming to build popular support for specific political claims, i.e., the introduction of the Tobin tax, debt cutting for Third World countries and a halt on speculative stock market trading with pension capital. The Swedish globalization movement also includes more institutionalized NGOs, engaged in Third World issues, foreign aid and environmental questions, often connected to, or a part of, more established movements (or institutions). Here, we find the churches, with their Jubilee 2000 campaign as well as the umbrella organization Forum South (WWF, Unicef Sweden, Save the Children Sweden, the youth organization of Red Cross Sweden, and various churches and parties), and other organizations promoting international solidarity, and, to a limited extent, the trade unions.

Identity and Heterogeneity These groups and movements form quite a heterogeneous alliance. Thus one might ask whether these prerequisites are sufficient to call it a social movement. This depends, of course, on how a social movement is conceived. I follow social movements theorists Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison who see the formation of a

social movement as a process constituting a new social space for different forms of interaction between different groups and organizations, "conceptualizing fundamental contradictions and tensions in society."[8] The movement's identity—i.e., its collective self-image—is something that is shaped as much by ongoing internal tensions and negotiations within the movement, over what its identity should be, as by responses to internal events as well as to interventions made from the outside. From this perspective, the heterogeneous alliance presented above can be seen as a movement, since it emphasizes the movement's changing character and conceives it as a space wherein different actors converge, as they try to understand and change something they commonly believe to be fundamentally wrong.

For the globalization movement, identity has mainly been shaped by similarities in mobilization strategy and by a shared political focus on certain issues. The common identity is, thus, articulated around how and where to get attention on certain issues, rather than on precise political agendas agreed to by all. Political cooperation between the different parts of the overall movement focuses on certain concrete issues—such as Third World debt crisis, the low democratic legitimacy of international institutions (IMF, IBRD, WTO, EU, etc), privatization policies, the commercialization of social relations, general issues of global inequality etc.—rather than agreement on how to solve them. Especially after Seattle—where the movement claimed to have stopped the WTO-negotiations—the form of protest has been the most common characteristic, manifested in the large counter-summits in Seattle, Prague, Nice, Gothenburg and Genoa. Alternative conferences and demonstrations have created a meeting place for different parts of the movement, and a scene where the message can be communicated to the politicians and administrators of the "real" summits, and of course, to the public via the media.

This heterogeneity was clearly evident in Gothenburg, where the different demonstrations had different messages, and were carried by different actors. The largest demonstration focused on demanding Sweden's resignation from the EU, and the main actors of this demonstration were the anti-EU movement, the Left party, the Green party, and trade

unions.[9] In the second largest demonstration, which expanded beyond a critique of aspects of EU policy to a broader attack on global inequalities, groups like Attac, the Syndicalists and the "extra-parliamentary Left" were involved while the unions played at best a marginal role. This points towards what seems to be a polarity within the globalization movement: on the one hand, the anti-EU movement, with an agenda focused primarily on Swedish sovereignty; on the other, actors whose horizons focus on global inequality. Some of the latter are against the EU, while others see the EU as a tool for change. Some stress reform and democratization of international institutions, while others have a revolutionary anti-capitalist and anti-state agenda. All, however, are less interested in the sovereignty of the national state than in steering the process of globalization in a more democratic and egalitarian direction. This polarization seems to have class and organizational dimensions. While the anti-EU movement gathers more people from traditional working class organizations, the broader internationalist claims are mainly advanced by youth-based groups with fewer participants from the organized working class. The latter also tend to be organized in more loosely connected networks, and to use "untraditional" struggle methods such as civil disobedience and different symbolic actions.

Social Democracy and the Globalization Movement In terms of the connection between civil society and the State, or more precisely on the way State power is mediated (as a two-way process) via civil society in Sweden, the role of Social Democracy vis-à-vis the globalization movement is of particular import. Swedish Social Democracy, and the labour movement as a whole, served as a nexus for many of the social movements active at the beginning of the 20th century. When Social Democracy became a hegemonic force in the modernization of Swedish society, these popular and working-class based movements, served to mediate between the State's power structure and the masses. The active participation of these movements meant that modernization was accomplished with popular support, and that the claims of the movements were realized to a certain degree. Social Democracy thus operated as the link between civil society

and the State, exercising considerable influence over both spheres.[10]

Contemporary debates about social democracy often assume that it has lost its mediating function, with the diminishing importance of the labour movement and the weakening ties between unions and party. In some cases this has led to a call for abandoning class politics, for the more "value-oriented" segments of the middle classes, where the new social movements are seen to be important actors.[11] In practice, some kind of middle-way seems to have been chosen by many European Social Democratic parties. Instead of fully abandoning class politics, and cutting the ties with the labour movement, new alliances between Social Democratic parties and parties with connections to different social movements have been created, to form red-green governments or governments based on a red-green support. In the nineties, there were examples of the former in Germany, France and Italy, and of the latter in Sweden. In Sweden the government is Social Democratic, but it relies for parliamentary support the Green and the Left party. Though there were tensions between the LO and the Social Democratic party in the 1990s, the party now seems to be trying to combine class politics with a rapprochement to the new social movements through the Green and Left parties.

From this perspective, one could expect that social democracy should be positive to the globalization movement, since it brings together many important actors in the social movement arena. Indeed, this has been the case but there is a certain ambivalence, not yet solved, related to the aims of the globalization movement and tactics used. I will examine how this surfaced during the first half of 2001, when Sweden assumed presidency of EU.

Springtime for the Globalization Movement The roots of the Swedish Social Democrats' ambivalence towards issues on global trade and inequality are long-standing. The party has long seen free trade as a central part of the Swedish Model. At the same time, at least since the 1970s, when Prime Minister Olof Palme was influenced by the Vietnam movement and other internationalist currents, there has been an important internationalist current, visible in Sweden's pro-

motion of the interests of Third World countries. Thus, there are two traditions within the discourse of Swedish Social Democratic foreign policy, which necessarily do not coincide. The internationalist current often tends to play the role of creating credibility, while the free trade current articulates a harsh realpolitik. Thus, when leading Social Democrats promoted the "yes" side in the EU referendum, they began by describing membership in internationalist terms. In the end, however, it was the free trade argument that took over, with reference to what would happen to jobs and growth if Sweden chose "isolation." This same duality is discernible in the Social Democratic party's response to the globalization movement. Despite the distorted media image of the globalization movement, many Social Democratic politicians have focused on the movement's self-representation, and expressed their sympathies with its aims. Most notably, the Minister of Foreign Trade—not really known as one of the leftists of the party—publicly welcomed the founding of the Swedish branch of Attac. He also participated in the seminar where Attac Sweden was formally founded. While critical of anti-free trade tendencies, he showed openness towards the Tobin tax proposal.

Similarly, the Social Democratic government wanted the EU presidency not just to be a top-level affair, but also to involve citizens and social movements in the process, in order to increase the legitimacy of the EU among ordinary people. The government invited organizations involved in organizing around the EU summit in Gothenburg to a dialogue with the prime minister and some of the other more important ministers. This was held the day before the summit was to start. This was the first time such a dialogue was held between EU politicians and representatives of the protesting movements. Funds were also made available for the "Fritt Forum" ("Free Forum") in the centre of Gothenburg, where different movements, groups and parties had the opportunity to hold seminars and workshops, and to meet the public.

The "movement" part of Social Democracy evinced less interest but there were some exceptions. Activists from the Social Democratic youth organization, who had participated in globalization events in Prague as well as smaller demonstrations in Sweden, were involved in the demonstrations in

Gothenburg. The Olof Palme International Center (the labour movement's organization for international development co-operation) has also played a role. The centre has arranged seminars on many of the issues raised by the globalization movement, and also participated in the "Free Forum" activities in Gothenburg. LO, the other major wing of labour movement, has shown a certain hesitance vis-à-vis the globalization movement. Some of the LO unions do work with the anti-EU movement which connects them to the wider movement. LO's "think-tank," "LO idédebatt," has arranged seminars and other activities with different parts of the globalization movement. Yet in comparison to the active role of AFL-CIO in Seattle, LO has played a minor role, even though it shares many of the movement's political views. On the eve of the Gothenburg summit, LO was criticized by the editor of *Arena*,[12] a major journal of the Swedish Left partly connected with LO, for not actively participating in the events. As a result, LO became involved in some of the activities of the "Free Forum." It did not, however, take part in the demonstrations.

"The Battle of Gothenburg" The gains made by the globalization movement in the spring of 2001 were not just a result of the positive treatment by the government, but also of the movement's own effort in preparation for Gothenburg. Yet the movement gained not only from its conscious efforts but also through a by-product of an earlier demonstration. At a demonstration timed to coincide with a meeting of the EU Ministers of Finance in Malmö two months before Gothenburg, the police suddenly closed in on the "Black Bloc" without any prior provocation. Under full media scrutiny, all the Black Bloc activists were taken into custody, in a rather brutal manner. In the subsequent media debate, police brutality was condemned by most commentators, irrespective of their political stance. As a preventive measure, it was decided that all police were to wear identification numbers on their helmets during the demonstrations in Gothenburg in case a similar incident arose.

As the meetings began, the movement's self-confidence was high, with something of the atmosphere of a carnival, as thousands of activists began to arrive in Gothenburg. While the

Malmö incident had not been forgotten, most participants anticipated a couple of days of grand manifestations, lively discussions, interesting seminars and gatherings of activists from different parts of the movement. City council had put schools at the activists' disposal for accommodation and seminars. The movement had an important opportunity to bring forward its issues to the public and the world leaders gathered at the EU summit. But things did not turn out as expected. Certainly, the ministers and the movement's representatives met as planned; there were the "Free Forum" activities, with dozens of seminars, workshops etc; and there were three larger demonstrations, each with between 15,000 and 25,000 participants. Yet nearly all of this was overshadowed by the encounters between police and a minority of activists, which became the main image of the event in almost all the media, Sweden and worldwide. What happened, what triggered the riots and clashes, and who was to blame, deserves much more space than can be given in this article. I can only offer a brief overview.

During the first day, police surrounded one of the schools where the activists were accommodated due to rumours (later proved to be false) that some activists were armed and this resulted in some minor riots during that night. On the second day, participants of a minor demonstration (the so-called anti-capitalist march) planned to break into the summit area, but the police anticipated this and drove all the demonstrators away. The Black Block activists counter-attacked, resulting in a large riot on the main street of Gothenburg, and clashes continued throughout the day all over the city centre, escalating again during a Reclaim the Streets "street party," when an activist was shot by the police, and nearly died. This was the first time in over fifty years that the police had fired at demonstrators in Sweden. As the summit meeting and counter activities were shutting down, the anti-terrorist special force of the police struck one of the schools where the activists were accommodated. After forcing everyone out on the schoolyard, the special force made the activists lie on the ground, with their hands above their heads, for almost an hour. Once again the reason given—rumours that an armed German activist was in the school—turned out to be baseless.

The debate on the Gothenburg events has focused almost exclusively on the violence, at the expense of the globalization

movement's criticisms and demands. Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson regretted that the "violent demonstrations in Gothenburg overshadowed the political progress made at the EU summit meeting," going on to warn that "this must be taken extremely seriously, since the troublemakers are well-organized and have substantial economic resources," and that "we cannot permit that this continues."[13] British Prime Minister Tony Blair called the demonstrators "a travelling anarchist circus, going from top summit to top summit in one single purpose: to destroy and to get cheap publicity."[14] During the summer, the media continued to focus on the violence, with article after article attacking the "extremist Left" and calling on the more established parts of the globalization movement to dissociate themselves from this. In all of this, the concrete issues raised by the globalization movement were lost from view. More ominously, the "decent middle," which had begun to embrace the globalization movement, suddenly seemed very afraid to be associated with it.

Movement of Peace versus State of Control? When, in Genoa as many as 200,000 demonstrators took to the streets and, for the first time (at least in a Western country), someone was killed by police during a globalization movement demonstration, the issue of "violence" was again front page news.[15] The terrorist attacks in the US the 11 September, took the focus away from of the Gothenburg and Genoa events. Nevertheless some commentators have sought connections between the summit riots and the terrorist attacks. At the same time, US bombing of Afghanistan seems to have made the globalization movement focus more on peace claims. It is too early to tell if this will result in a lasting change in the strategies and agenda of the movement. It is, however, possible to identify one direct effect of the terrorist attack, which in Europe seems to be played out in relation to the protests and riots in Gothenburg and Genoa.

Discussions of a common EU policy to handle such protests in the future started immediately after the summit meeting. In fact, decisions affecting the EU common policy on police cooperation and the free movement of persons inside the Union, were made during the Gothenburg event. Activists were stopped from crossing the Swedish border to

prevent them from joining the riots just as had occurred in relation to the Nice demonstrations, December 2000 and would occur again in relation to the Genoa summit. These actions violate the Schengen Treaty, the EU Treaty that grants every citizen of a member state free movement within the Union. It was, however, in line with police cooperation among the member states, which has been criticized for granting too much space for "extraordinary measures" during "extraordinary events."

At the meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers of EU on September 20th, proposals were put forward as part of the fight against terrorism, which in addition have implications for the globalization movement. The draft offers a very wide definition of "terrorism." "Terrorist offences" include when "an individual or a group" aims to "seriously alter ... political, economic or social structures."[16] Proposed penalties for such offences include "community service, limitation of certain civil and political rights". The draft was heavily criticized by the European civil rights-monitoring group "Statewatch," whose editor suggests that the "European Commission proposal on combating terrorism is either very badly drafted, or there is a deliberate attempt to broaden the concept of terrorism to cover protests (such as those in Gothenburg and Genoa) and what it calls 'urban violence' (often seen by local communities as self-defence). If it is intended to slip in by the back door draconian measures to control political dissent it will only serve to undermine the very freedoms and democracies legislators say they are protecting."[17]

Tough on Dissent, Soft on Causes to Dissent For Swedish Social Democracy this development cannot be but highly problematic. Social Democracy has been intertwined with the State for decades – an arena where it was once possible to handle conflicts with a large degree of consent, but one that today seems to be linked up to an inter- and supranational network of obligations and commitments that have to be fulfilled. At the same time, Social Democracy remains dependent on its connections with the social movements of civil society, to maintain its legitimacy as a party rooted in the masses.

As Karl Polanyi argued in *The Great Transformation*,[18] a capitalism that cuts all social ties without replacing them with better ones, and ignores the effects of growing inequality, will create social imbalances that it cannot master. The rise of Social Democracy and the labour movement during the last turn of the century was a response that sought to recreate the balance by widening democracy and by tackling the causes of social imbalances. On the eve of Gothenburg, there seemed to be growing awareness within the party that the issues of global inequality must be addressed. However, after Gothenburg and September 11th, the perspective of the governing party, with its concern to maintain law and order, has predominated.

In this article, I have used the Swedish case to examine the globalization movement and the way it interacts with the older social movements associated with Social Democracy, in an era when capitalist mode of production and governance, as in the heyday of laissez-faire capitalism, seems to produce large scale inequalities and threatens to harshly restructure the social landscape. Following Polanyi, these social imbalances and popular discontent are fertile ground for movements imagining a different order of things. Certainly, it is not easy to find a clear alternative vision within the globalization movement. Although the groups within it come together around some shared criticisms and shared ways of carrying out protests, there are different views on how to create the democratic counter-powers to global capital—by strengthening the power of the nation states, or by democratizing global economical institutions. And yet, perhaps, this modernist notion of the social movement as one promoting a fundamentally new order, is not applicable today. Will the heterogeneity of the globalization movement persist or will the movement be homogenized? Only time will tell.

Notes

1. I chose not to make use of the more pejorative term "the anti-globalization movement," since the broad coalition of movements and groups engaging in questions related to "globalization" rarely position themselves in opposition to globalization as such. More often, they claim to be against "corporate globalization"—i.e., a globalization on the terms of multinational corporations—or are critical of other aspects of the neoliberal politics often marketed as "globalization." Many (though

not all) of the actors within the movement have an internationalist, i.e., a "globalist," agenda, and act on a global scale, with cross-border networks and manifestations, uniting NGOs and activists all around the globe.

2. For one of the first Swedish accounts of "the Battle of Seattle" and the reactions in Sweden, see P. Larsson, *Proteststormen* (Stockholm: Atlas, 2001).
3. A. Svensson *et al*, "Alf Svensson om IMF-protesterna: 'Dags att stoppa huliganerna'," *Dagens Nyheter* 26 (September 2000).
4. M.-I. Klingvall and B. Ringholm, "Förkastligt angrepp, Svensson," *Dagens Nyheter*, (29 September 2000).
5. K.G. Hammar et al, "Ärkebiskopen KG Hammar attackerar Alf Svensson: 'Kd-ledaren ohederlig'," Dagens Nyheter (1 October 2000).
6. The empirical material for this article, I have mainly gathered from my own participant observations during the counter-demonstrations and other activities in Gothenburg in July 2001, and by analyzing documents from different parts of the globalization movement and the media coverage of above all, the Gothenburg events. I wish to thank Petter Larsson, Anders Kalat and Sara Eldén for their help, with commentaries on and ideas for my article during it's coming into being, and in the case of Sara, also her help in making my text more readable in English.
7. Between 1991-1994, however, a new Right party with xenophobic tendencies, New Democracy, managed to gain enough votes to enter parliament. It is no longer a force to contend with.
8. R. Eyerman and A. Jamison, *Social Movements. A Cognitive Approach* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), p. 55f.
9. Only the Transport and Dock Workers Union from Sweden but many Norwegian and Danish unions were involved.
10. This line of reasoning is partly inspired by the characterization of civil society versus state during "modern sovereignty" made by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (for example, in their book *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), though they do not specifically handle the role of Social Democracy, but rather the general growth of the interventionist, Fordist, welfare state, from the New Deal and onwards, a period that in Swedish terms properly would be denominated "the Swedish Model." They also see a break with this period, as economy and society turns post Fordist, globalized and informational, where they claim, very much that the mediating role of civil society is diminishing, since power (and counter-power) operates more directly through networks and informational structures. Nevertheless, I argue that the globalization movement in some respects can be seen as the beginning of a creation of a global civil society.
11. In a Swedish context, this discussion of the importance of the social movements has been raised by Olle Svenning, in his *Vänstern i Europa. De nya liberalerna?* (Stockholm: Atlas, 2000), with reference to Herbert Kitschelt.
12. M. Linton, "Stoppad i facket. Magnus Linton undrar vad LO sysslar med inför EU-mötet i Göteborg," *Expressen* (7 June 2001).
13. Cited from C. Barkman, "Toppmötet. Persson fick sitt måldatum," *Dagens Nyheter* (17 June 2001).
14. Cited from H. Brors, "Toppmötet. Blair fördömde - och gav beröm," *Dagens Nyheter* (17 June 2001).

15. There were some signs of an attempt at a more balanced view, such as a TV documentary which shed critical light on police action in Gothenburg.
16. Cited from "EU to adopt new laws on terrorism," http://www.statewatch.org/news/index.html (1 November, 2001).
17. *Ibid.*
18. K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944).

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