

UP FROM THE ASHES

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A Journal for the Self-Education of
Revolutionary Activists

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FOR AN ANARCHIST SENSIBILITY, FOR A BROADER THAN ANARCHIST WORLD-VIEW

After Six Months

Six months have elapsed since Jay Moore and I first published our *Up From the Ashes* letter. If we had it to do over, we would no doubt change some things. We would write it with less bombast and more humility. We would de-emphasize the question of organization. Nonetheless, our letter has, if only to a small degree, created new objective conditions. Through the dozens who have answered it, we have established an informal correspondence network, and have definitely struck some chords while also having been challenged to change and deepen our own ideas (about which more shortly). It is my opinion that it is now possible to take things a further step. Based on considering the thoughts and criticisms of our respondents, I offer some tentative proposals.

To date, *Up From the Ashes* has been published in part or in whole in *Strike!*, *Toronto Clarion*, *Open Road*, *Root and Branch*, and *To Apeiron*. In addition, it has been distributed to members of the Solidarity Network in the U.S., and to participants in the North American Anarchist Network. Also, several hundred copies have been mailed out (or have been zeroxed and passed along by others) and have reached comrades as far away as Britain. All in all, several thousand people have seen our letter.

Our letter is a tiny example of the truth of the notion of praxis, i.e. that in acting on the world, people change the world, and are themselves changed by it. We have learned a tremendous amount about the existence of the movement which we tentatively tried to describe in our letter. We've learned a lot about the problems, sentiments, experience and history of that movement. Mere babes in the woods, we've learned that the effort at achieving effective libertarian unity has a long history (mainly of failures), and that many of the concerns which we have been encountering and articulating are by no means new.

All that, notwithstanding, we still feel now as we did then that (to put it very simply) libertarians could and ought to be doing more to influence the consciousness and activity of the people on this continent in light of the urgency of the times. The fact that the revolutionary libertarian movement has not erected a very effective pole is evident from my own experience. As a Maoist, wrestling with the inconsistencies of one brand of orthodox Marxism, I felt that I was at least aware of all the various trends. And yet I was unaware of the anarchist/libertarian/communist current. I was unaware of the writings of Murray Bookchin (I had had fleeting exposure to him as a youth), of Paul Cardan, of Maurice Brinton and the Solidarity folks in Britain, of Philadelphia Solidarity, of Albert and Hahn's book, *Unorthodox Marxism*, etc. etc. If I had been, I would have deserted the Maoists much sooner.

For A Revolutionary Libertarian Network

However, to exert that sort of political pole, it is usually necessary to have some sort of organization (or so it seemed to us at the time). But, as we all know, organizations have a way of developing a life of their own. They have a tendency to develop sectarian interests, to destroy vital local collectivity in the interests of centralization and carrying out a "unified" plan. They tend to sacrifice reality to their own dogmatic conceptions.

On the other hand, I am still of the opinion (to quote a letter to a comrade written a few months ago) that "To have a successful revolution, two things are necessary — 1) a theoretical 'armamentarium' (as Bookchin describes it) — a body of thought that not only shows that a new society — in opposition to bourgeois ideology — is possible and necessary, but also that guides revolutionary practice, so as to avoid the mistakes of the past; 2) a national or international political focus (in Europe, it might not need to take the form of an organization, but in North America — where there is no coherent revolutionary movement, I think it does) to serve as a clearly visible lightning rod for channelling and concentrating revolutionary sentiments and action. The role of both of these is to serve not a vanguard, but a catalyst rôle — to speed up, but not command, the revolutionary process."

The Role of A Journal

Recently, I received some material pertaining to the waning of the Solidarity group in Britain. One of the things they talk about is the difficulty of getting their theoretical materials noticed amid the ever-growing profusion of glossy theoretical journals and books. The more I thought about it, the more it seemed that to start another theoretical journal that would seek to compete with existing journals of long standing and repute (especially given our meagre resources) would be both redundant and impractical. Not that a journal should be iced altogether, but 1) it should not seek to "compete" with existing journals (many of which are doing some excellent work -- for instance, Murray Bookchin is starting a new one which, in quality, will probably greatly surpass anything we could hope to do), and 2) it should not seek to be all things to all people, but should play its modest role within sharply defined boundaries. It should principally serve as a forum for participants in the network itself (though it should certainly be open and available to all others who are interested) for dealing with major theoretical issues from the standpoint of fundamental questions of practice confronting network members and the libertarian movement as a whole. Such a journal could be inexpensively and yet attractively produced, and could be put out on the average of every two months.

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POWER IS THE OPIATE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

REFLECTIONS ON LENINISM, SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY AND THE "COORDINATOR" CLASS

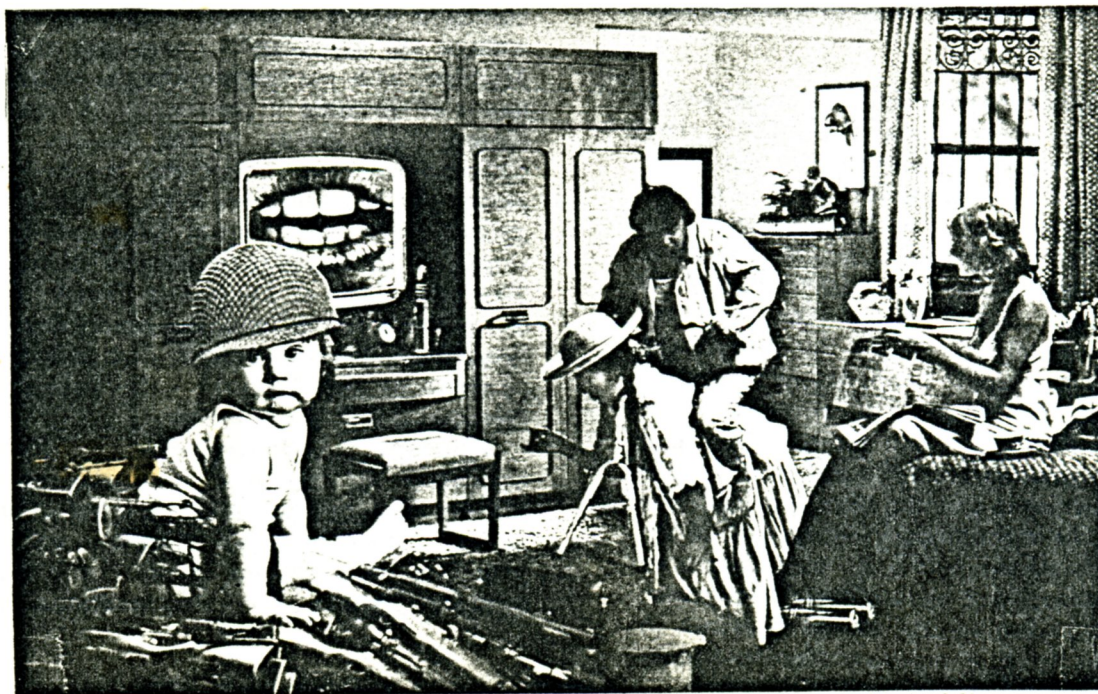
In our original Up From the Ashes letter, Jay Moore and I mentioned the Solidarity Network of Socialist-Feminists as a possible component of the emerging libertarian left. Jay Moore joined that organization in the hopes of finding like-minded revolutionaries. His experiences therein have not confirmed our expectations. The following resignation letter is a critique of the common social and political basis of Leninism and Social-Democracy which, in Solidarity's case, are rather bizarrely intertwined.

This letter is about the Solidarity National Conference at Wellesley, Massachusetts which I attended August 13—15. To be blunt, I found the conference a real disappointment. I am in agreement on all essential points with S.T.'s letter of resignation. I do not plan to continue my own membership. On Sunday, after the Bay Area's resolution to speed-up merger talks with the IS and/or the Socialist Party had been ratified, I left the conference. The only resolutions on which any substantive political struggle might have occurred—those on Nicaragua and El Salvador—were to be deferred until the next conference in another year! Thus, the sweetness of political unity was properly achieved.

In an earlier article published in the Solidarity Discussion Bulletin, I stated with a well-understood large measure of optimism that I thought the members of Solidarity shared an implicit politics. I wished, I said, to try to make this underlying politics more explicit. This was, I further said, a clearly revolutionary vision—fueled by the misery, privation, and rampant alienation everywhere in the world in which we live—possessed of an implacable desire to turn this whole world upside down. Then, on the smouldering ashes of the old we might build a new world, leaving—in Marx's poetic expression—the prehistory of humanity forever behind. More than anything else, I was hopeful that putting it so strongly in this way would serve as a revolutionary pole in Solidarity around which others might rally.

It is evident to me now how wrong my supposition was, about Solidarity. Although there are many good people still in this organization, the majority—in whose soporific politics the minority such as it exists is totally submerged—does not share this political outlook. Indeed, very far from it. To some of them, independent political action consists of building some third electoral fiction and fraud such as the Citizens Party or Barberro's campaign for mayor against Koch in NYC. This is the "right-wing" of Solidarity. The "left-wing" critics of this open electoral strategy talk about, as their more favored activity, building militant, "class-struggle" caucuses in the trade unions or doing support work for El Salvador. When I attempted to intervene in the discussion of "movement-building" and electoral politics in order to suggest that perhaps socialism also had something to do with a vision for a totally different society, it was as if I was speaking to a room full of deaf people.

The true implicit politics of Solidarity can also be seen in its two national leaflets—the one issued in New York, June 12th, and the other at the Cherry Hill reproductive rights demonstration. (I have heard no other criticisms of these leaflets.) Here we have displayed an example of what may nearly be the most elliptical language and dim-witted "radical" political thinking imaginable. We are urged by the leaflets to realize that the nuclear arms race (or read: "the attacks on abortion rights") has deep roots in the economic and political system. Yes, of course. "We need to build a



Richard Slye

movement that will challenge both the priorities and the power that maintains them." How do we do this? Solidarity's answer appears at the bottom: "We should connect rather than separate the issue of nuclear weapons from other progressive issues."

Comrades, it is not by the linking-up of individual issues alone that a revolutionary outlook and methodology is distinguished from the bourgeois. (Phyllis Schlafly, from her side, does a far better job of connecting abortion and nuclear weapons with "communism" than these leaflets do anyway.) Nor is it by uniting these issues somehow—each with its own autonomous area of resistance—into a single united-front of consensus politics under the leadership of a "mass, multi-tendency" socialist vanguard. Independent political action must mean something more than refusing to follow the New American Movement into the embrace of DSOC and the Democratic Party.

"In 1982 it makes no sense to choose between the Second or Third or Fourth Internationals. To hell with them all." Amen. The fact is that the Social Democrats, along with the Leninists and the Trotskyists—indeed, all the so-called "Leftists" whose unity was such a concern of this conference without stopping once to ask what "Leftism" means—the naked fact is that these groups, parties and sects all share a common political disposition. They all share the same political ends. The continual and often incomprehensible (but, oh, how so important to those-in-the-know) bickering and struggle between and among them concerns nothing more than the choice of whichever means. I do not share these means—or ends. They must equally be rejected. The unity of the "Left" is not our concern.

To many early 20th century radicals, disgusted with the sleazy treachery of Social Democracy, the Bolshevik Revolution seemed to herald a great, new revival of the principles of the First International. The emancipation of the working classes was again the activity of the working classes themselves. The new Russian revolutionary State proudly defined itself as a Union of Soviets—of workers', peasants', and soldiers' councils. Lenin had proclaimed that the day and hour of world-wide revolution had occurred and that the Soviet Union would be henceforth its loyal base area.

In the West, the radicals found themselves under severe attack. Some, like Luxembourg and Liebknecht, were murdered by their former Social Democratic comrades. The high priest of Marxist "orthodoxy", Karl Kautsky, pulled out every drawer of his clerk-like brain to demonstrate that both the Bolsheviks and their erstwhile imitators elsewhere had violated the sacred "truth" of Marxism. Yet, abuse rained-down from another, unexpected source—from the newly head-quartered Vatican of orthodoxy in Moscow. Lenin himself personally intervened to condemn the "infantile ultra-leftism" of the Dutch communists, Pannekoek and Gorter. They had insisted that a total break was necessary with all bourgeois institutions and—believing in this they were cleaving to the Soviet model—that the revolutionary self-activity of the masses should be developed within its own system of popular councils. Instead, much like the Social Democrats, Lenin advocated that communists should continue to participate in elections for the bourgeois parliament and do work on the inside of the old, bureaucratic trade unions.

Why the means and tactics of both Lenin and the Social Democrats began to converge so as to become almost indistinguishable was explained by another heretical "council communist", Karl Korsch. It was because, on a fundamental level, they both shared the same image of socialism. In his famous book, *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), Lenin had only been quoting from Karl Kautsky when he said that socialism was a doctrine which owes its existence to the leisured intellectuals who have been able to devote their free-time to "science". This arcane knowledge, according to Lenin, must then be fused by a party of professional revolutionaries to the "spontaneous" movement of the working class. Without this outside assistance, the workers would be capable only of a simple "trade union consciousness" or, at best, a blind and inchoate groping for socialism.

In Korsch's highly accurate description, Leninism is nothing more than a "left" form of Social Democracy. Despite a slightly greater level of militant rhetoric and some occasional fast-talk about a classless and stateless society, Lenin and his followers, like the Social Democrats, bind the masses hand and foot to the rule of an "educated" elite. Under its diligent—and, of course, selfless—tutelage, the common people must work hard until they can show proof that they are entitled to greater freedom. This is always a distant prospect for which new excuses to postpone are ever ready to be found.

The Social Democrats take as their model and their means for achieving this state which will bring culture and true enlightenment to the masses the very same principles of bourgeois representative democracy. Sooner or later, the people will realize who their true friends are and the Social Democrats will be elected to power. But this strategy does not preclude the Social Democrats from forming electoral alliances and selling themselves to the ruling classes as those with the "rational" solutions of the country's problems—and best able to control the unruly workers.

The Bolsheviks, for their part, refuse to share power; they are in favor of starting from scratch. In Lenin's own inimitable words, a socialist society is "the capitalist state without the capitalists" — meaning, naturally, the true Marxists, with the correct Marxist understanding of the nature of the State — *themselves*. (Lenin had raised the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets", out of sheer opportunism. No sooner did the Bolsheviks acquire power on this platform, than the Soviets were totally gutted. When the rebels at Kronstadt again raised the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets", they were shot down 'like partridges' at Lenin and Trotsky's orders.) This, aside from a few differences over the degree of organizational discipline and centralization, constitutes the whole context of the historic split between the Social Democrats and the Leninists.

Solidarity, "A Socialist-Feminist Network", stands heedlessly on this all-too-familiar political terrain, shifting first one way and then the other. At its first national conference, we encounter no great issues of principle debated, no important historical lessons examined. Above all, we find no discussion of that most

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important thing of all — *our goal in all this* — from which and only secondarily the appropriate means must be, with care, selected. Some members of Solidarity, it is true, covertly love Leninism and would heap praise if they could on that wonderful new socialist fatherland in Nicaragua. Others have their doubts. Yet, here where we might expect these things to be foremost on the agenda, the movement is everything and the final aim is nothing.

Seemingly, now, it is only a matter of “shopping around”, of getting the most for our money, of finding the suitor with the maximum bride price. The Leninists, it is said, know something indispensable about organization. In particular, the IS can brag about some notable success — once upon a time — in leading a “militant caucus” within the Teamsters Union. What a nice match that would make — Lord knows Solidarity has no roots at all among the industrial proletariat. Yet for those who don't feel quite at home with the Trotskyists, could a better choice perhaps be the Socialist Party with David McReynolds for President. Besides, the Trots are worn-out from internal bickering and their numbers are few. The SP can proudly boast of 400 members! Their strength lies in the Midwest — and added plus — where Solidarity is currently weakest. So — back and forth and how long is anyone's guess — goes this strange, little courtship ritual.

I, for one, refuse to play this matrimonial game. It is a choice between two sets of proven losers. How can we possibly expect to attain a free and non-hierarchical society by employing either one of these methods? The Leninist method which exalts the so-called proletarian discipline of the factory and the naked, terroristic power of the State (of course, in the ‘right’ hands) — certainly not. Neither is it by reinforcing the electoral fetish of bourgeois democracy, asking the masses to be sure to vote or to attend their monthly union meeting a bit more frequently. (The principal criticism of Nicaragua from the other point of view seems to be — *not* that the State has been greatly strengthened instead of promptly abolished — but that the junta has lagged on its time-table for multi-party, bourgeois elections!!)

What we desire — let us simply call it “what we desire” and abandon without regrets the terms “socialism” and “communism” for the “Leftists” to fight over as they will — is not the implementation of some kind of pseudo-scientific and scriptural doctrine, of whatever interpretation. What is truly revolutionary is the self-activity and self-consciousness of the people themselves. For this, there can be no substitutes. It cannot be forced or compelled into being. At best, we can play the role of helpful “mid-wives”, making easier its entry into the world, analyzing those barriers to its development and popularizing those mechanisms which are found to be most conducive. (As Murray Bookchin has perceptively pointed out, the Soviet or council form — due to its own less than direct, representational structure — is probably not the best we might choose. He recommends the affinity group.)

In this light, it makes no sense whatsoever to talk about a socialist “vanguard” — whether of the Leninist variety or something which permits the existence of tendencies and faction. Neither is helpful; in fact, both are obstacles to our movement. There is no way that the latter form of organization — a concept which some members of Solidarity nostalgically cling to from the days of the New

American movement — could, and I am speaking of a national organization, be anything more than a reformistic and eclectic mish-mash. This is true even if, against all the odds, Solidarity could somehow remain independent of the overt forms of Leninism and Social Democracy and solidify around a more radical and thoroughgoing vision of socialist-feminism.

I should not have to provide for this a complicated explanation. On the most fundamental level, it is simply tautological. If revolution is not a Platonic abstraction or a chemical quality which can be distilled in its pure form by the specialist and held in a bottle but, instead, is the coming into consciousness of the masses themselves and if revolutionary theory is only the generalized expression of this real movement accompanied by a vision of the “impossible”, then a national revolutionary organization can only arise when the masses on a broad scale are self-active and self-conscious.

What is natural at other times is the formation of local collectives and affinity groups among those people who already share some similar ideas and praxis. Let these flower in great multiplicity and diversity. “Let a thousand revolutionary nuclei flourish, multiply, polemicize and join forces. . . Let them emerge and federate.” The vision we should have of the future, in any event, is not of any sort at all of centralized power but of a freely-organized federation of communes. Local collectives are the embryo today of this future tomorrow, we may hope. They are where the new comradely human relationships of the future will be nurtured and developed.

Unfortunately, this is not the vision — even in the vaguest outlines, much less implicitly — of very many other members of Solidarity. In direct and antagonistic contradiction to everything that socialist-feminism is supposed to stand for, they wish, in some insidious form, to contest for power and not to destroy it. They think they, too, possess some secret, “scientific” knowledge. As one national co-ordinator confided to me in private, modern society is “too complex” to allow for a direct, popular economic and political democracy.

As much as we may disagree with him, what Lenin said about the social origins of this brand of “not what we desire” is candidly accurate. It is the product of the petit-bourgeoisie. Specifically, it is the ideology of what Albert and Hahnel in their book, *Unorthodox Marxism*, call the ‘co-ordinator class’ — those managers, technicians, and intellectuals savants who occupy the middle layers of the modern bureaucratic pyramid. In the final analysis, the outlook of the “Leftist” is that of the ambitious sub-altern who feels that, given the chance, he could do a better job than his boss. (The assembly-line worker is also infected by this outlook. However, there is a dangerous difference. The ambitious worker thinks of a soft job as the foreman or union steward. The ‘radical’ intellectual of this type dreams of ruling the State.)

If, as Marx alleged, consciousness is determined by social being, we have only to look at any “Leftist” group, of any persuasion, to confirm that this is indeed true. (Lenin was a lawyer by training. In the French Socialist Party of Mitterand, 190 parliamentary deputies are school teachers, etc.) We can also look at the class composition of Solidarity.

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What is profoundly wrong, however, and even at times highly pathetic is how all these so-called 'conscious', Marxian radicals with their presumed insights into the psychological laws of history *allow* their consciousness to be "socially determined". They transform this analytical statement into a kind of "revolutionary" moral precept and use it to guide their own lives, as if there were nothing better. (Marx talked about the realm of freedom as well as a realm of necessity.) For instance, they let their social being make them guilty, while still continuing to struggle for its prerogatives. Or, no better, they try to "remold" themselves by ostentatiously wearing a union jacket or by traveling to cut sugar cane in a Third World country, as if a change of clothing or geography could cause social being to rub off onto consciousness. The more inventive ones create a new theory and, by expanding the definition of the working class, discover that they already belong to it.

By contrast, the real revolutionary, if he or she is told that the consciousness of the individual is determined by some kind of historical law, will set out immediately to disprove this "law" by breaking it. This person will strive, at all times, in this case, to do exactly the reverse of what Marxism says. He or she will try to determine *his or her own consciousness*. In this way, and only in this way, will it be possible for consciousness to change social being.

This includes breaking with every manifestation of "class" — both in its traditional and reactionary forms and also "radical". All class-consciousness is false consciousness. For all their good intentions, the syndicalists and council communists are also greatly in error. There is nothing sacred or holy about the social being of the working class, and in this day and age, not even anything very special.

It was always one of the strange paradoxes of Marxism that a *class* — any class — could act as the agent and standardbearer of a *classless* society. (Lenin and Kautsky basically had to admit that it could not. Marx, who was no Leninist in matters of organization, had a far more sophisticated and libertarian explanation. Nevertheless, how can any class be a "universal class" with no hidden class interests of its own? This can only be called paradoxical. Or, perhaps it is one of those religious questions where we are told the faithful do not pry any longer.)

The category of class is the deepest category of bourgeois society. By hypostatizing this category and investing a *certain* class within the capitalist relations of production — even an exploited and oppressed class — with the role of ushering in communism, Marxism only serves to reimplant and reinforce this bourgeois relationship. Instead, it must be extirpated *in toto*.

Howard Ehrlich has written an interesting article, 'On Building a Transfer Culture', which says it perfectly:

Is there a revolutionary sector of society? Who will make the revolution? — These are standard questions of revolutionary theory. The social anarchist response is that if there is a revolutionary sector, it is to be found among those who are declassed. Those who have voluntarily unleashed themselves from the bonds of social integration as well as those whose release was more traumatic. It is an open sector, and anyone can join. (*Social Anarchism*, volume 2, #2, 1982)

I had hoped, when I joined it, to find in Solidarity a revolutionary residue of the New Left. The New Left, its early founders and members said, refused to accept a recrudescence of the old ideas and "solutions". It demanded change immediately and said to hell with everything — every bureaucrat, racist, politician, and no-good — who stood in the way of a better, more human society. But it would not wait for the Second Coming. It affirmed human values, as the highest goal, in the here and now. If necessary, it would begin already to construct the institutions — the co-ops, the communes, and the consciousness-raising sessions — with which the world should be populated, while seeking constantly to universalize them.

Yet, out of this same milieu, arose two retrograde trends. On the one hand, there were the Leninists — the New Communist Movement — of which, for a long, sad time, I was a member and participant. On the other hand, there was the trend represented by NAM. Both these trends did not seek their poetry in the present, much less — as Marx advised — in the world of the future. Instead, they tried to pull it out of the dank and hopeless regions of the past. The Leninists found their twisted inspiration in a Revolution which had perished on the bayonets of Kronstadt and in the prisons and concentration camps of Lenin and Stalin. NAM wanted to return to the "golden era" of American socialism, to revive — not the direct action of the IWW — but the electoral politics of Eugene V. Debs — without a doubt less sinister than the Leninists but equally hopeless as a goal and equally buried in the dungeons of the past. Now, the past is swallowing its own.

Comrades, it is to the future that we must turn — while drawing our inspiration from those of the past who lived in this future. The poetry of the future is largely yet to be written.

After this was written, I took a look at a pamphlet, "Why Socialists Need Organization", that the IS was passing out at the conference. Despite all their talk about *democratic* centralism vs. "bureaucratic centralism" (whatever that means), a few quotations should suffice to show how much their thinking is still permeated by vanguardism and other types of harmful and outmoded ideology:

When a movement has to be built, an organization created, a demonstration organized, it is often organized socialists who first get together or talk on the phone or correspond to get things started and give them a push. . . . So it's often up to us on the revolutionary left to organize much of the work. Without a socialist organization, who will get the job done?

The great historical problem of the American left is that socialist ideas are separated from the working class, which is the only force that can give them relevance. Socialism becomes a possibility only when the working class is prepared to fight consciously to create it. . . . The historic task of socialists is to again make the connection between socialism and the working class.

There must be a conscious effort to put forward the notions of the democratic control of the working class over the state and over production. How that should be done is a matter of great controversy no doubt, but that it has to be done no socialist can deny. And if there is no socialist organization, then who will do it?

IS ANARCHISM OBSOLETE?

The following are excerpts from Murray Bookchin's new book The Ecology of Freedom. Murray bears no responsibility for the title. I chose it because what I found particularly intriguing about the passages reproduced here is his contention that traditional anarchist conceptions are almost as useless as traditional Marxist ones. Though suffering, in my opinion, from certain defects of style, The Ecology of Freedom, continues Murray's splendid demystification of leftist dogma, and is a further contribution to the development of a theory which is truly rooted in contemporary conditions.

"The distinction between justice and freedom... is even more basic... This distinction has rarely been explored even by radical theorists, who often still echo the historical cry of the oppressed for 'Justice!' rather than freedom. Worse yet, the two have been used as equivalents (which they decidedly are not). The young Proudhon and later Marx correctly perceived that true freedom presupposes an equality based on a recognition of inequality — the inequality of capacities and needs, of abilities and responsibilities... Socialism, in most of its forms, gradually degenerated into a demand for 'economic justice', thereby merely restating the rule of equivalence as an economic emendation to the juridical and political rule of equivalence established by the bourgeoisie." (pg. 9)

"Happiness... is the mere satisfaction of *need*, of our survival needs for food, shelter, clothing, and material security — in short, our needs as animal organisms. Pleasure, by contrast, is the satisfaction of our *desires*, of our intellectual, esthetic, sensuous and playful 'daydreams'. The social quest for happiness, which so often seems liberating, tends to occur in ways that shrewdly devalue or repress the quest for pleasure. We can see evidence of this regressive development in many radical ideologies that justify toil and need at the expense of artful work and sensuous joy. That these ideologies denounce the quest for fulfillment of the sensuous as 'bourgeois individualism' and 'libertinism' hardly requires mention. Yet it is precisely in this utopistic quest for pleasure, I believe, that humanity begins to gain its most sparkling glimpse of emancipation. With this quest carried to the *social* realm, rather than confined to a privatized hedonism, humanity begins to transcend the realm of justice, even that of a classless society, and enters into the realm of freedom — a realm conceived as the full realization of humanity's potentialities in their most creative form." (pgs. 9-10)

"Communal property, once property itself has become a category of consciousness, already marks the first step toward private property — just as reciprocity, once it too becomes a category of consciousness, marks the first step toward exchange. Proudhon's celebration of 'mutual aid' and contractual federalism, like Marx's celebration of communal property and planned production, mark no appreciable advance over the primal principle of usufruct. Both thinkers were captive to the notion of interest, to the rational satisfaction of egotism." (p. 50)

"...I am asking not if the notion of dominating nature gave rise to the domination of human by human but rather if the domination of human by human gave rise to the notion of dominating nature. In short, did *culture* rather than *technics*, *consciousness* rather than *labor*, or *hierarchies* rather than *classes* either open or foreclose social possibilities that might have profoundly altered the present human condition with its diminishing prospects of human survival?" (p. 66)

"Even such notions as primitive communism, matriarchy, and social equality, so widely celebrated by radical anthropologists and theorists, play a mystifying role... Lurking within the notion of primitive communism is the insidious concept of a 'stingy nature', of a 'natural scarcity' that dictates communal relations — as though a communal sharing of things is exogenous to humanity and must be imposed by survival needs to overcome an 'innate' human egoism that 'modernity' so often identifies with 'selfhood'. Primitive communism also contains the concept of property, however 'communal' in character, that identifies selfhood with ownership. Usufruct, as the transgression of proprietary claims in *any* form, is concealed by property as a public institution. Indeed, 'communal property' is not so far removed conceptually and institutionally from 'public property', 'nationalized property', or 'collectivized property' that the incubus of proprietorship can be said to be removed completely from sensibility and practices of a 'communist' society. Finally, 'matriarchy', the rule of society by women instead of men, merely alters the nature of rule; it does not lead to its abolition. 'Matriarchy' merely changes the gender of domination and thereby perpetuates domination as such." (pgs. 86-87)

"Hierarchy, class, and ultimately the State penetrate the very integument of the human psyche and establish within it unreflective internal powers of coercion and constraint. In this respect, they achieve a 'sanitizing' authority that no institution or ideology can hope to command. By using guilt and self-blame, the inner State can control behavior long before fear of the coercive powers of the State can be invoked. Self-blame, in effect, becomes *self-fear* — the introjection of social coercion in the form of insecurity, anxiety and guilt.

Renunciation now becomes socially meaningful and 'morally' invaluable to history's ruling elites because there really *is* something to renounce: the privileges of status, the appropriation of material surpluses, even the lingering memory of an egalitarian order in which work was pleasurable and playful and when usufruct and the irreducible minimum still determined the allocation of the means of life. Under the conditions of class rule, a 'pleasure principle' *does*, in fact, emerge. And it stands sharply at odds with a 'reality principle' whose limits were once congruent with those imposed by nature. To the extent that the ruling few are freed from those limits by the toiling many, the tension between the two principles is increasingly exacerbated; it assumes the form not only of a social trauma, notably, as class conflict, but also of psychic trauma in the form of guilt, renunciation and insecurity.

But here the Freudian drama completely deceives us — and reveals an extraordinarily reactionary content. The fact that nature's limits constitute the only 'reality principle' of organic society is ignored; indeed, it is displaced by a mythic 'pleasure principle' that must be

constrained by guilt and renunciation. Cooperative nature is turned into predatory nature, riddled by egotism, rivalry, cruelty, and the pursuit of immediate gratification. But 'civilization', formed by rationality, labor, and an epistemology of *self-repression*, produces a 'reality principle' that holds unruly nature under its sovereignty and provides humanity with the matrix for culture, cooperation, and creativity. Freud's transposition of nature and 'civilization' involves a gross misreading of anthropology and history. A 'reality principle' that, in fact, originates in nature's limits, is transmuted into an egoistic pursuit for immediate gratification — in short, the very 'pleasure principle' that social domination has *yet* to create historically and render meaningful. The natural home of humanity, to borrow Bloch's terminology, which promotes usufruct, complementarity, and sharing, is degraded into a Hobbesian world of all against all, while the 'civilized' home of humanity, which fosters rivalry, egotism and possessiveness, is viewed as a Judeo-Hellenic world of morality, intellect, and creativity. Freud's drastic reshuffling of the 'pleasure principle' and 'reality principle' thus consistently validates the triumph of domination, elitism, and an epistemology of rule. Divested of what Freud calls 'civilization', with its luxuriant traits of domination, repressive reason, and renunciation, humanity is reduced to the 'state of nature' that Hobbes was to regard as brutish animality." (pgs. 116-117)

"In restructuring society around itself, the State acquires superadded social functions that now appear as political functions. It not only *manages* the economy but politicizes it; it not only *colonizes* social life but *absorbs* it. Social forms thus appear as State forms and social values as political values. Society is reorganized in such a way that it becomes indistinguishable from the State. Revolution is thus confronted not only with the task of smashing the State and reconstructing *administration* along libertarian lines; it must also smash society, as it were, and reconstruct human *consociation* itself along new communal lines. The problem that now faces revolutionary movements is not merely one of reappropriating society but literally reconstituting it." (pgs. 127-128)

"Rarely has it been possible to distinguish the cry for Justice with its inequality of equals from the cry of Freedom with its equality of unequals. Every ideal of emancipation has been tainted by this confusion, which still lives on in the literature of the oppressed. Usufruct has been confused with public property, individual competence with populist elites, the irreducible minimum with equal opportunity." (pgs. 148-149)

"Almost every critique of the 'bourgeois traits' of modern society, technics, and individuality is itself tainted by the very substance it criticizes. By emphasizing economics, class interest, and the 'material substrate' of society as such, such critiques are the bearers of the very 'bourgeois traits' they purport to oppose." (p. 217)

"What is... most surprising is that classical anarchism, from Proudhon to Kropotkin, cast its notion of consociation in terms of contract with its underlying premise of equivalence — a system of 'equity' that reaches its apogee in bourgeois conceptions of right. The notion that equivalence can be the moral coinage of freedom is as alien to freedom itself as is the notion of the State. Nineteenth-

century socialisms, whether libertarian or authoritarian, ultimately are still rooted in the concept of property as such and the need to regulate property relationships 'socialistically'. Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin's paeans to contracts 'freely entered into' between 'men' and between communities strangely denies the term 'freely' by its limited concept of freedom. Indeed, it is not accidental that this kind of language can be found in the constitutions and legal codes of the most unreconstructed bourgeois republics. Traditional anarchist concepts of contract score no greater advance over our system of justice than Marx's notion of 'proletarian dictatorship' scores any advance over our republican concepts of freedom... Denied the message of social ecology, the libertarian ideal tends to sink to the level of ideological sectarianism and, even worse, to the level of the hierarchical syndicalism fostered by industrial society." (pgs. 320 & 322)

"The nineteenth-century socialists and anarchists were largely economic and scientific in their outlook, often on a scale comparable to the conventional social theorists of their day. Proudhon was no less committed to a 'scientific socialism' than was Marx. Kropotkin was often as much of a technological determinist as Engels, although he redeemed this stance by his emphasis on ethics. Both men, like the Victorians of their time, were thoroughly enamored of 'progress' as a largely economic achievement. All these principle figures viewed the State as 'historically necessary'. Bakunin and Kropotkin saw it as an 'unavoidable evil'; Marx and Engels saw it as an historically progressive datum. Errico Malatesta, perhaps the most ethically oriented of the anarchists, saw these failings clearly and openly criticized them in Bakunin and Kropotkin. All of them were dystopian in their outlook. The given reality, with its hypostatization of labor, its reverence for science and technics, its myths of progress, and above all, its commitment to proletarian hegemony, was part of a shared mythology that cements the 'libertarian' and 'authoritarian' socialisms of the last century into an equally uninhabitable edifice." (pgs. 324-325)



THE SITUATIONISTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST

The following excerpts from the Situationist International Anthology, though 15 years old, are a lot more germane to a libertarian discussion of the Middle East than most of the clap-trap currently being put out by the left. The Anthology, available from the Bureau of Public Secrets, P.O. Box 1044, Berkeley, California 94701, is must reading for any libertarian interested in a new theoretical synthesis.

The Arab-Israel war was a dirty trick pulled by modern history on the good conscience of the Left, which was communing in the great spectacle of its protest against the Vietnam war. The false consciousness that saw in the NLF the champion of "socialist revolution" against American imperialism could only get entangled and collapse amidst its insurmountable contradictions when it had to decide between Israel and Nasser. Yet throughout all its ludicrous polemics it never stopped proclaiming that one or the other was completely in the right, or even that one or another of their perspectives was revolutionary.

Through its immigration into underdeveloped areas, the revolutionary struggle was subjected to a double alienation: that of an impotent Left facing an overdeveloped capitalism it was in no way capable of combating, and that of the laboring masses in the colonized countries who inherited the remains of a mutilated revolution and have had to suffer its defects. The absence of a revolutionary movement in Europe has reduced the Left to its simplest expression: a mass of spectators who swoon with rapture each time the exploited in the colonies take up arms against their masters, and who cannot help seeing these uprisings as the epitome of Revolution. At the same time, the absence from political life of the proletariat as a class-for-itself (and for us the proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing) has allowed this Left to become the "Knight of Virtue" in a world without virtue. But when it bewails its situation and complains about the "world order" being at variance with its good intentions, and when it maintains its poor yearnings in the face of this order, it is in fact attached to this order as to its own essence, and if this order was taken away from it it would lose everything. The European Left shows itself so poor that, like a traveler in the desert longing for a single drop of water, all it seems to need to console itself is the meager feeling of an abstract objection. From the little with which it is satisfied one can measure the extent of its poverty. It is as alien to history as the proletariat is alien to this world; false consciousness is its natural condition, the spectacle is its element, and the apparent opposition of systems is its universal frame of reference: wherever there is a conflict it always sees Good fighting Evil, "total revolution" versus "total reaction."

Neither the manichean consciousness of the virtuous Left nor the bureaucracy are capable of seeing the profound unity of today's world. Dialectics is their common enemy. As for revolutionary criticism, it begins beyond good and evil; it takes its roots in history and operates on the totality of the existing world. In no case can it applaud a belligerent state or support the bureaucracy of an exploiting state in formation. It must first of all lay bare the truth of present struggles by putting them back into their historical context, and unmask the hidden ends of the forces officially in conflict. The arm of critique is the prelude to the critique by arms.

These minimal qualities in the struggle and the social objectives that they express remain totally absent in the confrontation between Israel and the Arabs. The specific contradictions of Zionism and of splintered Arab society add to the general confusion.

Since its origins the Zionist movement has been the contrary of the revolutionary solution to what used to be called the Jewish question. A direct product of European capitalism, it did not aim at the overthrow of a society that needed to persecute Jews, but at the creation of a Jewish national entity that would be protected from the antisemitic aberrations of decadent capitalism; it aimed not at the abolition of injustice, but at its transfer. The original sin of Zionism is that it has always acted as if Palestine were a desert island. The revolutionary workers movement saw the answer to the Jewish question in proletarian community, that is, in the destruction of capitalism and "its religion, Judaism"; the emancipation of the Jews could not take place apart from the emancipation of man. Zionism started from the opposite hypothesis. As a matter of fact, the counterrevolutionary development of the last half century proved it right, but in the same way as the development of European capitalism proved right the reformist theses of Bernstein. The success of Zionism and its corollary, the creation of the state of Israel, is merely a miserable by-product of the triumph of world counterrevolution. To "socialism in a single country" came the echo "justice for a single people" and "equality in a single kibbutz." It was with Rothschild capital that the colonization of Palestine was organized and with European surplus-value that the first kibbutzim were set up. The Jews recreated for themselves all the fanaticism and segregation of which they had been victims. Those who had suffered mere toleration in their society were to struggle to become in another country owners disposing of the right to tolerate others. The kibbutz was not a revolutionary supersession of Palestinian "feudalism," but a mutualist formula for the self-defense of Jewish worker-settlers against the capitalist exploitative tendencies of the Jewish Agency. Because it was the main Jewish owner of Palestine, the Zionist Organization defined itself as the sole representative of the superior interests of the "Jewish Nation." If it eventually allowed a certain element of self-management, it is because it was sure that this would be based on the systematic rejection of the Arab peasant.

As for the Histadrut, it was since its inception in 1920 subjected to the authority of world Zionism, that is, to the direct opposite of workers' emancipation. Arab workers were statutorily excluded from it and its activity often consisted of forbidding Jewish businesses to employ them.

The development of triangular struggles between the Arabs, the Zionists and the British was to be turned to the profit of the Zionists. Thanks to the active patronage of the Americans (since the end of World War II) and the blessing of Stalin (who saw Israel as the first "socialist" bastion in the Middle East, but also as a way to rid himself of some annoying Jews), it did not take long before the Herzlian dream was realized and the Jewish state was arbitrarily proclaimed. The recuperation of all "progressive" forms of social organization and their integration within the Zionist ideal allowed even the most "revolutionary" to work in good conscience for the building of the bourgeois, militaristic, rabbinical state that modern Israel has become. The prolonged sleep of proletarian internationalism once more brought forth a monster. The basic injustice against the Palestinian Arabs came back to roost with the Jews themselves: the State of the Chosen People was nothing but one more class society in which all the anomalies of the old societies were recreated (hierarchical divisions, tribal opposition between the Ashkenazi and the Sephardim, racist persecution of the Arab minority, etc.). The labor union organization assumed its normal function of integrating workers into a capitalist economy, an economy of which it itself has become the main owner. It employs more workers than the state itself. It presently constitutes the bridgehead of the imperialist expansion of the new Israeli capitalism. ("Solel Boneh," an important building branch of the Histadrut, invested 180 million dollars in Africa and Asia from 1960-1966 and currently employs 12,000 African workers.)

As for Israel, it has become everything that the Arabs had accused it of before the war: an imperialist state behaving like the most classic occupation forces (police terror, dynamiting of houses, permanent martial law, etc.). Internally a collective hysteria, led by the rabbis, is developing around the "ironclad right of Israel to its Biblical borders." The war put a stop to the whole movement of internal struggles generated by the contradictions of this artificial society (in 1966 there were several dozen riots, and there were no fewer than 277 strikes in 1965 alone) and provoked unanimous support for the objectives of the ruling class and its most extremist ideology. It also served to shore up all the Arab regimes not involved in the armed struggle. Boumediene could thus, from 3000 miles away, enter the chorus of political bragadocio and have his name applauded by the Algerian crowd before which he had not even dared to appear the day before; and finally obtain the support of a totally Stalinized ORP ("for his anti-imperialist policy"). Faisal, for a few million dollars, obtained Egypt's withdrawal from North Yemen and the strengthening of his throne. Etc., etc.

As always, war, when not civil, only freezes the process of social revolution. In North Vietnam it has brought about the peasantry's support, never before given, for the bureaucracy that exploits it. In Israel it has killed off for a long time any opposition to Zionism; and in the Arab countries it is reinforcing—temporarily—the most reactionary strata. In no way can revolutionary currents find anything there with which to identify. Their task is at the other pole of the present movement since it must be its absolute negation.

Unlike the American war, the Palestinian question has no immediately evident solution. No short-term solution is feasible. The Arab regimes can only crumble under the weight of their contradictions and Israel will be more and more the prisoner of its colonial logic. All the compromises that the great powers try to piece together are bound to be counterrevolutionary in one way or another. The hybrid status quo—neither peace nor war—will probably prevail for a long period, during which the Arab regimes will meet with the same fate as their predecessors of 1948 (and probably at first to the profit of the openly reactionary forces). Arab society, which has produced all sorts of dominant classes caricaturing all the classes of history, must now produce the forces that will bring about its total subversion. The so-called national bourgeoisie and the Arab bureaucracy have inherited all the defects of those two classes without ever having known the historical realizations those classes achieved in other societies. The future Arab revolutionary forces which must arise from the ruins of the June 1967 defeat must know that they have nothing in common with any of the existing Arab regimes and nothing to respect among the established powers that dominate the present world. They will find their model in themselves and in the repressed experiences of revolutionary history. The Palestinian question is too serious to be left to the states, that is, to the colonels. It is too close to the two basic questions of modern revolution—internationalism and the state—for any existing force to be able to provide an adequate solution. Only an Arab revolutionary movement that is resolutely internationalist and antistate can both dissolve the state of Israel and have on its side that state's exploited masses. And only through the same process will it be able to dissolve all the existing Arab states and create Arab unity through the power of the Councils.

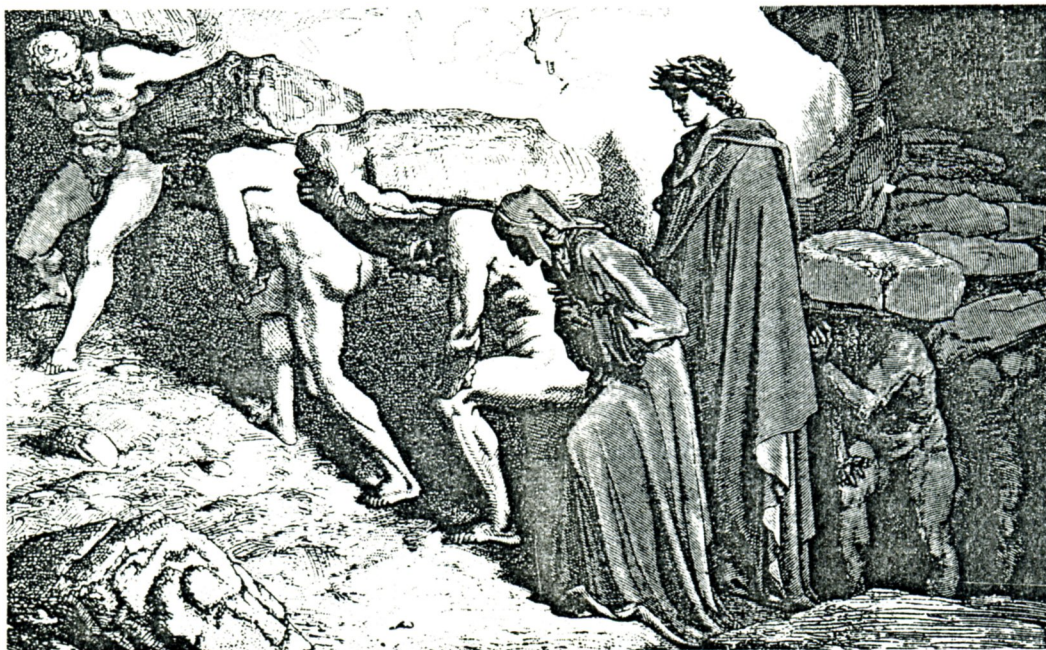
The movement drawing the Arab peoples toward unification and socialism has achieved a number of victories over classical colonialism. But it is more and more evident that it must finish with Islam, manifestly a counterrevolutionary force as are all religious ideologies; it must grant freedom to the Kurdish people; it must finish with the Palestinian pretext which justifies the dominant policy in the Arab states, since this policy insists on the destruction of Israel and thereby perpetuates itself since this destruction is impossible. The repressive forces of the state of Israel can be dissolved only by a *model of a revolutionary society realized by the Arabs*. Just as the success of a model of a revolutionary society in the world would mean the end of the largely sham confrontation between the East and the West, so would end the Arab-Israel confrontation which is a miniature version of it.

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Bookchin on "Lines of Demarcation"

Ultimately, a line will have to be drawn that, by definition, excludes the repeated "slippage" of libertarian concepts into authoritarian ones—the slippage of centralization into varying degrees of centralization, direct democracy into delegated power, libertarian institutions to the side of bureaucracy, and spontaneity into authority. Such a line, like a physical barrier, must irrevocably separate a clear *transparent* libertarian zone of theory and practice from the hybrid socialisms that tend to denature it. This zone must be marked by the transparency of its libertarian commitments and criteria; it must build its anti-authoritarian utopian, and revolutionary commitments into the very recognition it has of itself—in short, into the very way it defines itself. Given the intellectual opportunism that marks our era, there is no way that a libertarian zone can retain its integrity and *transparency* without describing its parameters in terms that reveal every conceivable form of slippage from its ideals, at which point it must cease to be what it professes to be. I would hold that such a zone can only be denoted by the term "anarchocommunism," a term that denies the validity of all claims of domination by definition. Accordingly, to admit of domination is to cross the line that separates the libertarian zone from the socialist. Whoever eschews the term in the name of a revolutionary project that is theoretically more delectable and socially more popular remains unreliable in his or her commitment to libertarian goals as such—goals that must remain tentative insofar as they are not rooted in the fixity of consistently anti-authoritarian premises. Perhaps such a fixity of premises may be intellectually distasteful or socially impractical. These are legitimate questions that must be decided by discussion or personal conscience. But the very fixity of premises that define anarchocommunism as a consistently libertarian zone is the sole guarantee that a revolutionary project will not gradually slip back to forms of theory and practice that inherently lend themselves to opportunistic compromises.

Traditions and personalities must not be permitted to stand in the way of our self-understanding of the issues involved. One may charge a Proudhon for his philistinism, a Bakunin for his naiveté, a Kropotkin for his didacticism, a Durruti for his terrorism—and anarchist theory generally for its simplicity. Even if each such assessment were true, it would merely be episodic in the face of a social crisis so massive and a social response so opportunistic that we can no longer retain any revolutionary project without the most compelling moral imperatives. Existentially, our era allows for no commitment that falls short of the anarchocommunic project for liberation, certainly not without leading to the betrayal of humanity's potentiality for freedom.



The Goals of the Network

The network I have described would have two basic objectives: 1) to help popularize the need for, and help bring into being, a truly holistic theoretical synthesis, and 2) to help make anarchism -- as an idea, as a sentiment, as a battle-cry -- a true magnet for all those seeking to break out of the suffocating realities and social relations of capitalist\patriarchal\hierarchical society.

These two things are obviously related. In order to tear down the old system, people have to have a vision of the new. They have to see the thousand well-springs of urgency and creativity that could bring it in to being. They have to see how the microcosm (their own lives, frustrations, aspirations) intersects with the macrocosm (an outdated, soulless, genocidal, and bankrupt social monstrosity that lives on by virtue of the power of the state, and by virtue of people's spontaneous acquiescence). I have tried to develop my ideas in greater detail in a collection of articles entitled *Struggling for New Perspectives On Revolution*. In addition, Jay Moore has written an excellent article called *Towards A New Synthesis*, and Scott Tucker has written a piece called *Socialist Education and the Cult of the Family*, dealing with the failure of the traditional left to "capture hearts and minds" by virtue of the lack of a holistic critique.

An Anarchist Sensibility

Instead, I will confine myself to a couple of comments on why we need an "anarchist sensibility" and a "broader than anarchist world-view". First of all, Marxism as a movement and a theoretical system is hopelessly flawed. Anarchism, on the other hand, while not without its own historical skeletons in the closet, has, through its opposition to Marxist totalitarianism, established itself as the only viable starting point for those who wish to oppose authority, dogma, and theoretical obfuscation. Particularly after the failure of the Marxist-Leninist movements of the 1960's, anarchism has come to represent the need for liberation in all its multi-faceted aspects (and not just economic), and hence to a definition of liberation which spells **Freedom**, and not **Slavery** (which is what, for so many Marxists, "liberation" spells). Already, the anarchist **A** has come to stand for revolution and freedom in troubled Europe, and it's beginning to develop that potency here in North America. That's something we should build on. True, the mere popularizing of a symbol does not relieve us of the responsibility for investing that symbol with content, and true, there are those who would fill it with the same old shit -- with reformism, and workerism, and all the rest, but frankly, those who would do so are at a disadvantage, because that is not what anarchism is coming to represent in the growing popular consciousness.

For A New Synthesis

But, on the other hand, it would be sectarian and foolish to think that only self-described anarchists have something to contribute to a theoretical analysis of our era and the tasks of the age. Feminists, situationists, people like Reich, Fourier, Luxembourg (and certainly Marx as well) all have to be learned from critically, and the final result of stirring the pot will certainly go "beyond black, red, green, and lavender", and that which is currently called anarchist theory. The revolutionary libertarian network should help to popularize all such efforts, and each member should contribute to the process as best as she or he can by contributing articles to, and working with, the other journals and collectives which are engaged in the same task. Anyhow, this is what I propose. Please let me know what you think.

One possible idea for future issues is to have a rotating editorship so that different individuals could put out their own special issues. I also think it would be appropriate to publish the most interesting letters that Jay and I received. In addition, a mailing list could be published so that members of the network could correspond with one another about various questions, including the results of any concrete organizing activities that they are involved in.

Any correspondence, manuscripts or other material should sent to one or the other of us:

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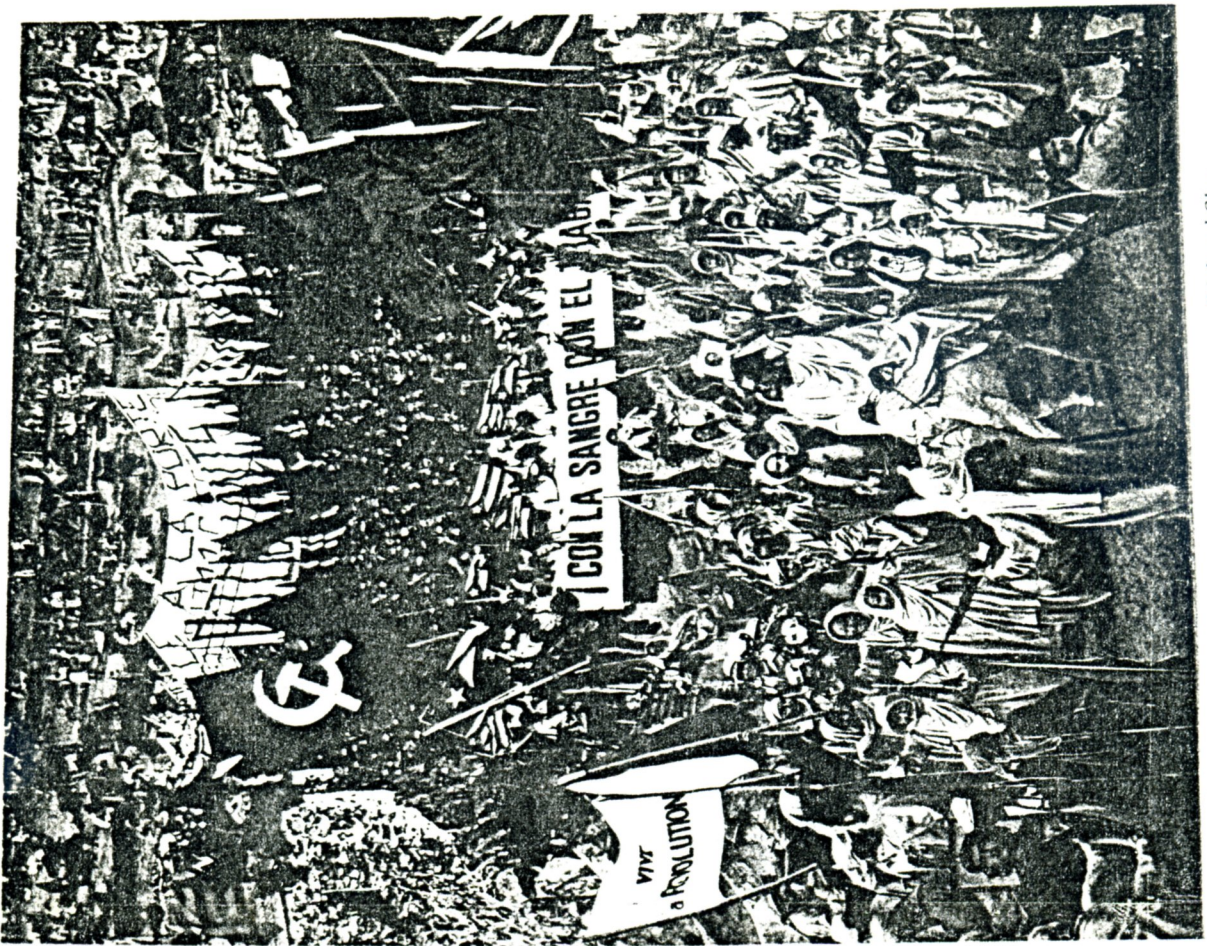
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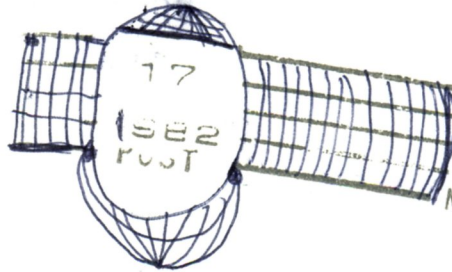
--Ronald Hayley

When he was come down from the mountain, multitudes followed



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