

# BLACK ROSE

1

JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY ANARCHISM

**BLACK ROSE**, published by the Black Rose Collective, a group of anarchists from the Boston area, is intended primarily as a creative theoretical contribution to left anarchist and libertarian thought and praxis.

There can be no question of the need for such a journal at this time. The theoretical and practical confusion that marked the new left and that continues to permeate its remnants makes clear that what is needed is a rediscovery and reformulation of the revolutionary project itself in a manner adequate not only to the present but also to the future. For us, this can only mean the maximization of freedom through the elimination of all forms of domination by one person, or group of persons, over others---the abolition of alienation through the conscious creation of a self-managed stateless society.

To us, self-management is not the right to engage in partial control of one's own alienation through the "management" of a workplace which retains work in the authoritarian and pointless forms in which it exists today, nor is it the management of a workplace which is owned by an agent distinct from those who labor at its base and who inhabit the community of which it is a part, whether that agent be an individual or a party purporting to speak in the name of the people. As self-management is the realization in one's daily life of the needs and desires of the "self becoming conscious," it cannot co-exist with the nuclear family, with sexual role distinction, or with dominance and submission in any form.

This is no idle fancy, no utopian chimera. Emergent decentralized technologies and alternative communities have presented concrete possibilities for a substantive change in the pattern of work, and therefore in the quality of life as a whole. The viability of self-sufficiency corresponds to the exigency of an economy that is not based on the blood and toil of peoples in the third world countries. Its implications for a revolutionary movement are enormous. Not only need people suffer no longer from a lack of vital necessities, but the need for a "transitional stage" in the traditional sense from capitalism to a classless anarchist society is rendered obsolete. The development of a potentially liberatory technology means that work need no longer be synonymous with oppression.

With the objective technological means at hand, subjectivity, "the question of consciousness," assumes paramount importance. A self-managed society can only be achieved by individuals capable of self-management, a simple tautology whose realization is impeded by the psychic legacy of centuries of sexual and hierarchical domination. This calls for a new and wider understanding of the class struggle: the proletariat, interpreted as all those who lack control over their own lives, is not the class of the developing economy in the sense the bourgeoisie was. Rather it is the class of developing consciousness. Thus, "the highest form of class-consciousness becomes self-consciousness" and the goal of revolution, the total transformation of daily life. "The world already possesses in the form of a dream a reality of which it need only become conscious in order to obtain it."

This realistic dream of the future need not blind us to the realities of the present. We are not interested in developing a dogma and passing abstract judgement on unfolding events from the lofty throne of an imagined ideological superiority. We do not "stand aloof in giant ignorance" from movements for social change but realize that the unfolding dialectic of the revolutionary process encompasses a myriad of struggles, any number of which could be seen out of the context of the entirety of this process as fragmentary or partial. To those who have control over not a single facet of their lives even the most fragmented or partial vision of liberation can be revolutionary, and we support all peoples who are actively engaged in the struggle for self-determination. We seek the development of a creative revolutionary theory based on, and in turn conditioning an evolving revolutionary practice, a task which involves everyone, and we welcome communication from all those who would join us as comrades.

# BLACK ROSE 1

- 2 On Hierarchy and Domination  
*Murray Bookchin*
- 8 Anarcho-Feminism and Louise Michel  
*Marian Leighton*
- 37 How I Became An Anarchist  
*Louise Michel*
- 38 Poem  
*George Therese Dickenson*
- 40 Anarchist Planning  
*David Dobereiner*
- 49 The Tyranny of Tyranny  
*Cathy Levine*
- 58 Desideratum: To the New Left Upon Occasion of its Recent Demise  
*John Hess*
- 60 For Clara, If She Had Lived Today  
*George Therese Dickenson*
- 62 Songs of Hate (No. 4)  
*Marie Nares*
- 63 Discussion with Noam Chomsky  
*edited by Doug Richardson and John Hess*

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# ON HIERARCHY AND DOMINATION

MURRAY BOOKCHIN

[Our commodity society, more than any society in history, has rooted the human condition in economics - and accordingly produced a formidable ideological structure based on property, labor, the market place, and the social allocation of resources.] Even our innermost psychological apparatus of guilt, sacrifice and renunciation - an apparatus that is obviously not unique to the psyche molded by bourgeois society - borrows its conceptual framework and its terminology from economic theory. Marcuse's use of the term "surplus repression", with its conscious affinity to Marx's category of "surplus value", is merely a more sophisticated parallel to words like "investment" or "buying", terms by which we express the "allocation" of our emotions and our susceptibility to opposing ideas. We are a people who "invest" our feelings; we "buy" or we do not "buy" certain viewpoints. The contractual relationship which bourgeois ideology hypostacizes as the very essence of human sociation traps our thinking in a network of equivalences and "trade offs" that reaches its ideological perfection in computer simulation theory and even in utopistic visions such as Proudhon's conception of a mutualistic society. Accordingly, when we think of our status with respect to others, we are all too ready to translate it into class and materially exploitative terms. Not merely are we abashed "intellectuals", but "middle class" intellectuals to boot, and not merely are we caught in a nexus of privileges, but of material exploitation.

I have examined elsewhere the extent to which this order of economic reductionism presents human experience and activity in a partial, albeit underlying, manner. There is no economic substructure to society that is immune to cultural, political, and psychological analysis. That this approach has its merits I would not deny: as organized in Marx's theory, it looks behind the ideological conditions of capitalism to the economic world that acquires so pronounced a role in modern social life. The mon-

adic reified individual - in economic theory the "free entrepreneur", in juridical theory the "free citizen" - is demystified and acquires her or his social locus in an internally divided society based on conflicting class interests and oppressive relationships. Natural right, which Enlightenment thought eternalized as an invariant suprasocial principle, is reduced to the historically conditioned reality of crass economic power, and the claims of reason are revealed as the instrumental rationality of modern industry, self-interest, and self-preservation in the market place.

But invaluable as these insights may be in demystifying Enlightenment ideology, they mute a more basic human condition that unites all class and materially exploitative societies, and thereby become a source of mystification in their own right. Even more fundamental to class and materially exploitative relations are those modes of coercion that can best be grouped under the broader rubric of hierarchy and domination. For here, history retains not only the core of prehistory from which Marx's theory sought to liberate us in a supreme act of class consciousness, but reconstitutes itself as "natural right" in its most atavistic form. The bourgeois notion of "freedom of opportunity" is permeated by the diffidence and cruelty of "opportunity", the free-fire zone of "catch as catch can". Chance, luck, the accidents of "opportunity" are the crudest realm of animality, not the most sophisticated of humanity, the ramifications of natural selection. Human sociation, however intuitively or imperfectly, was meant to mitigate this animalistic dimension, to diminish the impact of chance, luck and accident. The Hellenic concept of moira embodies not so much a sense of resignation in the face of inexorable destiny as a redemptive hope that order prevailed in the universe, an order that imparted intelligibility to human fortune. Here emerged a sense of self-recognition, indeed of selfhood, that was not totally submerged by cosmic indifference, and here too, a counterposition of the social to the natural, of design to accident, of rationality to purposelessness. It is out of this hope that science fashioned its concept of law, German idealism its notion of transcendental reason and Spirit, Marx his theories of history. The ideological swindle of bourgeois ideology is that its ruthless mentality of "opportunity" was dressed in the liberatory garments of freedom. The incubus in the Enlightenment notion of natural right is this atavistic reach of nature into right, a nature debased by the jungle as a market place and its modus operandi as production for the sake of production.

In this sense, social-Darwinism has long preceded Darwin. Social power reverts to nature - or, at least, the bourgeois conception of nature - by penalizing age, sexuality, race, lineage, and physical weakness. It is no longer enough, however, to elaborate the dialectic, so brilliantly worked out by Horkheimer and Adorno, that relates the natural rights theory of the Enlightenment and of liberalism to the atavistic "naturalism" of fascism. The critical spirit of our times must press still further. Even the equality of unequals which libertarian communism opposes to the bourgeois inequality of equals - a precept which defers to the claims of dependency and differences in individual capacities - retains the stigma of a hierarchical mentality. The very sense of equivalence to which Horkheimer and Adorno have given so much attention is assimilated as liberatory canon in the distribution of social rights and material resources. It is the word "equal" and its antonym, "unequal", that must be placed under theoretical scrutiny if we are to free ourselves from all the connotations of power, of institutionalized forms which place human under the domination of human and arrange their very sense of experience along hierarchical lines. In the last analysis, we will not banish inequality from society until we banish equality from thought.

We live under a conceptual tyranny that always presupposes what it has yet to demonstrate and acknowledges what has yet to be formed. The authority of reason, in this respect, is a form of authority, and even more so, the authority of words. The words "hierarchy" and "domination", in particular, which connote the notion of subjugation, are themselves subjugated words in the sense that their very ubiquity is a product of bourgeois reification. If used co-extensively with the entire world of nature and society, they provide the means for dissolving society into nature and for validating the atavistic "naturalism" of present-day ethological theories of universal domination. If these words are to be liberated - all the more to liberate ourselves from the conditions which they are used to connote - we must begin by imparting to them a stricter social and institutional meaning than they have today.

"Hierarchy" and "domination" in the sense that they prevail in modern society do not exist in the natural world - although, with a certain amount of justification, one can describe parallelisms that might provide the raw material for human aggression. This amounts to saying that, if as human beings we are also animals, it is equally true that animals are not human beings. To the degree that an animal community acquires structure according to forms of pre-eminence in sexual relations and accessibility to

food, "hierarchy" and "domination" range variously from mere individual aggressiveness (a positive value in individual survival) to protection of the community (a positive value in group survival). Indeed, as the latter becomes more notable than the former, as the phylogenetic becomes more conspicuous than the ontogenetic, I would advance the view that the implicit "egotism" we find in animal "hierarchy" gives way to qualities we impute to guardianship. There is a fundamental difference between the pecking order of chickens, which implies little more than the survival of the strongest and most aggressive, and the "hierarchy" in a baboon troop, which forms the structure for a coordinated, mutually protective entity. To the degree that hierarchy does exist in the animal world, it seems to evolve from the survival of the individual to the survival of the group, from the solo to the social, and becomes increasingly diffuse among the hominoid primates. In fact, the dependence between individuals that exists at this nascently social level consists primarily of the dependence of the young on the mother - which forms the basic social unit among all hominoid primates - and secondarily, the dependence of both for guardianship on adult males. Except for the satisfaction of sexual needs, the flow of association converges on the male; the relations are not reciprocal or symmetrical.

With human society, particularly in its early phases, this picture changes fundamentally. The labor process unites both sexes in interdependence; indeed, it demarcates their spheres with remarkable rigor according to a strict sexual division of labor. In most primitive communities, in fact, it is woman who provides the greater amount of food in the course of her collecting activities. Her performance is labor extensive; the male's labor intensive. The significance of this division - and the interdependence it implies - can hardly be overestimated. Less mobile than the male, woman occupies the domestic sphere and man the civil sphere. She manages the material conditions of life and reproduction in which he is merely a participant; he, in turn, supplements this sphere with his hunting, a function of his greater mobility and strength, and guards the community as a whole. To his sphere belongs hunting, ceremonialism and war; to her, the maintenance and reproduction of life.

The essential feature of social life at this level is the pre-eminence of the woman's sphere. Civil society is directly grounded in domestic society. Objectively speaking, society as a whole is matricentric, and not

accidentally its symbolism is centered on powers that are associated with woman. Levi-Strauss misleads us when he argues that patriarchy has no counterpart in matriarchy, for the very essence of this matricentric world is that it vitiates rule as such. Within a realm where rule has not been formed, much less defined, the polarities to which structural anthropology gives such emphasis are simply meaningless. If we must seek polarities, they exist not between patriarchy and matriarchy - one form of rule and another - but between rule and anarchy, between the presence and absence of domination.

Accordingly, we must try to envision a society in which the power of human over human has not yet been constituted, in which a conceptualized mode of sociation has flattened even the impact of animal "hierarchy" and "domination". Here, the relationship of mother to child as expressed in the kinship bond forms the anatomy even of civil society. It is remarkable, in my view, how readily we dismiss the very fact of matrilineality. That men discover their own ties to each other in descent from a common womb; that their most primal social concept is blood, and the blood of the ancestral mother rather than the fresh kill - this prius of conscious sociation is more archetypal than any structural distortions they eventually impose upon it. For the very material of this association bespeaks the relationship of maternal nurture, the affective concerns of care that reveal the most nuclear substance of authentic sociation - a disinterested love that formed and informed society long before humanity became entangled in the equivalences of rights and duties.





Bill Nowlin

# **ANARCHO-FEMINISM AND LOUISE MICHEL**

*MARIAN LEIGHTON*

There is general agreement among women that we have gone about as far as spontaneity and gut level reactions to our oppression can take us. Many women in many groups are self-consciously attempting to develop a well-thought-out and painstakingly analyzed theory of women's oppression, a theory capable of leading the way in developing strategic priorities in the women's struggle. This article is a preliminary offering to relate several aspects of anarchist theory to organizational preferences shown both historically and contemporarily by the women's movement. Secondly, in a brief psycho-social analysis of Louise Michel, an extreme exemplar of women's activism within a particular tradition, a preliminary analysis is presented of how certain characteristics in early childhood sexual/social conditioning work together to create a particular way of relating to and interacting with one's environment.

To date within feminist theory, most work has tended to concentrate upon definition of and analysis of exactly what constitutes women's work, her productive material contributions to society. The principal technique has been the application of and further extensions of Marxist analytical categories, as is to be expected. This is very important work since the bulk of feminist literature has been narrative and descriptive rather than systematically analytical. I think I should make clear at the very beginning that I do not believe the classical Marx/Bakunin or Lenin/Goldman dichotomy applies to the feminist analysis of "women and work." The literature produced thusfar by James, Dalla Costa, Mitchell, and Rowbotham are not narrowly dogmatic or opportunistic in the tradition of Marxist/Leninist/Trotskyist sect groups, rather they are exploratory and utilize Marxist analysis in a way that is creatively consistent with the best and intellectually most rigorous of the Marxist approaches. "To ask feminist questions to receive Marxist answers" is not antithetical, to my way of thinking, to an anarcho-feminist critique of society.

I do feel, however, that in order to develop the most far-reaching and consequently the most transformative feminist theory that it is necessary to develop a technique capable of analysing the psycho-social roots of the female self-image that serves to reinforce political and social inequities. Consistent with this belief the latter analysis of Louise Michel in this article is a modest effort, from a psychoanalytical theoretical perspective partially, in developing such a technique.

A theoretical priority such as development of an analytical method to approach female sexuality and socialization, again, is implied in much of the purely narrative, descriptive, and lyrical literature of women's liberation. Historically, anarchists of the late nineteenth century in particular emphasized the role played by personality, or consciousness, in making or breaking a revolutionary movement. Indeed, this awareness of the built-in destructive potential of the authoritarian personality has been a major motivating force in the anarchist critique of organizational hierarchy, of the "democratic centralist" group structure. However, in the late nineteenth century, anarchists who emphasized the importance of individual personality often came off sounding like "idealistic individualists" since they did not have access to the twentieth century clinically based psychoanalytic theory which potentially provides the needed tool to approach personality motivation and development.

In this country, feminists aware of the anarchist tradition of radicalism early articulated their awareness of certain theoretical and organizational preferences within the women's movement that are clearly anarchist such as preference for the small group structure, distrust of hierarchically organized groups, distrust of leader figures and leadership positions, and an acceptance of federalized group networks, rather than of centralized organizations. (See Sue Katz in the "Furies" an anarchist answer to Rita Mae Brown; Marian Leighton and Cathy Levine, "Blood of the Flower"; and Arlene Meyer, "Siren" for an anarcho-feminist manifesto).

Is radical feminism inherently anarchist in the above terms? Have revolutionary women's organizations a tradition, perhaps even older than we yet know, that emphasizes voluntaristic creation of groups, mutual aid and cooperation among such groups, a stress upon consciousness-raising at the lowest levels of society as the only true prelude to total revolution, federalized distribution of power among neighborhood groups, and a negative valuation of centralized power-

wielding agencies? If such a tradition exists in women's history, from whence arise the psycho-social roots for such a concept of one's position in society? How does this relate to positive or creative leadership roles for individual women in the forefront of theoretical articulation? Most importantly perhaps, how realistic is the anarchist vision of feminists (the oft-repeated criticism of anarchism as beautiful but impossibly utopian)?

In order to provide first steps to answering some of the above questions, I must first make clear what aspects of anarchist theory are particularly applicable to the radical feminist experience and in what areas I feel the anarchist critique offers the most hopeful possibilities in innovative theoretical contributions.

### **THE ANARCHIST TRADITION.**

Before setting out to chart a relationship between revolutionary feminism and anarchism, it is imperative that I attempt to state as succinctly as possible just what the chameleon-like term anarchism, as here used, encompasses. Within the socialist movement, anarchism - as old as Marxism - has always existed as an alternate tradition to authoritarian socialism and its accompanying evils, vanguardist manipulation and pseudo-scientific dogmatism. Generally, the anarchist tradition has stressed the need for the total identification of means with ends. In specific structural terms, the anarchist critique of authoritarian socialist theory has focused upon the incompatibility of vanguard organizations, "revolutionary" leadership organizations with the projected view of a libertarian socialist theory.

Anarchism has always stressed, more than has any other part of the socialist movement, the importance of the coincidence of the "personal" and the "political." Personal consciousness, as part of social and political analysis, is emphasized equally with revolutionary solidarity and struggle. However, simply because of the consistent emphasis on ethical integrity in each "revolutionary" individual's life, the popular misconception that anarchists are out to trash all organizational systems as such is certainly not justified.

Some of the most incisive contributions of anarchist analysis, all the way from the First International, but especially since the Bolshevik period have related to organizational modes. More importantly, many anarchist criticisms of socialist "movement" groups are identical with those made by feminists who have come out of the male-

dominated socialist left. For example, the anarcho-communist Murray Bookchin's characterization of the left seems very relevant to the feminist experience:

*. . . The tragedy of the socialist movement is that, steeped in the past, it uses the methods of domination to try to "liberate" us from material exploitation . . . We are beginning to see that the most advanced form of class consciousness is self-consciousness. The tragedy of the socialist movement is that it opposes class consciousness to self-consciousness and denies the emergence of the self as "individualist" - a self that could yield the most advanced form of collectivity, a collectivity based on self-management.*

p. 13, "Anarchos 4," On Spontaneity and Organization.

To state that, because anarchists have criticized certain structural and organizational choices made by authoritarian socialists, they in general trash all forms of organization and arbitrarily opt for personal solutions to liberation, is both unfair and simplistic. However, because anarchists have stressed both psychological struggle and awareness as well as economic/political analysis, a fairer characterization is that made by Sam Dolgoff in his article "Anarchism and Modern Society" in "Workers' Opposition Magazine."

*While the anarchists never underestimated the great importance of the economic factor in social change, they have nevertheless rejected fanatical economic fatalism. One of the most cogent contributions of anarchism to social theory is the proper emphasis on how political institutions, in turn, mold economic life. Equally significant is the importance attached to the will of man, [sic] his aspirations, the moral factor, and above all, the spirit of revolt in the shaping of human history.*

This latter emphasis, the "spirit of revolt," awakening consciousness or transcendent awareness, accounts in large part for an organic and conceptual link between anarchism and revolutionary feminism.

The anarchist tradition of socialism has been popularly misunderstood as being "unscientific" socialism. However, historically, this

criticism is not terribly justified. Because of the splits between Marx and Bakunin in the First International and disagreement between Goldman, Berkman and Lenin, the differences between anarchists and scientific socialists have usually been overemphasized. But both historically and contemporarily many left-wing anarchists do accept the Marxian technique of class analysis as a basic part of their own radical critique. Anarchists have not, in general, it is true accepted a narrowly determinist function of materialism.

The closeness of the libertarian Marxist and left-wing anarchist traditions is particularly obvious if one looks at the development of mutualism a la Proudhon into anarcho-syndicalism and the base of class analysis within the latter tradition. Today these currents come together in the workers' councilist movement. The reason for mentioning this strong relationship is simply to call attention to the similarities in approach and intellectual method of the Marxist socialist and anarcho-communist as a tentative reply to those who feel anarchism is incomprehensible, confused, unsystematic, a far-left fringe movement, as the most dogmatic of Marxist-Leninists have wished us to believe.

However, it is indeed true that the most influential and creative of anarchists can be differentiated further within the socialist movement than by their non-assent to a narrowly economic determinist viewpoint. They have tended to affirm that without self-consciousness, as a logical concomitant to class-consciousness any revolution will ultimately be a restoration, with new faces in old places. The dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed must not only be comprehended, but transcended, or ultimately it will be perpetuated with a new cast of characters.

Wishing won't stop the vicious circle. Just as the Marxist technique when utilized by a disciplined and committed mind can enable us to form a clear analysis of and concretely based solutions to the economic relationships under capitalism, so, too, there of necessity must be developed a systematic analysis of character and of consciousness and of the ways in which they are projected onto the socio-political environment. The total picture of human life is only comprehended in the interaction of human consciousness and organization of the material world.

### **ANARCHO-FEMINISM.**

Anarcho-feminism, like socialist feminism, as a movement within the larger women's movement has only developed in recent years.

There have always been anarchist women, a few of whom became very well-known and influential, in the male-dominated anarchist movement (analogous to Luxemburg and Zetkin in the male-dominated socialist workers' movement). Unlike this earlier period of "anarcho-feminism" of Louise Michel, Emma Goldman, Marie Louise Berneri, today the anarchist "movement" especially in America is scarcely worthy of the name.

For the most part, "anarchist groups" consist of a few irascible men quarrelling with a few others, or of Wobblies nostalgically recalling the labor union strategies of yesteryear, or of neo-capitalist Randists flailing the air with irrelevant and nit-picking abstractions

Unfortunately, many unfair and inaccurate criticisms of anarchists of earlier periods have become fairly accurate stereotypes for contemporary anarchists, "undisciplined thinkers," "chaotic personalities," "extreme egoists," "opportunistic individualists." In respect to this growth of "in"-group irrelevance, the anarchist movement, such as it is, shares with other male-dominated socialist sectarian groups the distinction of having become havens of arrogant and isolated men prattling their rhetoric for their own dubious benefit. However, this irrelevance is usually even more blatant in the case of anarchist groups which lack even the veneer of pseudo-scientific credibility of their Trotskyist/Leninist/Maoist counterparts in splinterdom.

Even if there were an "anarchist movement," anarcho-feminists belong right where they are, which is with other women. Nor should we delude ourselves about consideration of women's issues in the past of the anarchist movement. Feminist priorities were no more positively received by anarchist men than by any others in over-all male socialist circles (an infamous relationship documented often and well in contemporary works by Rowbotham, Mitchell, Morgan . . .). It is patently untrue that male anarchists usually led lives compatible in practice with the theories, and implications of theories which they originated, Nestor Makhno's rapine practices bearing extreme testimony to this fact.

For current attitudes and responses to feminist issues by anarchist men, the reader is referred to the male/female conflicts in the Social-Revolutionary Anarchist Federation Bull(etin) or to editor Fred Woodworth's myopic and paranoid discussion of possible sexist material in the only regularly-appearing anarchist newspaper "The Match." The

alienating experiences of anarcho-feminists at meetings of the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World) have been recorded in the Social Revolutionary Anarchist Federation Bull(etin) as well as in the "Industrial Worker" itself. Significantly enough, the few constructive male anarchists usually prefer to be active in areas other than the "anarchist movement," but rather look to other emerging groups as embodying truly anarchist priorities. For example, Murray Bookchin strongly emphasizes the radical ecology, "counter-culture," women's and gay movements, while Karl Hess has worked with the draft resistance movement and now with neighborhood controlled, alternate technology systems.

Since anarcho-feminism's primary commitment is and should be made to the radical feminist movement with only marginal participation in anarchist movement politics, does the term "anarcho-feminist" possess any functional significance, or is it only a confusing label laden with semantic difficulties? My own feeling is that the refining distinction from radical feminist to anarcho-feminist is largely that of making a step in self-conscious theoretical development. Having perceived that there are "natural" anarchist tendencies in the women's movement, an anarcho-feminist is one who intellectually identifies with major aspects of the intellectual tradition of anarchist radicalism. If anarchism itself were more well-known as a radical tradition, the term "anarcho-feminist" would be as self-evident as the term Marxist feminist, i.e., one who has chosen to utilize a particular intellectual analytical method to aid in the development of feminist theory and strategy.

There is no question that Marxism is indispensable in articulating any coherent understanding of economic and material interrelationships. However, many materialist theorists have tended to define "matter" itself too narrowly, often defining out of existence many crucial areas of human life, such as consciousness, transformation of values except by manipulating the political/economic environment directly, and the relationship of a society's sexual attitudes and its cultural styles. The anarchist tradition has nowhere been so inhospitable to investigation of these areas. By way of historical example, even in the mid-1940's, leading English anarchists were emphasizing the need to integrate Reichian sexual theory into anarchism, this at a time when Reich's ideas and psychoanalysis in general, were anathema to Marxists and Marxist/Leninists (this is not true of the unorthodox neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School).



While classical anarchists themselves may not have gone much beyond creating a "favorable climate" in which to investigate such areas as subjectivity, they have consistently presented sophisticated criticism of organizational and leadership styles, ideas which have already been of benefit to women's groups in developing an understanding of the importance of small group structures, for example (see Cathy Levine's "The Tyranny of Tyranny," an anarcho-feminist comment on Joreen's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness.").

## **WOMEN AND THE PARIS COMMUNE OF 1871**

**"I have been told that I am an accomplice of the Commune. Certainly. Yes, for the Commune wanted, above all else, the Social Revolution, and the Social Revolution is the dearest of my desires."**

**LOUISE MICHEL.**

At first sight, it may seem problematic to hop from the relationship of anarcho-feminism and feminism generally with parts of the male-dominated left today to activities of women during the Paris Commune. Let's not be too hasty. While the time of this revolutionary situation is separated from us by over a hundred years, there are similar and illustrative difficulties between the relatively autonomous, radical women's organizations and the power-wielding, exclusively male, Commune political structure. Aside from their relationships with the male, revolutionary power body, the women's organizations also are of contemporary relevance in the forms of organizations they chose, the theoretical priorities they pursued, and the means they adopted to achieve their theoretical ends.

There are many historical and revolutionary myths about the Paris Commune of 1871. In its day, it was hailed by both Marxists and anarchists as a beacon bearing great hope for the revolutionary future. In the years following Marx's principal work on the subject, the first laudatory position taken by Marx was somewhat more realistically modified by Engels. After all, the Commune's Central Committee was chiefly composed of latter-day followers of Proudhon, believers in mutual aid associations. Only one or two at most were self-conscious Marxists, or even members of the International Workingmen's Association, for that matter.

In terms of the composition of the elective, guiding body of the Commune, the anarchists would seem to be adequately justified in viewing the Communal experiment as a forerunner of anarchism. This is, indeed, the view taken by both Bakunin and Kropotkin, neither of whom - like Marx - were in Paris. Kropotkin seems to imply that [see end of article for references] the fault in the Commune's not having been more anarchistic in practice lay not with the Commune's elected officials, but with there not existing enough widespread support among the general populace. A look at the activities of the women's groups and the negative attitude of the Commune's male leaders toward the women's activities, unless it directly supported a male's program, would seem to belie Kropotkin's assessment of the lack of well-developed popular support.

A more nearly accurate assessment, historically, of the Commune would probably emphasize the neo-Jacobin appearance of the politics of many of the Central Committee members, that is, a belief in a centralized, elected agency to sit at the helm of instituting a radical democracy. The major reason for the Commune's downfall probably has less to do with mistakes in political theory on the part of the Commune's leaders of the Parisian population, than with the objective facts of the military strength of the opposing forces, the material destitution to which the Parisians were reduced by their military enemy, and the financial impoverishment of the Commune as a government.

The intent of the above statements is not to invalidate the Commune of any revolutionary import, nor to show that late nineteenth century radicals, like Marx, Bakunin, Kropotkin, were idiots in their assessment of the Commune. They were correct in stressing Paris' isolation, geographically/culturally/politically, from the provinces as a major failing of the Commune. Future generations of radicals have discovered also the many, very advanced attempts at workers' councilism and self-management in the Commune. In 1968, French youth, eloquently represented by Cohn-Bendit, attested to the legacy bequeathed them by the Paris Commune of 1871 and added correctly that "the Commune has not been fought alone."

16

I, too, rediscovered the Commune. I rediscovered it in the organi-

zations and activities of countless and nameless Parisian women, many of whom were not only slaughtered by the Versailles forces during that Bloody Week in May, 1871, but who were subjected first to rape, the unique form of male torture of troublesome females. Many of those women had been tireless in working for the Commune, with which many had identified their only hope for a better life. An example of this spirit is found in the following declaration signed by a group of women ambulance workers, in which they refer to themselves in the third person:

*They do not belong to any society whatever, they live only for the revolution; their duty is to tend, on the very field of battle, the wounds made by the poisonous bullets of Versailles and when the hour demands, to take up rifles like everyone else. In the event that, as might happen, reaction is triumphant somewhere, they have the right to set fire to powder; for wherever it may be, the Revolution must not be vanquished. Vive la Commune! (p. 136, Thomas' Women Incendiaries.)*

As had happened in every potentially revolutionary situation in Paris since the French Revolution, women had mobilized themselves for fighting at the barricades, on the battlefields. In addition to the traditionally female roles of nurturant and aid to those dying and those being born, women outfitted themselves in uniforms, formed battalions, and whenever possible sequestered arms for themselves. Louise Michel in her "Memoires" constantly complained of the old rusty weapons with which she was furnished and was overjoyed when finally she was given a new Remington rifle with which to fight.

Women were constantly in the streets, at the very least looking for wood and bread, both of which were the basic necessities of life and which were in short supply because of the Civil War. But all the while they were also making trouble for their enemy, the Versailles government forces. Since the Civil War was fought virtually in the backyards of many Parisians, often whole families, men, women, and children were fighting side by side at the barricades. On March 18, when the bourgeois oppositional government at Versailles sent its forces on an early-morning surprise raid to capture the cannon along the Buttes of Montmartre, women on their way to the bread lines to get food for

their families surprised the soldiers, rushed in with their children amid the soldiers and confounded the venture. Similarly the mass demonstrations in April were primarily attended and enthusiastically carried through by women.

During the evenings, political clubs met in the now-defunct churches and became discussion and energy centers. Many of the leading speakers were associated with their own particular clubs. A few of the clubs were even exclusively comprised of women. To hear reports of the activities of women of the Vigilance Committee of one's own *arrondissement* (a neighborhood, sub-division unit of the city), a woman need only go to the political club in her neighborhood where she would also hear discussed such topics as, "The View of Women Taken by the Church," "Prostitution," "Divorce," "Union Libre," (free union, the substitute form for marriage), or the "Reorganization of Women's Work."

All of life had been taken out of its old static modes; consequently, women's new prominence in the life of their community was rationalized by conservative men as justifiable because of the national emergency. Women were literally everywhere, anywhere they were needed. Tireless workers in the streets during the day, they tirelessly attended their political clubs in the evening. The women's political groups and political clubs were all, in general, very informally constituted. Whenever a group of women felt an organization could meet a particular need they shared, they got together and called themselves a group. The group mode was that of loose organizations, spontaneously and volitionally maintained. Theoretical articulation was not a major priority: rather any problem was approached in a spirit of pragmatism:

*The women didn't ask themselves if a thing were possible, but if it were needed; they they set about accomplishing.*  
*p. 154, Michel*  
*La Commune.*

Both in respect to its centralized organizational structure and its close adherence to Marxism, Elizabeth Dmitrieff's "Union des Femmes" is an exception rather than a typical example of the other numerous women's organizations. Significantly, however, Dmitrieff, represent-

ing the women's section of the International, was appointed by the male Commune leaders to a seat on the former Ministry of Public Works. From this position, Dmitrieff and her group were to be in charge of the total reorganization of women's work in Paris along socialist lines. Before many of this group's actual plans could be implemented, however, the Federal troops had entered Paris and Bloody Week ensued.

While the officially sanctioned projects of the "Union des Femmes" certainly sound impressive, actual experiments in the reorganization of women's work into worker-controlled, profit-sharing localized shops were carried out by various neighborhood women's groups, but with no official aid. For example, Sophie Poirier, wife of one of the arrondissement mayors, cooperated with Louise Michel and a group of neighborhood women in setting up such a cooperative workshop. Nathalie Lemel and E. Varlin (later a member of the Commune) had both been members of the International and had also worked together in the operation of La Marmite, a cooperative soup kitchen for urban laborers.

Another major priority of the radical women's groups was reorganization of the educational system. During the 1860's and during the Commune, several of the leading activists on behalf of women were institutrices by profession, i.e., lower-level elementary schoolteachers. Louise Michel was one such woman, who like many other institutrices had come to Paris from the provinces to obtain work, but also to obtain further education in the exciting educational experiments in which women could participate in the 1860's. These women by and large pioneered whatever radical educational experimentation that occurred. Louise Michel testified in court that she had led her students in the singing of then-radical songs like the "Marseillaise". To appreciate the shock effect of such an admission, one need only be aware that French education at that time was still chiefly in the hands of the Clergy. During the Commune, the radical schoolteachers organized themselves into a union, to be better able to assist and organize radical education projects to take over the now-banned Church schools.

The women's groups, in general, functioned occasionally as mediating organizations between Commune government and populist needs. This had been the principal role of revolutionary clubs and groups in

earlier periods of French revolutionary radicalism, such as the Commune of 1848 and the French Revolution. However, Baron Marc Villiers duTerrage in his book *Histoire de Clubs de Femmes et Legions D'Amazones, 1789-1848-1871* notes that of these three activist periods, women's groups received the least official attention and recognition during the Commune of 1871. In such a position, the Commune's women's groups represented an unofficial, unrecognized revolution in the revolution, often with different priorities and goals from the male-power-wielding group "leading" in "making" the Commune.

Typical of women's preferred agitational mode is the Bread Riot or perhaps their activity on the Buttes of Montmartre against the soldiers: direct action. Further, in the goals and priorities of their groups, they generally favored an activist-pragmatic mentality, as opposed to a theoretical, program-building mentality. Considering their response by the male Commune leaders, the women's groups exhibited a distrust of centralized organizations. Their emphasis was rather upon local community initiative and upon radical education projects and consumer cooperatives at the lowest levels of society. These groups often seem to manifest an experiential affinity on the part of revolutionary feminism for anarchism, but *not* as dogma or a previously developed body of thought, but as a tradition or spirit, the principles of which rest naturally in "each woman's soul."

To make the above picture more comprehensible and explainable, the earlier traditions of female and general populist participation in the French Revolution and the Commune of 1848 can be invoked for perspective's sake. Women and the poorest classes were conspicuous agitational elements in both of these earlier situations. However, especially in the French Revolution, the aspirations and goals of those at the bottom of society coincided only occasionally with the goals of those leading the revolution. Consequently, the voice of the popular masses strengthened the leadership group only irregularly, and principally was manipulated by the leadership. When the women's groups and lower artisan groups became disharmonious with the leadership, their groups were invariably dispersed and imprisoned.

Significantly, in reading of the *sans culottes* during the Revolution, one becomes aware of an unself-conscious, a purely experiential affinity for anarchism on the *sans culottes*' part similar to that demonstrated by the women of The Commune of 1871. (Albert Soboul's *The Sans Culottes*) . Then, too, the popular movement during the French Revolution had tended toward decentralization and local autonomy, a preference for direct control over and recall of elected officers, and equality of rights to the basic necessities of life. The unself-conscious or non-ideological anarchist strain seems to be fairly consistent throughout the most grassroots, most popular protest tradition in the on-going French revolutionary experience.

In some respects, it is possible that the Commune of 1871 provides a transitional link from unself-conscious, non-ideological anarchist strains in the French Revolutionary tradition to a precise, ideological anarchist stance that is of prime importance in the late-nineteenth century development of an anarchist movement. Louise Michel is clearly the crucial spokesperson for this trend.

Before proceeding further with this hypothesis, it is interesting to look at Proudhon's role in this particular anarchist development, especially given the usual view of Proudhon as a forerunner of anarchist thought. Proudhon was also known as the principal disseminator and representative of misogyny in the French radical labor movement. France in the 1860's had seen a tremendous growth of women's groups attempting to better women's educational situation and to combat the ingrained stereotypes of female inferiority. The Norman Mailer of nineteenth century France was unquestionably Proudhon, infamous in feminist history for such quotes as "Women belong in the home, and are physically, intellectually, and morally, men's inferiors." In 1862, Jenny d'Hericourt was motivated to write an entire book *Woman Enfranchised* (not about the vote) in refutation of Proudhon's anti-woman diatribes published in the Parisian popular press. Perhaps it would be too much to attribute the Commune's decidedly anti-female biases and practices to Proudhon. Proudhonian followers, however, gave women no official voice in the Commune government, and granted women no voting rights even in elections of their local *arrondissement* leaders.

Proudhon seems to be the “father” of anarchism, at least of Louise Michel and of the popular anarchism of women’s organizations in only a very limited sense. (His influence was chiefly through the mutual aid associations for male laborers). After the Commune of 1871, several prominent Commune participants did become agitators and spokespeople for European anarchism. They each subsequently attributed their ideological belief in anarchism to the political lessons they learned in the Paris Commune of 1871. Nathalie Lemel, former member of the International and organizer of *Marmite*, was probably the first of these. Louise Michel, in her autobiographical work *La Commune* recalls that Nathalie Lemel first spoke to her of anarchism as they were on the voyage to their common exile in New Caledonia. On the prison island itself, Lemel, Louise Michel, and Chas. Malato, another participant in the Commune, comprised a little anarchist study cell. According to their testimony, their belief in anarchism had only an experiential base in the Commune activities, since they had not at that time been exposed to the writings of Bakunin or Kropotkin. Perhaps needless to say, Lemel and Michel as women activists had few positive associations with Proudhon. Lemel, already an old woman at the time of her condemnation to prison exile, died in captivity. Both Malato and Michel returned to France after the amnesty granted some Communards in the early 1880’s. Malato wrote a great deal on anarchism, some of which is still available in French libertarian circles today. Louise Michel returned to France to agitate and organize as formerly among the Parisian lower classes. Her public charisma subsequently made her name a household word, synonymous with revolt and comradesly love, on the lips of the Parisian poor.

#### LOUISE MICHEL: The Female Revolutionary and the Joan of Arc Stereotype.

By looking at the life and self-avowed motivations of Louise Michel, an attempt is here made to understand in psycho-social terms a neglected type of historical female revolutionary style. Principally, in recent works in women’s history, three “types” have received the bulk of investigation



and attention: suffrage pioneers, important socialist theorists, and spokeswomen for new lifestyles (sexual liberation, alternatives to institutional family, etc.).

Yet the "ministering angel" role of women's activism has not been dealt with, aside from middle and upper class social workers like Jane Addams or Florence Nightingale. However, even in radical and socialist movements, the motivations of many charismatic women speakers and writers seem to have been of an extremely self-sacrificial nature. It is important to recall that Victorian and late-Victorian female socialization was extremely imbued with religious expression and image. Much of the religious imagery, combined with other factors of self-perception rooted in Victorian female childhood socialization, created the mentality of the Joan of Arc style revolutionary.

Louise Michel's charismatic style is an extreme of this type of female activism. Much of the strength of her appeal to other revolutionaries and to the Parisian poor rests upon her total identification with and embodiment of "La Vierge Rouge" (The Red Virgin) as she was popularly called. Not only was Louise Michel an extreme exemplar of this development in her self-image and her identification of self with the Social Revolution, but also in her later conscious articulation of and adherence to the ideology of anarchism. Anarchism often varies slightly in emphasis from individual theorist to individual theorist. This is particularly true in Louise Michel's case, not necessarily in differences of stated "doctrine," but in her own relationship with her ideology.

Before suggesting possible important implications of Louise Michel's life for feminists today, let us regard the genesis and development of her place in women's history. Interestingly, Louise Michel was probably the best-known, popular speaker on socialism and anarchist socialism during the 1880's and 1890's, until her death in 1905. Through her speaking missions, she reached literally hundreds of thousands of French and English people, introducing them to socialism. Attended by hundreds of thousands of Parisian poor, her funeral in 1905, was the second largest in French history until that time, second only to Victor Hugo. Yet today, since her approach to the world often seems

so melodramatic to the modern mind and since male socialist historians are usually more impressed by vast bodies of theoretical quibbling than with actual relationships with the oppressed, she is virtually unheard of.

Like many of her female counterparts and contemporaries, Louise Michel often seems more like a pious nun than an "emancipated woman," as currently defined. Pauline Roland (a Commune of 1848), Nathalie Lemel (also a fighter with Michel in the 1871 Commune) and Louise Michel identified themselves rigorously with their cause, and refused to distinguish their public lives from their private lives. Devotion to the people, extreme physical deprivation, sexual asceticism and moralism, and humble and quiet lives (often as "spinsters") were not atypical of such nun-like revolutionaries. These women's lives were marked not only by selflessness, but by a belief in transcending "realistic" existence to the level of becoming a symbol. Yet they also displayed a marked disdain for wielding power in the ordinary political sense, and displayed a decided propensity for visions which transport one to an ethereal/inspirational plane in which one obtains her understanding of the pure meaning of revolution. In many instances, their conscious ideal for emulation was based upon Joan of Arc, Jesus Christ, or - as in Louise Michel's case - upon ancient warrior maidens and Gallic druidesses who helped overthrow the Roman invaders of Gaul by primitive physical prowess and supernatural wisdom.

Whereas the male radical tradition in nineteenth century France was often dominated in word, spirit, and deed by extreme rationalism that cuts to the very roots of the church's influence on the lives of churchgoers, women revolutionary leaders embody a new kind of spiritual body which tends to be self-consciously transcendent, verging on mystical, in character. While the women too, may verbally subscribe to the materialist, rationalist, and positivist tradition that was considered radical in this time, the evidence from their lives, their manifestoes and writings bring new elements into play, elements which differ substantively from the dominant threads in the male radical tradition. Hypotheses will be suggested later as to the differing elements in female/male socialization which contribute to formation of such diverse female/male revolutionary types and what the ideological and strategic implications of these differing self-images may be.

Louise Michel's radical activities did not begin until she was forty-one years old during the Paris Commune of 1871, which she always considered the turning-point in her life. Just prior to that time, she was merely another *institutrice*, spinster elementary school teacher in Paris. True, she had been involved in various radical organizations and intellectually radical groups in the 1860's, but then again she had also sung fairly regularly in the choir in her local Catholic Church, up until the Commune when she verbally became violently anti-clerical like most other Communards. However, never literally dogmatic or ideological, her change of heart seems entirely believable and sincere.

Paris was a great change from the environment of her childhood in the provinces north of Paris. She was born as the illegitimate child of the servant in a family of rural nobility. She was educated and raised as part of the family, a not uncommon occurrence if the father or son were implicated in the servant child's paternity. For many years, the future Louise Michel was called Louise deMahis, the family name of the household where Louise's mother Marianne served. Louise and her mother remained with the deMahis' until the death of the head of the family and the selling of the estate, at which time the old family servant and her illegitimate child went away to Paris. There Louise's exceptional education in music, the arts, and literature stood her in good stead in supporting the two of them by teaching jobs.

In spite of differences in ideology when Louise became a radical, Louise remained with her mother, caring for her, worrying about her, until her mother's death while Louise was imprisoned in the 1880's. Later in life, Louise's only companions were devoted women friends. As a schoolteacher, she often lived with other women teachers when she first left her childhood home. In later years, after her mother's death, she lived with various other, younger women like Marie Ferre, the younger sister of Louise's martyred, fellow Commune Theophile Ferre. Never did she experience similar intimate and caring relationships with men.

All her experiences with men seem to have been totally idealized, her inspirational poetic muse from adolescence having been Victor Hugo, who in return idealized her and immortalized her in a poem of tribute. She en-

joyed similar relationships with prominent radicals or men of letters like Kropotkin and Henri de Rochefort. It seems entirely unlikely that these contacts, which were the source of much of her creative energy, were ever complicated by actual physical contact.

Indeed, she was as much idealized by men of letters, as she idealized them. Poems of tribute were written about her bravery not only by Hugo, but also by the poets Verlaine and Rimbaud. Interestingly enough, even a rightist and nationalist like Maurice Barres, too, was devoted to Louise, or at least to what she represented in French history . . . "she is a saint, she has the divine fire (*la flamme*). "

Her sexual asceticism (for which there are also obvious social reasons such as the total unavailability of contraceptives and societal taboos on female sexuality) made her even more the ministering angel, the *soeur de charite*, which was still such a powerful symbol in a very much Catholic-influenced nineteenth century France. Even among anti-clerical radical men, the image of the selfless and sexless woman who was everywhere and willing to help everyone was thoroughly praiseworthy and truly ideal. Their anti-clericalism did not cause radical socialist males to allow ex-prostitute volunteers instead of their nun-like counterparts, as nurses on the field of battle. The male attitude toward the "ideal woman" is demonstrated in the following quote referring to the Commune of 1871. Fortunately, the women did not worship pedestalized, male-honored, notions of purity.

*What was to become of these prostitutes who could no longer ply their trade? It was banned. Some of them turned up at the Hotel de Ville asking to be allowed to care for the injured. They were refused this honor, for, Louise Michel noted, the men of the Commune wanted pure hands tending the Federals. But for Louise Michel, these women, the victims of poverty and of society, had a right to their place in the new world which was being born, and which ought to reject any moral condemnation.*

*p. 107, Thomas. Women Incendiaries.*

Once the Commune had been declared, Louise Michel found her element. During the Commune, she was literally tireless, usually not going home or sleeping for days on end. She attended meetings of many organizations, working with all people, committing herself to helping others, all the while carefully transcending identification with any particular group. To have been a partisan of one particular organization would have been inimical to her style, her own ideology at that time being very amorphous and vague if judged in terms of traditional intellectual development.

Constantly during March-May 1871, until the Commune was finally defeated by the Versailles forces, Louise lived with the threat of death looking over her shoulder, often consciously seeking to expose herself to the most dangerous extremities. She gathered up the wounded and bandaged them on the battlefield . . . she went under fire to rescue a cat . . . under fire also, she read Baudelaire with a student . . . near a barricade, she played the harmonium in a Protestant church at Neuilly.

During one night of heavy fighting, she paid a midnight visit to the grave of a former close woman friend at a cemetery on the heights outside of Paris. Vividly she later described the extraordinary event in a letter to her fellow Communard, Theophile Ferre'. She had felt there in the cemetery the presence of her old friend, as if distinctions between life and death no longer had any meaning, as if she had perceived a timelessness of the moment, wherein past, present, and future merged. She had experienced life on another plane. Only one other time does she record a similar transcendent experience and that was in extreme old age, after she was found by an assassin's bullet and believed herself to be resting on her deathbed.

Louise Michel's revolutionary mystique should not be dismissed as atypical of the examples of other women leaders of the Commune. Louise Michel, thoroughly steeped in the phantasmagoria of the French romantic tradition and a tremendously imaginative poet and novelist in her own right, obviously was more conscious of living through a certain image or mystique than many other women were. But even here one cannot be

led to depict her as a “phony” or a “crackpot;” her mystique was her life and inspiration. Other Communardes cut similar sorts of figures. One reads of fiery women, attired in traditional French revolutionary costume replete with red sashes, rising to orate furiously in the political clubs; of Beatrix Excoffon determinedly confronting the enemy with a red flag as she marched to aid the wounded on the field of battle.

During the confusion of Bloody Week, May 1871, which saw the final slaughter of the Communards by the Versaillese troops of the Third Republic, Marianne Michel was arrested and was to be shot in her daughter’s stead. Louise rushed to the detention center, barely saving her mother’s life. Two trials followed, before Louise was finally sentenced to exile in New Caledonia for her role in the Paris Commune.

All of Louise Michel’s later life, from her exile at age forty-one until her death at the old age of seventy-five is deeply colored by her involvement in the Commune. Thereafter, she believed herself to embody the Social Revolution and behaved accordingly, living always in utter material deprivation on what little she could borrow from old friends or earn by her writing and speaking engagements, most of which she gave away.



Her ideology, loosely described as anarchism, was largely defined during her years in exile. Here again, she always stated that her belief in anarchism was the result of her personal political experiences. Louise Michel’s relationship to her ideology was a total one; it could brook no hypocrisy in her personal life nor any compromise with alternate political modes.

In some respects, Louise Michel's representational relationship with her ideology, colored the very nature of the ideology itself. While absolutely intolerant of reformist groups and reformist political measures, (she refused nomination by a women's group to run for political office because she believed that electoral reform could not promote or aid in making a thorough-going revolution) she was nonetheless dogmatic only in the sense that the "dream," the new world, the Social Revolution must never be compromised. Destruction of the old order must be complete in order to allow for total construction of the new. But on the other hand, obscure, theoretical discussions or implications of her ideology did not interest her.

Louise Michel's anarchism was a non-dogmatic radical ideology in that, for all its emphasis on the principles of decentralization, anti-Statism, and anti-authoritarianism, it was never intellectually dogmatic to the extent that it could statically impose itself upon a popular uprising with emergent radical implications. As during the Commune, there was no distinction between her life, needs, and emotions, and the lives, needs, and emotions of those oppressed around her, whom her ideology served.

Clarification of the type of revolutionary "prophet" of which Louise Michel is an extreme embodiment is aided by an example quoted by Mary Daly in her recent book. The original concept was formulated by Max Weber. Like Mary Daly, I am using Weber's polar concepts of religious prophets by extrapolation to "prophets" of revolutionary movements. (pp. 165-167, *Beyond God the Father*). Weber's two types are delineated by the terms "ethical" and "exemplary." In the former instance, the person sees himself as the *instrument* of a higher objectivity, need not be sanctified, and legitimates his dogma by reference to gods standing "outside" and "above," who are "objective" and know what is best for the world. Weber emphasizes that the "ethically-based" type generates by its very nature, hierarchy and that it, as a matter of course, imposes upon its adherents a sense of motivation based upon "duty."

The "exemplary" type of prophet/revolutionary possesses the self-

image of a vessel. The prophet/revolutionary herself shows a relationship of total identification with the message she bears to the world. By participating in her message and inviting others to do so, she becomes the personification of the charisma of her ideal. Obviously, in this instance, it is crucial for the prophet to strive to be as "pure," i.e., consistent, non-hypocritical, as her radical message of apocalypse for the world. While hierarchy and authoritarianism are the negative implications of the "ethical" type, the latter "exemplary" vessel has the negative implications of elitist escapism into the cultish non-reality of an isolated Utopia.

It is no doubt obvious by now that Louise Michel is here identified with the "exemplary" prophetic type, i.e., the prophet as "example" of the ideology she professes. While, thusfar, there are but limited secondary historical works on the Joan of Arc image of women's social activism, in women's history there are numerous other examples besides Louise Michel.

If explored no further, Weber's polar concepts of prophets which I have extrapolated to male/female conceptual poles, may seem unacceptably deterministic or, at least, static. However, these concepts can be a further aid to enlightenment if informed by the differing realities of male/female experiences in childhood socialization. Clearly, male children are led to believe by mothers and fathers that they will grow up to become productive, participating members of society. It is also clear that female children receive signals early that their aggressive or externalized behavior is not valuable or well-received by society. Having learned from her tenderest years that hers is a domain "inside," inside a family, inside a house, inside a body, it is not surprising that a woman should come to see herself as a "vessel." In Victorian times, when societal proscriptions were even more stringent regarding woman's external behavior, it is not surprising that one's relationship with her ideology would be viewed in terms of "service," rather than "recruitment" or "hustling" (terms of the male revolutionary).

In the Victorian period, the values of the religious establishment were ingrained in a female's self-image almost from birth. As in the Victorian "respectable classes," religion was the great educator, so today the values



of the psychoanalytic establishment, the new priesthood, operate as the dominant socializing force upon middle and upper middle class women of the West. In both instances, society encouraged a feminine core personality to be constructed upon passivity, narcissism, and masochism, qualities viewed very negatively if possessed by "patriarchs" themselves.

Yet many outstanding Victorian women were able to become extremely productive and creative members of society by variously balancing feminine personality components usually judged only negatively by society. For example, to relate to the world and to one's ideology as a "vessel" is not tremendously different from the way a traditional mother might relate to her offspring. Furthermore, the narcissism of total identification of self with one's beliefs is quite apparent. It is further true that Louise Michel was terribly masochistic in service to her ideology and to disadvantaged people around her.

The point which is here emphasized is that I am in no way belittling or trivializing Louise Michel's place in women's history. Her contributions to society and her vision of a new society are tremendously important in women's history, in libertarian socialist history, and in French Revolutionary history. However, I am affirming that Louise Michel's greatness, is, so to speak, the potential greatness of Everywoman. The male historical school of the "Great Man" has emphasized the distance from the experience of the Man in the Street to the Great Male Leader. Further, male historians often tend to have us believe that Great Women possess unique, mysterious, male-affirmed qualities that consequently separate them from the rest of the hysterical, masochistic, narcissistic, and passive women of their age. By implication they say: emulate and strive for male qualities of strength and you will be a Great Woman. In opposition, it seems that Great Women, while different from Everywoman in their unusually important social, political, or intellectual achievements, have not always achieved this greatness by attempted "masculinization," but often by extreme female psychological qualities.

Lest it appear that I am simply playing "Female Chauvinist" advocate of the need to perpetuate all female qualities traditionally considered

negative, it must be added - and quickly - that this is not my intent. Juliet Mitchell is absolutely correct in her assertion that women must recognize the extent to which they have become their own enemy by internalization of oppression into becoming small-minded, jealous, petty, backbiting creatures. But, the same oppressive personality components which have encouraged in women the above self-destructive qualities have also, when balanced out in other peculiar ways, led to women's greatest achievements for herself, other women, and her society. Thus, in a very basic psychological sense, women often possess within themselves the positive solution to the problem which they represent.

In summary, the richness and intensity of female internalized activity (fostered at an early age by societal proscriptions or discouragement of externalized behavior allowed or encouraged in male children) has at certain times in history led women to perceive their own self-image within the body social in terms very disparate from that of their male revolutionary counterparts. Louise Michel is an extreme example of the female "transcendent" revolutionary type. Her self-image of identification of herself as inseparable from her ideology further extends to the political beliefs to which she self-consciously adhered later in life after the Commune, i.e., anarchism.

In politics, the identification of self with one's beliefs is intellectually compatible only with an ideology that affirms the unity of means with ends. Thus, after the Commune, Michel came to believe that no hierarchical or dominating political structures as a means could be compatible, even during a transitional or crisis stage, with a totally liberatory, revolutionary end. Her own concept of legitimate political theory for revolution could be only that of a non-dogmatic type. Theory was rooted in historical situations and could only legitimately aid in the birth of revolution if it emerged and evolved in a popularly-created and perpetuated rebellion.

Consistent with Louise Michel's anarchism, the only authentic revolutionary leader must be one whose life is one with her ideology and one

with those people whose needs her ideology purportedly serves. The comparatively greater psychic energy at women's disposal, caused by the comparatively greater intensity of feminine internal activity, has allowed women revolutionaries of the "Joan of Arc" type greater imaginativeness and greater creativity in outlining a multi-dimensional relationship with the world, as well as multi-dimensional ideologies to explain this relationship. Implied in, or maybe inherent in, the female revolutionary's approach to her ideology and revolution is the necessity for a more subtle awareness of, and acting upon, different facets of interrelationships, both societal and personal, which often do not seem immediately definable in traditional male, narrowly rational, linear perceptions of the world.

## CONCLUSION.

From conditioning in youngest years, women ultimately have interpreted their place in the world and their relationship to the world, differently from men. Early differences in socialization have led to great disparity in the radicalizing experiences of male, as differentiated from female, revolutionaries. Basically, this has resulted in problems and contradictions in male-defined and male-developed ideologies' ability even to comprehend the female revolutionary experience. This is one factor perhaps for the relative lack of attention given to women like Louise Michel or Pauline Roland (a similar figure in 1848's Commune).

It is generally agreed in the radical women's movement of today that the fullness of women's liberation cannot be achieved without a total revolutionization of the present forms of organizing the material world, politically, economically, and socially. Beyond this, however, the very basis of participation - an experiential rather than utilitarian basis for participation - in the radical women's movement further implies the shattering of various psychic bonds with which the patriarchal worldview has shackled us.

Murray Bookchin, in an article "On Spontaneity and Organization," (*Anarchos No. 4*, pp. 10, 14), has discussed the anachronistic existence of the left today as embodying a "dominating" approach to and relationship

with the world. This is precisely the point at which male radical ideology had failed to comprehend the experience of women radicals like Louise Michel. The principal themes of Weber's "ethical" or male revolutionary/prophetic type is authority, objectivity, domination, and ultimately hierarchical institutionalized authority. The female radical experience, as represented by Michel, is one of mutual aid, of compassionate identification and nurturance in the path of revolutionary development. In the following quote from the above-mentioned Bookchin article, his vision for anarchism coincides well with that of Louise Michel herself:

*. . . there is much that requires transforming - not only in social views and personal attitudes, but in the very way "revolutionaries" (especially male "revolutionaries") interpret experience . . . Western selfhood, certainly in its male forms, is a selfhood of appropriation and manipulation in its very self-definition and definition of relationships. . . . The dialectic we seek [as anarchists] is neither a Promethean will that posits the "other" antagonistically nor a passivity that receives phenomena in repose. . . . Thus, the dialectic we seek is an unceasing but gentle transcendence that finds its most human expression in art and play . . ., not in the bestialized "other" of toil and domination.*

Ultimately, the radical feminist vision will mean the spiritualization of all of life and all of life's interrelationships. Spiritualization, as a restoration of the organic and cooperative relationships between people and people, and between people and their environment is not an equation for mystification or vulgarized and other-worldly "mysticism," but represents instead an affirmation of the "here and now," of this world, and of our rightful place in this world.

Perception of the new spiritual possibilities has inspired much recent writing in the American women's movement. Jane Alpert's article "Mother Right," for all its deficiencies, contained a basic truism of women's movement:

*The changes which it [the women's movement] will embody can perhaps be better imagined as primarily religious and spiritual, rather than economic and social, though they include and embody the latter. Thus a better analogy than the Cuban or Chinese revolutions might be the Reformation or the Christian revolution, or perhaps the revolution made by the patriarchy itself when the ancient gynocracies were invaded.*

*. . . Because the women's movement gets lumped together with the Left in many people's minds, it is mistakenly regarded as narrowly "political." Yet feminism concerns more than political power, essential as that is. It is closely tied to theories of awakening consciousness, of creation and rebirth, and of the essential oneness of the Universe.*

*-p. 94, MS. August, 1973.*

Mary Daly's most recent book *Beyond God the Father* is a very important articulation of the psychic/spiritual/cosmic implications of women's liberation, unquestionably the definitive and most thorough work of its type, to date.

Much of the incompatibility with and incomprehension of woman's radical consciousness by male radical ideologies historically has its source in the very base of women's politics: the "personal as political" and the "political as personal." Somehow, whenever men attempt to comprehend this reality, it is articulated in a dichotomized state as sheer egotism or self-effacing martyrdom. While the contributions of many socialist women like Louise Michel did not tend to concentrate upon theory innovation and development as principal priority in its own right, their contributions are of a less recognized, but equally valuable, sort: chiefly of devotion and service to the needs of the "real" people around them. Their own attitudes toward their ideology was such that its activist expression was oriented toward moving with - "flowing with" - the most positive and far-reaching elements of the revolutionary tide, rather than maintaining an ideological separateness in order to stem, direct, or in any way manipulate this tide. Thus, their organizations were created by the revolution, rather than the dominative reverse of the organisation attempting to create the Revolution.

Clearly today, it is the task of radical feminists themselves to search for, to articulate, and to evolve an on-going theory that will discuss the organizational, strategic, and cultural forms that are consistent with the realities of radical feminist experiences. In the life and work of Louise Michel, several positive statements are made for the potentially constructive integration of anarchism, as a compatible theoretical orientation, with feminist theory.

#### NOTES FOR BACKGROUND READING.

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Edith Thomas, Louise Michel: La Valleda de l'Anarchie.

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##### PSYCHOLOGY AND WOMEN:

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Helene Deutsch, Psychology of Women, Vol. 1.

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Juliet Mitchell, Women's Estate.

Nancy Roelker, "The Appeal of Calvinism to French Noblewomen in the Sixteenth Century," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, II, 4, Spring 1972.

Special thanks to the Centre Internationale des Recherches sur l'Anarchisme, Lausanne, Switzerland, in aiding us in finding a copy of Louise Michel's "Comment je suis devenue anarchiste" in Libertaire, 15 January 1896. They were able finally to locate it through their Toulouse annex.

Mention also deserves to be made of many long and exciting conversations between Betsy Warrior and myself, which contained much of the substance of what became this article. For two years we have shared many of these ideas.

I became an anarchist when we were exiled to New Caledonia for our activities in the Paris Commune. On the State's ships, we were sent with afflictive and defamatory condemnations, to which we were absolutely indifferent, having seen that, obeying our consciences, we would have been criminals to behave otherwise than we did: rather we reproach ourselves for not being more vengeful; sorrow in certain circumstances is treason.

Always, in order to bring us to repentance for having fought for liberty, and for protection against such "great malefactors" as us, we were put into cages like lions or tigers.

For four months on the ship, we could see nothing but sky and water and occasionally the white sail of a boat, like a bird's wing, on the horizon - that impression of flatness was startling. There, we had all the time in the world to think, rocked by the gentle rhythm of the waves, being lifted infinitely into the distance or expelled all at once to the immense depths, the shrill whistling of the wind in the sails, the vessel groaning under the swells; there we were like servants to the elements and the Idea was magnified.

Eh bien! - the force of comparing things, events, men . . . Having seen our friends in the Commune energetically throwing their lives away, so honest and so fearful of not being adequate to their tasks, I rapidly came to be convinced that honest people in power will be as incapable there as the dishonest are harmful and that it is impossible for liberty ever to be allied with any power whatever.

I felt that a revolution forming any government whatever was inconsistent, that it does not open all the doors to progress, and that the institutions of the past, which seemed to disappear, actually remained under changed names. Forged in the chains of the old world, these institutions form a single bloc which must disappear entirely to make way for a new world, happy and free, under the heavens.

I saw that the laws of attraction which endlessly carry countless spheres toward new suns between the two eternities of the past and of the future, also preside in the destinies of human beings in the eternal progress which attracts them toward a true ideal, ever changing and growing. I am then an anarchist because only anarchy means the happiness of humanity. In working for the ultimate good, the highest idea which can be comprehended by human rationality is anarchy.

For to the measure in which ages will pass, progress as yet unknown will follow. Is it not common knowledge that what appears as utopia for one or two generations will be reality to the third generation?

Only anarchy can render man ethically aware, since only anarchy can make him totally free. Anarchy therefore means the complete separation from the hordes of the enslaved and true humanity. For every man participating in power, the state is like the bone upon which the dog gnaws, and it is for this reason that he defends the state's power.

If power makes one ferocious, egotistical, and cruel, servitude is equally degrading; anarchy then will mean the end of the horrible misery in which the human race has always languished; anarchy alone will not become a recommencement of the old suffering. More and more, it attracts hearts tempered for the battle for truth and justice.

Humanity wishes to live and adhere to anarchy in the struggle against despair which it must engage in order to leave the abyss, this struggle is the harshness risen from the rocks below; any other idea seems like tumbledown stones and uprooted weeds. We must fight not only with courage, but also with logic. It is time that the true ideal, which is greater and more beautiful than all the fictions which preceded it, should be shown prominently enough for the disinherited masses no longer to shed their blood for deceptive chimeras.

This is why I am an anarchist.

your mouth could open  
to eat a turtle  
whole

and you could grin  
slyly  
running your tongue

over your lips  
as the turtle  
would sink  
to your belly

you could swallow  
the shell  
the slow pace  
the short broad legs  
the thick fleshy head  
you could swallow this slow stunted creature

and then  
you could grin

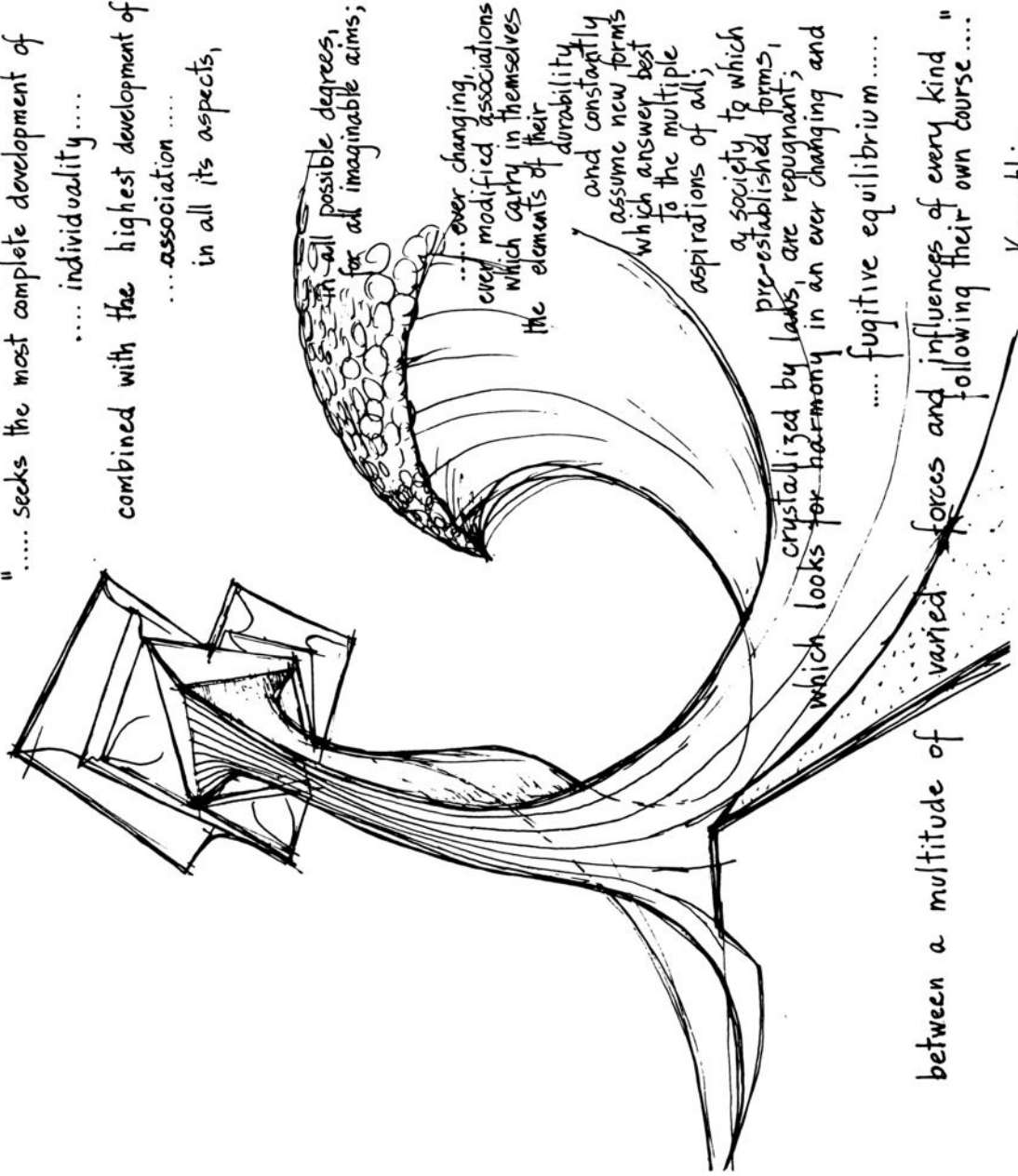
and then  
you could lift your skirts  
squat to the ground  
relieve yourself of your heritage

and as you were rising  
the tower could buckle with hiccups  
the javelin could turn inside out  
to reveal an inner pocket  
gold rings leap!  
carports collapse!  
aprons and purses tumble hysterically  
over streets to their deaths  
the sun emits sighs and moans  
and the moon would rise and rise and rise

*GEORGE THERESE DICKENSON*



" ..... seeks the most complete development of  
..... individuality .....  
combined with the highest development of  
..... association .....  
in all its aspects,



..... in all possible degrees,  
for all imaginable aims;

..... ever changing,  
ever modified associations  
which carry in themselves  
the elements of their  
durability  
and constantly  
assume new forms  
which answer best  
to the multiple  
aspirations of all;

..... a society to which  
pre-established forms,  
which look for harmony in an ever changing and  
fugitive equilibrium.....

between a multitude of varied forces and influences of every kind "

Kropotkin

# ANARCHIST PLANNING

DAVID DOBEREINER

I assume readers accept the need for world revolution to end capitalism.

But revolution is not to be taken lightly. The twentieth century has seen many revolutions that have failed and none that from the anarchist perspective can be considered an unqualified success in so far that each one has resulted in a reconstitution of a form of state power.

*Don't you want to abolish state power? Yes, we do but not right now, we cannot do it yet.*

*Mao tse Tung.*

Capitalists use economic means and governments use legal means to accomplish the same ends: the expansion and consolidation of their own ill-gotten *power*. Both deprive the 'have nots' of their freedom and both are backed by the violent sanctions of police and army. Any revolution that ends up with a state system has not really ended though it may have made a radical breakthrough *towards* its end. Anarchists should not take refuge in the undeniable fact that all true revolutions are originally anarchist in spirit and have been co-opted by authoritarian groups as they proceed. It is imperative to know the *reason* this happened so as to avoid this direction decisively in the future.

What keeps going wrong?

This question must be correctly answered *before* the next conflagration for it just might be the final, global one so often vainly predicted.

I believe a large part of the answer lies in two main areas:

- 1) Unconscious psychological pre-conditioning to hierarchical modes, deeply imbedded in the language, thought processes

and cultural inheritance: an accompanying irrational terror in the absence of these modes.

- 2) Theoretical contradictions within the anarchist tradition itself arising from 1).

It is the second area that will be discussed in this paper.

### Theoretical Contradictions

The first contradiction concerns the need to preserve existing expertise. How can this be reconciled with the equally strong need to destroy the elitism of existing institutions (universities, professions, associations, etc.) which at present control this knowledge? Asked another way how can we retain the authority of science without the authority of the scientist? What typically happens in revolutions is that form is confused with content and both are at first half destroyed and then, with desperation, resurrected. Anarchists value freedom, spontaneity, equality, the power of liberated energy, job rotation, small group autonomy with small scale industry, organic farming, etc. Such values are usually considered to be in conflict with specialization. But in *developed* countries expertise may be even more necessary after a revolution than before. In America, for example, even 'small scale industry' will require all the knowledge of the specialists and more (because it will have to be re-invented in a completely new, automated way) if it is to support today's populations comfortably and with surplus leisure time. And that should be only the beginning of what we have a right to expect for the world's population, liberated.

Another aspect of the same contradiction concerns centralization, discipline, and hierarchy. Franz Borkenau has it that:

*Centralization and discipline are elements of modern life, most needed in moments of acute crisis. It is the basic weakness of the anarchists not to understand this . . .*

Anarchists believe on the contrary that de-centralization and individual autonomy are elements of life pre-requisite to any true humanism. It is the basic *strength* of the anarchists to understand this.

Post-scarcity anarchy, as adumbrated by Murray Bookchin, will aim to simplify the range of products, reduce the scale of industry, shorten the lines of distribution, and seek local self-sufficiency as far as possible. On the other hand, to do so harmoniously will require an automated, electronic global communications network to monitor population and resour-

ces and thus to advise communities of recommended policies with regard to their local economic development.

Such concepts are not science fiction. They are realizable with today's technology, but not with today's politico-economic institutions. The relevant model for long term survival is 'network', not 'hierarchy'. Present day TV networks are good examples of hierarchy *not* 'networks'. (Post-revolutionary TV networks will be equipped with as many transmitters as receivers and virtually infinite 'memories'.) Although global, *such structures are not centralized*. But does a problem arise when we consider the many specialists such systems will require to design, construct, maintain, repair and revise them? What will prevent them becoming a special class of workers with the rest of society becoming drones? What will protect the revolution from the emergence of a new ruling class?

Potentially we can see work for a few chosen specially trained initiates; the specter of a new class vested with enormous power, for, like the priesthood of ancient Egypt, they would be able to claim possession of secret knowledge vital to the ecological ordering of the globe. Such a technology may not be so very remote a prospect. We already see signs suggestive of such an elite forming in and around our major universities.

It is worth asking the question: *How does anarchist theory reconcile its insistence on equality and freedom, which implies the removal of scarcity through the full exploitation of technical means, with the need for specialized knowledge of those means?*

### The Specialist

We have already referred to the values prevalent in the kind of society an anarchist might project. The future specialist in global information networks does not sit happily in this projection. We will now consider how this traditional anarchist view may need updating.

It will never be easy, in the heat of revolt especially, to draw fundamental distinctions between those exploiters (managers and capitalists) who will *claim* to possess irreplaceable skills and those professionals who actually *do* possess them. The former in reality will have known only how to promote their own interests whereas the latter will be definitely needed in the service of the people.

Theoretically an anarchist world society would be able to free so much latent creative energy through the appropriation of machine technology

in the service of humanity and through the total elimination of the wasteful products of militarism, nationalism and other status drives, competition, etc., that everyone who desired any specialized knowledge could and would easily acquire it. Then we would see close-knit, happy, carefree, sexually uninhibited, life-oriented communities composed of individuals freed from all onerous work, enjoying different (specialized) activities out of those particular pursuits. Some of these will be useless, some culturally enriching, a few necessary, and one or two absolutely vital but none will require much of each individual's time and none will be done under coercion (that would imply a boring, repetitive or unpleasant task for which a machine would have been invented by then.) In such a world who would want to, or need to, or be allowed to seize 'power'? Consequently, the problem of the specialist does not loom large in the *climax* condition of human development.

Basically, by then, specialized knowledge will be diffused amongst a great number of people and open to all the rest. The economy will allow everyone who wants to become a specialist to do so. Specialized knowledge will no longer be a privilege. But what about earlier stages of development, for example, the present moment?

### **The Radical Specialist Today**

Having attempted to sketch the *future* resolution of the problem, what could be the *present policy* to achieve it?

Youthful dissenters tried violence in the 60's and achieved little beyond some mitigation of the U.S. rape of Indo-China. Many are now, perforce, 'working within the system' in various ways, some through electoral politics, others through experimentation with personal life styles and efforts at consciousness expansion. Whilst generally these latter manifestations are the domain of white middle and upper class youth, the ruling class does not yet seem to feel threatened by the playful antics of its children. This is one advantage that radicals have in being allowed some freedom to experiment. The fact that these experiments increasingly stress the need to set up alternate *economic* institutions means that in the long run they may be significant as models to be reproduced on a large scale at some appropriate later date.

For example, groups like New Town in the Boston area, which is at present merging with Alternate Communities, a nationally based counterpart, is hoping to found a completely new community based on its own organic farming and non-exploitative, ecologically sound industry. All

property will be community owned and administered; communal living will be fostered but not to the exclusion of nuclear families for those who want them. Such new social organisms are particularly important from the point of view of evolving new relationships between specialists and generalists, scientists and artists, 'privileged' work and labor, and the provision of material and spiritual necessities. Clearly such microcosms of a new society require a variety of specialists; the broader a cross section of skills they have, the less dependent on the 'outside' they can hope to be. These are not rural utopianists. They seek to found a *town*, rejecting the evils of present day city life but by no means renouncing the most sophisticated technologies to lighten toil and promote health and fulfillment. For this innovative work, what is called for is not merely specialists but the very best creative thinkers in every field, only those dedicated to the promotion of community spirit, cooperation, and true freedom and true equality - that is to say, anarchists.

I am associated with this particular group as active member, anarchist, architect and planning consultant. The problems and opportunities offered to the radical professional are nowhere more challenging than in this particular area of physical planning.

#### **Anarchist Planning Today**

*To accept the organization of urban space as the domain of a particular brand of expert is to swallow not only the lie of town planning but also the lie which vitiates the whole of life.*

*Situationist Pamphlet.*

A belief in the value and rightness of the *spontaneous* process of living lies close to the heart of anarchism. From its perspective any *preconception* of life in the future is suspect at best and a threat to freedom at worst. Theories, manifestoes, plans...tend to be condemned in advance as violations of principle. What then can be meant by the phrase 'anarchist planning'? If the anarchist planner of future *societies* is suspect and a walking contradiction, how much more so is the anarchist planner of *towns*?

I maintain that our suspicions are justified but I want to argue that, contradictory as it may seem, 'anarchist planner' is a meaningful phrase.

now writing before I wrote it. Complete spontaneity can only be ascribed, if at all, to muscular reflexes. All significant actions of people in society are conceived before being carried out, even if some follow very rapidly from their conception. There is a hierarchy of time scales by which we plan for the immediate, short, medium, and long range futures. We never conceive of such plans as being a restriction of our freedom but on the contrary *it is precisely the making of such plans for our own future* and their subsequent realization that defines the content of our freedom. Conversely, it is precisely the interference with or constraints upon our plans or our freedom to follow them (or change them at will) which we define as coercion and seek to reject. Clearly we are not against planning as such. We are very much in favor of planning *for ourselves* and however much we may value living in the present, we must be free to plan for our future even if only on a moment to moment basis.

This planned conduct for oneself or self-regulation is our real goal. The kind of planning we are against is that which *prevents it*. It is when people calling themselves planners plan for *other* people that conflicts inevitably arise, for *their* plans ignore *our* plans.

Hence a most important principle: *The prime qualification for prospective designers of space is that they manifestly intend to share the occupancy of that space when built*. The general form of this principle as applied to all those offering skills for service in a community is: *All Specialists should be part of the community they serve*. Only thus can the built-in elitism of today's professional be curbed and the community retain control of its own destiny.

Anarchist planning maximizes *communal* self-regulation. It is the reconciliation of all the shared dreams of the communards. This process is primarily an involvement of all group members, of whom the planner will be one, but which will also - and equally importantly - incorporate the special expertise of each other individual. Whereas today's establishment planning practice runs the sequence:

program -- design -- execution

representing the performance of *three different* individuals:

client -- designer -- builder

the liberated commune will require the stages in the same sequence to become each a different phase of *its own performance*. As part of the

group, those with design experience at the different scales will have the great responsibility of constantly communicating the limitations and, above all, the *possibilities* of form. The designer can unlock the imaginations of all the others by pointing to possibilities they never dreamed of and vice versa. In-group designers could also see their role analogous to 'spokespeople' for the group: interpreting and expressing its creative intentions to itself through a more specific medium (from verbal to graphic, for example). It is no longer:

Necessity + Creative Artist = City  
(mother)            (father)            (baby)

but now:

Social entity x Group process = Physical object

The specialized designers remain within the group as catalysts whose long term effect is educational. That is to say, the group itself gradually develops competence as builder of its own habitat. Just as the group's growing cohesion generally will diminish the sense of alienation each specialist will initially feel, so the designers will tend to feel less identification as designers and more as contributing group members. Their creative role and individuality will not diminish but grow, for the educational process *they themselves* will undergo will be every bit as great as that of the rest of the group.

#### **Anarchist Planning During, and Immediately After, Revolution**

The initial process will be one of group definition. This may often take the form of small affinity groups seeking to expand sufficiently to achieve basic economic self-sufficiency. During the period when each of these is developing its own specific life style, there is likely to be a very active inter-communal membership exchange. The concept of 'affinity' already implies this. This is the formation of social entities.

But physical entities go hand in hand with this. Consequently, the physical habitats will be of an improvisatory nature at first. Some communes may prefer to keep them so, developing a new nomadism based, perhaps, on tent-like or inflatable structures. If so the technical limitations of power supply, water and waste disposal will need expert consideration. Solar energy offers the best long term hope of providing small relatively mobile energy packages necessary for group autonomy. The presence of water and natural drainage aspects of building sites will pro-



bably continue to be important considerations in site selection and if we assume, as we must, a simultaneous renaissance of respect for and understanding of the integrity of natural systems, this way of thinking will once more become 'second nature'.

### **Anarchist Planning Projected Into The Future (Post-revolutionary)**

What Bakunin said of the institution of science in the organization of future society really applies aptly to all specialized fields including architecture/planning/design:

*Let us honor the scientists on their proper merits, but let us not accord them any social privileges lest we thereby wreck their minds and morals. Let us not recognize on their part any other rights but the general right to advocate their convictions, thoughts, and knowledge. Neither to them nor to anyone else should be given power to govern, for by the operation of the immutable law of Socialism, those invested with such power become oppressors and exploiters of society.*

*How could this contradiction be solved? On the one hand, science is indispensable to the rational organization of society; on the other hand, being incapable of interesting itself with that which is real and living, it must not interfere with the real or practical organization of society. This contradiction can be solved in only one way. Science, as a moral authority existing outside of the universal social life and represented by a corporation of licensed savants, should be liquidated and widely diffused among the masses. Called upon to represent henceforth the collective conscience of society, science must in a real sense become everybody's property. In this way, without losing thereby anything of its universal character, of which it can never divest itself without ceasing to be science, and while continuing to concern itself with general causes, general conditions, and general relations of things and individuals, it will merge in fact with the immediate and real life of all individuals. . .*

*That is why it is necessary, by means of general education, equally available for all, to dissolve the segregated social organization of science, in order that the masses, ceasing to be a mere herd, led and shorn by privileged shepherds, may take into their own hands their historic destinies.*

## Conclusion

Even a world after revolution will need all the expertise embodied in the experience of individuals trained before its advent. It will be very hard to draw out the valuable knowledge from these individuals, to sift it from its entwined distortions, even in cases where they volunteer it. But it will be necessary. Since it is just this point that is denied by certain libertarian extremists it will be necessary to refute their argument.

This *is* an intellectual minefield. Any argument one advances tends to be translatable into some such authoritarian slogan as: 'the masses need guidance'. I am not saying this nor implying it. This slogan is based on fallacious terms since both 'masses' and 'guides' are abstractions which exist, if at all, only after someone has invented those particular mental categories. In reality there are in the first place individuals: people. (The term 'group' is also an abstraction and an even more dangerous one - see *Death of the Family* by David Cooper - but one I accept in the sense of our previous model - something constantly modified by the process of its own self-definition.) But in an immediately post-revolutionary situation, however cathartic it may have been, *all individuals* will be more or less tainted by their pre-revolutionary experiences and habits of relating. Fortunately there is also a positive side to that experience and it consists in the different perspectives each will have brought with her/him. The Andalusian peasants of the late nineteenth century may have been the perfect population to practice the principles of anarchism but they only did so in fact when 'seeded' by the very different experience of a few of Bakunin's associates. This was not 'guidance' - it was the spontaneous combustion of sound and tested ideas and of bitterness and desperation. I suggest that the forging of new social forms will require and will naturally receive the mixing of different kinds of experience, as chemical change requires the mixing of elements.

# THE TYRANNY OF TYRANNY

CATHY LEVINE

An article entitled "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," which has received wide attention around the women's movement, (in "Ms.," "The Second Wave," etc.) assails the trend toward "leaderless," "structureless" groups, as the main, - if not sole - organizational form of the movement, as a deadend. While written and received in good faith, as an aid to the movement, the article is destructive in its distortion and maligning of a valid, conscious strategy for building a revolutionary movement. It is high time that we recognize the direction these tendencies are pointing in, as a real political alternative to hierarchical organization, rather than trying to nip it in the bud.

There are (at least) two different models for building a movement, only one of which does Joreen acknowledge: a mass organization with strong, centralized control, such as a party. The other model, which consolidates mass support only as a coup de grace necessity, is based on small groups in voluntary association.

A large group functions as an aggregate of its parts - each member functions as a unit, a cog in the wheel of the large organization. The individual is alienated by the size, and relegated to struggling against the obstacle created by the size of the group - as example, expending energy to get a point of view recognized.

Small groups, on the other hand, multiply the strength of each member. By working collectively in small numbers, the small group utilized the various contributions of each person to their fullest, nurturing and developing individual input, instead of dissipating it in the competitive survival-of-the-fittest/smartest/wittiest spirit of the large organization.

Joreen associates the ascendancy of the small groups with the consciousness-raising phase of the women's movement, but concludes that,

with the focus shifting beyond the changing of individual consciousness toward building a mass revolutionary movement, women should begin working toward building a large organization. It is certainly true and has been for some time, that many women who have been in consciousness raising groups for a while feel the need to expand their political activities beyond the scope of the group and are at a loss as to how to proceed. But it is equally true that other branches of the left are at a similar loss, as to how to defeat capitalist, imperialist, quasi-fascist Amerika.

But Joreen fails to define what she means by the women's movement, which is an essential prerequisite to a discussion of strategy or direction. The feminist movement in its fullest sense, that is, as a movement to defeat patriarchy, is a revolutionary movement and a socialist movement, placing it under the umbrella of the left. A central problem of women determining strategy for the women's movement is how to relate to the male left: we do not want to take their modus operandi as ours, because we have seen them as a perpetuation of patriarchal, and latterly, capitalist, values.

Despite our best efforts to disavow and disassociate ourselves from the male left, we have, nonetheless, had our energy dissipated by them. Men tend to organize the way they fuck - one big rush, and then that "slam, bam, thank you ma'am," as it were. Women should be building our movement the way we make love - gradually, with sustained involvement, limitless endurance - and, of course, multiple orgasms. Instead of getting discouraged and isolated now, we should be in our small groups - discussing, planning, creating, and making trouble. We should be always making trouble for patriarchy and always supporting women - we should always be actively engaging in and creating feminist activity, because we all thrive on it; in the absence of feminist activity, women take tranquilizers, go insane, and commit suicide.

The other extreme, from inactivity which seems to plague politically active people, is over-involvement, which led, in the late sixties, to a generation of burnt-out radicals. A feminist friend once commented that, to her, "being in the women's movement" meant spending approximately twenty-five per cent of her time engaging in group activities, and seventy-five per cent of her time developing herself. This is a real important time

allocation for "movement" women to think about. The male movement taught us that "movement people" are supposed to devote twenty-four hours a day to the Cause, which is consistent with female socialization toward self-sacrifice. Whatever the source of our selflessness, however, we tend to plunge ourselves headfirst into organizational activities, neglecting personal development, until one day, we find we do not know what we are doing and for whose benefit, and we hate ourselves as much as before the movement. (Male over-involvement, on the other hand, obviously unrelated to any sex-linked trait of self-sacrifice, does however, smell strongly of the Protestant-Jewish work/achievement ethic, and even more flagrantly, of the "rational," cool, unemotional facade with which Machismo suppresses male feelings).

These perennial pitfalls of movement people, which amount to a bottomless pit for the movement, are explained by Joreen, as part of the "Tyranny of Structurelessness," which is a joke from the standpoint that sees a nation of quasi-automatons, struggling to maintain a semblance of individuality against a post-technological military-industrial bulldozer. What we definitely DON'T need, is more structures and rules, providing us with easy answers, pre-fab alternatives, and no room in which to create our own way of life. What is threatening the female left, and the other branches even more, is the "tyranny of tyranny," which has prevented us from relating to individuals, or from creating organizations in ways that do not obliterate individuality with prescribed roles, or from liberating us from capitalist structure.

Contrary to Joreen's assumption, then, the consciousness-raising phase of the movement is NOT over. Consciousness-raising is a vital process which must go on, among those engaged in social change, to and through the revolutionary liberation. Raising our consciousness - meaning, helping each other extricate ourselves from ancient shackles - is the main way in which women are going to turn their personal anger into constructive energy, and join the struggle. Consciousness-raising, however, is a loose term - a vacuous nothingism, at this point - and needs to be qualified. An offensive television commercial can raise a woman's consciousness, as she irons her husband's shirts, alone in her house; it can remind her of what she already knows, ie, that she is trapped, her life is meaningless, boring, etc. - but it will probably not encourage her to leave the laundry and organize a houseworker's

strike. Consciousness-raising, as a strategy for revolution, must involve helping women translate their personal dissatisfaction into class-consciousness and making organized women accessible to all women.

In suggesting that the next step after consciousness-raising groups is building a movement, Joreen not only implies a false dichotomy between one and the other, but also overlooks an important process of the feminist movement - that of building a woman's culture. While, ultimately, a massive force of women (and some men) will be necessary to smash the power of the state, a mass movement itself does not a revolution make. If we hope to create a society free of male supremacy, when we overthrow capitalism and build international socialism, we had better start working on it right away, because some of our very best anti-capitalist friends are going to give us the hardest time. We must be developing a visible women's culture, within which women can define and express ourselves apart from patriarchal standards, and which will meet the needs of women where patriarchy has failed.

Culture is an essential part of a revolutionary movement - and, it is also one of the greatest tools of counter-revolution. We must be very careful to specify that the culture we are discussing is revolutionary and struggle constantly to make sure it remains inveterately opposed to the father culture.

The culture of an oppressed or colonized class or caste is not necessarily revolutionary. America contains - both in the sense of "having" and in preventing the spread of - many "sub-cultures" which, though defining themselves as different from the father culture, do not threaten the status quo. In fact, they are part of the "pluralistic" American one-big-happy-family society - ethnic cultures, the "counter-culture". They are acknowledged, validated, adopted, and ripped off by the Big Culture. Co-optation.

The women's culture faces that very danger right now, from a revolutionary new liberating girdle, to "Ms." magazine, to Diary of a Mad Housewife; the New Woman - i.e., middle-class, college-educated, male-associated - can have her share of the American Pie. Sounds scrumptious - but what about revolution? We must constantly re-eval-

uate our position to make sure we are not being absorbed into Uncle Same's ever-open arms.

The question of women's culture, while denigrated by the arrogant and blind male left, is not necessarily a revisionist issue. The polarization between masculine and feminine roles, as defined and controlled by male society, has not only subjugated women, but has made all men, regardless of class or race, feel superior to women - this feeling of superiority, countering anti-capitalist sentiment, is the lifeblood of the system. The aim of feminist revolution is for women to achieve our total humanity, which means destroying the masculine and feminine roles which make both men and women only half-human. Creating a woman's culture is the means through which we shall restore our lost humanity.

The question of our lost humanity brings up the subject that vulgar Marxists of every predilection have neglected in their analysis, for over a century - the psycho-sexual elements in the character structure of each individual, which acts as a personal policeman within every member of society. Wilhelm Reich began to describe, in narrow, heterosexual, male-biased form, the character armor in each person, which makes people good fascists or, in our society, just good citizens - women experience this phenomenon, every day, as the repressed feelings, especially obvious among our male friends, who find it so difficult to express or even "expose" their feelings honestly. The psychic crippling which capitalist psychology coerces us into believing is the problem of individuals, is a massive social condition which helps advanced capitalist society to hold together. Psychic crippling of its citizens makes its citizens report to work, fight in wars, suppress its women, non-whites, and all non-conformists vulnerable to suppression. In our post-technological society, every member of which recognizes this as being the most advanced culture, the psychic crippling is also the most advanced - there is more shit for the psyche to cut through, what with Jonathan Livingston Seagull and the politics of "You're okay, I'm okay," not to mention post-neo-Freudians and the psycho-surgeons.

For the umpteenth time, let it be said that, unless we examine inner psychic shackles, at the same time we study outer, political structures, and the relationship between the two, we will not succeed in creating a force to challenge our enemy; in fact, we will not even know the enemy.

The left has spent hours and tomes trying to define the ruling class; the ruling class has representative pigs inside the head of every member of society - thus, the logic behind so-called paranoia. The Tyranny of Tyranny is a deeply-entrenched foe.

Where psychological struggle intersects political involvement is the small group. This is why the question of strategy and tactics and methods of organization are so crucial at this moment. The left has been trying, for decades, to rally people into the streets, always before a number sufficient to make a dent exist. As I. F. Stone pointed out, you can't make a revolution when four-fifths of the people are happy. Nor should we wait until everyone is ready, to become radical. While on the one hand, we should constantly suggest alternatives to capitalism, through food coops, anti-corporate actions, and acts of personal rebellion, we should also be fighting against capitalist psychic structures and the values and living patterns which derive from them. Structures, chairmen, leaders, rhetoric - when a meeting of a leftist group becomes indistinguishable, in style, from a session of the U. S. Senate, we should not laugh about it, but reevaluate the structure behind the style, and recognize a representative of the enemy.

The origin of the small group preference in the women's movement - and by "small group," I refer to political collectives - was, as Joreen explains, a reaction against the over-structured, hierarchical organization of society in general, and male left political groups in particular. But what people fail to realize is that we are reacting against bureaucracy because it deprives us of control, like the rest of this society; and instead of recognizing the folly of our ways by returning to the structured fold, we who are rebelling against bureaucracy should be creating an alternative to bureaucratic organization. The reason for building a movement on a foundation of collectives is that we want to create a revolutionary culture consistent with our vision of the new society: it is more than a reaction; the small group is a solution.

Because the women's movement is tending toward small groups, and because the women's movement lacks direction at this time, some people conclude that small groups are to blame for the lack of direction. They wave the shibboleth of "structure" as a solution to the strategic stalemate, as if structure would give us theoretical insight or relief



from personal anxieties. It might give us a structure into which to "organize," or fit more women, but in the absence of political strategy, we may create a Kafkaesque irony, where the trial is replaced by a meeting.

The lack of political energy that has been stalking us for the last few years, less in the women's movement than in the male left, probably relates directly to feelings of personal shittiness that tyrannize each and everyone of us. Unless we confront those feelings directly and treat them with the same seriousness as we treat the bombing of Hanoi, paralysis by the former will prevent us from retaliating effectively against the latter. Rather than calling for the replacement of small groups with structured, larger groups, we need to encourage each other to get settled into small, unstructured groups which recognize and extol the value of the individual. Friendships, more than therapy of any other kind, instantly relieve feelings of personal shittiness - the revolution should be built on the model of friendships.

The omnipresent problem which Joreen confronts, that of elites, does not find solution in the formation of structures. Contrary to the belief that lack of up-front structures lead to insidious, invisible structures based on elites, the absence of structures, in a small, mutual trust group, fights elitism on the basic level - the level of personal dynamics, at which the individual who counters insecurity with aggressive behavior, rules over the person whose insecurity maintains silence. The small personally involved group learns, first, to recognize those stylistic differences, and then, to appreciate and work with them; rather than trying to either ignore or annihilate differences in personal style, the small group learns to appreciate and utilize them, thus strengthening the personal power of each individual. Given that each of us has been socialized in a society in which individual competition with every other individual is the way of existence, we are not going to obliterate personal-style-as-power, except by constant recognition of those differences, and by learning to let differences of personal style exist together. Insofar as we are not the enemy, but the victims, we need to nurture, and not destroy each other. The destructive elements will recede gradually, as we grow stronger. But in the meantime, we should guard against situations which reward personal style with power. Meetings award prizes to the more aggressive, rhetorical, charismatic, articulate (almost always male.)

Considering how much the various derivatives of the term "Anarchism" are bandied about, very few people in the left have studied anarchism with any seriousness. For people priding themselves on cynicism about social taboos, we sure are sucked in by the taboo against anarchism. Like masturbation, anarchism is something we have been brought up to fear, irrationally and unquestioningly, because not to fear it might lead us to probe it, learn it, and like it. For anyone who has ever considered the possibility that masturbation might provide more benefits than madness, a study of anarchism is highly recommended - all the way back to the time of Marx, when Bakunin was his most radical socialist adversary - most radical, because he was a dialectical giant step beyond Marx, trusting the qualities of individuals to save humanity.

Why has the left all but ignored anarchism? It might be because the anarchists have never sustained a revolutionary victory. Marxism has triumphed, but so has capitalism. What does that prove, or what does it suggest, but that maybe the loser, up to this point is on our side? The Russian anarchists fiercely opposed the very revisionist tyranny among the Bolsheviks that the new left would come to deride with sophomoric callousness, before their old left parents, in the sixties. Sure, the old generation of American leftists were narrowminded not to see capitalism regenerating in Russia; but the tunnel vision with which we have charted a path of Marxist-Leninist dogma is not something to be proud of either.

Women, of course, have made it out of the tunnel way before most men, because we found ourselves in the dark, being led by the blind men of the new left, and split. Housewife for the revolution or prostitute for the proletariat; amazing how quickly our revision restored itself. All across the country, independent groups of women began functioning without the structure, leaders, and other factotums of the male left, creating independently and simultaneously, organizations similar to those of anarchists of many decades and locales. No accident, either.

The style, the audacity of Emma Goldman, has been touted by women who do not regard themselves as anarchists, because Emma was so right-on - few women have gotten so many men scared for so long, as Emma Goldman. It seems logical that we should study Emma, not to embrace her every thought, but to find the source of her strength and love of

life. It is no accident, either, that the anarchist Red Terror named Emma was also an advocate and practitioner of free-love; she was an affront to more capitalist shackles than any of her marxist contemporaries.



**Desideratum: To the New Left Upon Occasion of its Recent Demise.**

The tide is out.

The floodwaters have receded, leaving strewn  
behind the remnants of its movement to fend for  
themselves on unaccustomed terrain in  
confusionconsternationdespair.

Response varies

Some gaze fondly back toward the shrinking waters,  
remembering what it was once, quickly dehydrating  
till they are but  
a memory.

Others frantically make their way to tiny pools  
left behind by the once surging waters. A temporary  
respite . . . Soon puddles and then  
nothing at all.

More are clammed in the shell of stoical indifference,  
content to linger apathetically till the next surge  
sweeps them where it will; pretending to gaze on  
the celestial, they really contemplate phantoms  
flitting about the darkness of their existence.

Most are gone with the waters, swimming the  
banal seas they know so well, better boredom than . . . ?  
their flaccid life is really  
death lingering.

Everything old

Everyone blue

Nothing varies

Nothing new.

A few seek adaptation and continuance, painfully making their way over the beach; their course uncertain, erratic doggedly they explore and familiarize. Tough vulnerable, they seek and learn, altering the landscape carving A New World.

"The meaning of life" ceases to be a question, for, at last, they are living.

JOHN HESS



## TO CLARA IF SHE HAD LIVED TODAY

Clara, your lusty hips  
must know passion  
your oval eyes, wide and beckoning,  
must know the longing  
the emblazened journey to the fire  
the ecstatic release to the vision  
to the core  
to the root  
to the self

you must know desire  
you must know that desire is equal to need  
you must know that a revolution  
that would leave us well fed and bored  
and working eight hours a day  
is no revolution  
you must know that a revolution  
that would leave us warm and comforted  
and well cleaned and puritanical  
is no revolution

the only change, really  
is the one that opens up the dream  
is the one that makes our senses burn  
with hot and cold and ecstasy  
the one that we ourselves create in passion  
that we ourselves forge with  
unmediated human contact

so, Clara, let us go together  
and build the river  
let us sew the garments  
and raise the seedlings  
let us hew the boards  
and fire the pots  
but let us also                   strip our bodies and anoint with oils  
but let us also                   paint our faces and hennah our hair  
but let us also                   wail and scream and pound our fists  
  join our tongues and fingers and all other  
parts of our flesh that can be joined  
and in ecstatic reverie let us put flame  
to all ideologies  
to all dogmas  
to all thwarters of revolution let us put flame  
and let us join together  
in desire  
in passion  
in longing  
in love  
  
and let us build an ocean together and swim

-Therese George Dickenson

\*Clara Zetkin was active in the German Social Democratic Party in the late nineteenth century; her sexual views, we learn, were not of the orthodox and puritanical sort of the male leadership. In her famous conversation with Lenin, he expounded on his repressed and ascetic approach to sexuality in the "Glass of Water" theory. Subsequently, she modified her own more exploratory attitudes toward this question in favor of the orthodox party line.

SONGS OF HATE (No. 4).

It was as a student of American History  
in the eighth grade reading Thoreau and Whitman  
and the transcendentalists of 1848  
that I first discovered Marx.

This was at a time in American history  
when McCarthy was holding his hearings  
and communists feared loss  
of the means to survive  
but I was just a fourteen year old girl  
without a stake in the system  
spent half my life in written pages

until I read Alexandra Kollontai  
the Russian libertarian, who led her people  
during the 1917 Revolution and Emma Goldman  
who came out of the working class  
district in lower east side Manhattan  
to struggle for the emancipation of women.  
Then I became a radical feminist who lives  
the life of a free woman while I witness  
around me the lives of Anglo-Saxon mothers

there is one essential difference between us  
I prefer women  
while they continue to cohabit with men who support  
for generations past and present  
a society that praises conviviality and grace  
while their generals burn Asian peasants  
and enslave my race.

My ancestors were Aztec indians  
italian and spanish peasants  
and way back they say greeks  
who founded cities in Sicily  
Arabs decorating palaces in Cordoba and Seville  
originally we were a Mediterranean people  
from Egypt who survived  
the transfer in time and space.  
I owe allegiance to international anarchists  
not some petty nation state.

-MARIE NARES.



## *discussion with*

# NOAM CHOMSKY

Noam Chomsky is a professor of linguistics at MIT and author of many books, including *American Power and the New Mandarins*, *Problems of Knowledge and Freedom*, and *For Reasons of State*, which was recently published by Vintage Books. The following discussion took place in January, 1974, in Cambridge, Mass. The Black Rose interviewers were D. Dobreiner, J. Hess, and D. Richardson. A third party to the discussion was Tom Woodhull, who is connected with the West Coast situationist group, Negations.

BLACK ROSE: – It is not common for linguistics professors, or any professors in America for that matter, to become radicals. How did it happen? What was it that led you to develop and accept a radical critique of American society?

CHOMSKY: – Well, as far as I personally was concerned, it was the other way around actually. I got into linguistics actually more or less by accident through contact with radical friends, one of whom happened to be a professor of linguistics. And at a time when I was more or less thinking of dropping out of college, through political contact with him I got interested by accident in work that he was doing and got back into the field. So the problem in my case was not how the linguist became a radical, but rather the opposite. It was the radical student becoming the linguist sort of by accident.

B.R.: – How did you become a radical student? Were your folks radicals?

CHOMSKY: – Oh, I kind of grew up in that background. Not my immediate family, but all my aunts and uncles were part of this kind of Jewish radical intelligentsia in New York and I just sort of grew up in that environment. Most were CP, but by the time I was 12 or 13 I had worked out of that phase and...One uncle who just died recently was active in the anti-Bolshevik left. That is, there were small splinter groups at that time which were critical of Bolshevism from the left and they were really sort of marxists criticizing the Bolsheviks as a right-wing deviation from traditional marxism...sort of correct. There was some personal contact that I had with some of that literature and some of the ideas and I just got interested in it.

*political  
roots*

B.R.: – What about anarchism?

CHOMSKY: – Well, at that time in the early 40's...I was a high school student. I had already been interested in the Spanish Civil War, just reading the newspapers and so on, and I followed it up some. And I used to spend some time hanging around the Fourth Avenue second-hand bookstores in NY where there were some anarchist offices hanging around. I met some of the people. There was an office of Freie Arbeiter Stimme at that time and I got some news from those people. I lived in Philadelphia so whenever I had some free time I took the train to NY and poked around there.

B.R.: – In your article 'Notes on Anarchism' you were pretty sympathetic to anarchism. You talk about the 'process of rehabilitation' of Daniel Guerin, reintegrating anarchism into the twentieth century. Do you see anarchism as being really that relevant to social problems in the advanced capitalist countries?

CHOMSKY: – Well, as you know very well, anarchism covers a broad spectrum. That particular strain that Guerin isolated and studied I think is a valuable one. It's one that converges pretty much with libertarian marxism, I think. Marxism also covers a pretty broad spectrum and there is a point at which some varieties of anarchism and some varieties of marxism come very close together, as for example, people like Karl Korsch who was very sympathetic to the Spanish anarchist movement, though he himself was sort of an orthodox marxist. And out of that complex of ideas, anarcho-syndicalist ideas and libertarian socialist ideas, it seems to me that there is a very applicable...In fact, I think those are exactly the appropriate ideas for an advanced industrial society, one which...It seems to me that anarchism in that sense suggests certain principles of organization which are extremely realistic. Sort of a natural evolution with a high enough level of technology and communication and elimination of onerous, but necessary, labor. Under those conditions it seems to me entirely possible, in fact essential, to move toward these social forms so very much appropriate to advanced industrial society.

B.R.: – In that context (a) what do you think of Marx's class analysis. and (b) what social economic group in this country do you think is the most relevant to radical transformation?

CHOMSKY: – Well, I think the general idea of class analysis is indispensable. Whether Marx's particular formulations were either historically accurate or applicable today can be questioned. I would tend to agree with Bakunin's criticism of Marx that the notion of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' in a partially agrarian society would be a very repressive and destructive system, as in fact...I'm not implying the Bolsheviks introduced the dictatorship of the proletariat, they did not, but the particular perversion

of it they introduced gives some justification to that analysis and I think one could make other comments of that sort. But the insight that class analysis is indispensable to understanding of social processes, I don't have any doubt that that's true. ]

B.R.: – Which Bakunin agreed with.

CHOMSKY: – Right. There are questions of interpretation and so on, but I don't see how any socialist could fail to agree with that, or any social scientist for that matter. [As far as contemporary society is concerned, it seems to me that you can identify roughly a class of productive workers which now includes a pretty diffuse spectrum going all the way from manual laborers to technicians to scientists to creators of intellectual culture.]

B.R.: – You mean productive in the sense of material goods?

CHOMSKY: [No, not necessarily. I mean, artists are productive in this sense, creating parts of our material and intellectual culture.]

B.R.: – Professors...

CHOMSKY: [Some of them. Occasionally. They could be, in principle. Like in any other field. Artists, for example, could be drawing posters for the state or something. But this seems to me a very diffuse sort of class, but it's a class of productive people, and I think that class should play the role that Marx's proletariat played. That is, it should include everyone. It should have control directly of its own productive work, both the conditions of it, the distribution of it, and so on.]

*professor  
class,  
and the  
working  
class*

B.R.: – So the proletariat as defined by Marx, the industrial workers, is not as important because it is a minority.

CHOMSKY: – Well, if you really think of the proletariat as being blue collar laborers, of course that's a diminishing part of the working class in this broader sense. I doubt that Marx would have disagreed with this, frankly. As I read Marx, what he regarded as crucial to the notion of proletariat was that of productive work, and in different societies different people have to deal in productive work.

B.R.: – I think Sweezy makes the point that certain sectors of the working class have more power because what they produce seems more essential.

CHOMSKY: – Well, that's kind of a technical issue almost. You have to look and see what is more important in a particular factory, the engineer who decides what machines will

be there and what they'll do, or the guy who stands on the assembly line and turns screws. I have no objections about that. I'm sure it varies. I don't think you can make a generalization at that technical level. It would depend on the industry. Let's take a laboratory, certainly part of the productive apparatus of society. And there the technicians are certainly essential as regards ideas. I don't see fundamentally any difference between them as far as contribution to production is concerned. Neither can get along without the others.

*alienation,  
material  
needs,  
and ideals*

B.R.: – Do you sort of see this wider proletarian class being radicalized by material privation or much more by psychological aspects of alienation? One could scarcely argue that most professors at MIT are materially deprived, yet many of them suffer tremendous psychological alienation or displacement.

CHOMSKY: – No, in fact professors at MIT and so on belong to the very top few percent of income. But it's always been true...You couldn't say that Engels was materially deprived either. I don't see anything peculiar about that. I think a lot of people happen to be concerned about others or something. It may vary. But as a class, I wouldn't expect professors at MIT to be spearheading the revolution.

B.R.: – No, but you mentioned technicians and others. The experience in Chile and other areas seems to prove that they are essential. The question then is radicalizing them. Does that come out of...

CHOMSKY: – material deprivation or some psychological understanding?

B.R.: – Yeah.

CHOMSKY: – Well, I think it's very demeaning...There's a kind of strain in the radical tradition which sort of runs like this in caricature. It says: 'Look, I understand about the problems of oppression, lack of democracy, and so on. But those guys over there, all they understand is that they're not getting enough to eat. So therefore I have to put it all in their terms. I have to sort of put it in terms of material deprivation and so on, because that's the only way they'll connect with me.' And that's considered very radical by a lot of people, but I don't see any reason particularly to believe that sort of nonsense. There's no special reason why wealthy or educated people should have more concern over oppression, let's say. If you look at some of the actual documentary material that's come out of real revolutionary struggles - for example, some of the Spanish collective stuff - what is very striking about it is that at the very poorest, most oppressed level of the population you see a tremendous concern for justice, not for material goods.

B.R.: – But that's not the case, for example, with marxist parties.

CHOMSKY: – Okay, but they don't grow out of revolutionary struggle. These really were groups of intellectuals.

B.R.: – But what we're trying to get at would be, here you have a difficulty where there's a fuel crisis and people are talking of another collapse of capital like the depression, and the revolutionary movements tend to see things in apocalyptic terms, mainly that we try to build our organization and when capital collapses we move right in.

CHOMSKY: – I don't see or believe in that, though there is a kernel of truth to it. The kernel of truth is that affluence and, even more than affluence, the prospect of endless growth, has been a very effective technique of social control. The logic is sort of this. The prevailing ideology asserts in effect that each individual is purely a consumer, a person who tries to maximize consumption, and in that act life is given...life is exhausted or something. Now, if you accept that ideology, and furthermore you can believe that material production will increase without limit, then you can conclude that it's sort of rational not to be opposed to the inegalitarian society even though you may suffer from it, even though that society is biased against you, if you are an 'economic man' in this sense and you can hope that more commodities will be produced or something or other, it's sort of rational to accept the society biased against you in the hope that in the future you'll be able to consume more than you consume today. Now, there are all sorts of things wrong with this ideology, but the point is that if the factual assumptions...The effectiveness rests in part on the ability to get people to adopt the ideology that they are nothing but atoms of production and maximizers of consumption. But the other part of it is that it rests on the fact, or the former fact, that you could rely on prospects of endless growth. In this perspective I think that material deprivation can have an important effect in challenging the whole ideological system, which does lead to the conclusion that you ought to be subservient and obedient. It's in this respect that I think there's a kernel of truth to the idea that material deficit or the fuel crisis or whatever can contribute to some sort of new consciousness.

*apocalypse  
and  
consume  
ideology*

SITUATIONIST: – I'd like to get the meaning of 'psychological alienation' more precise. I'll set up two poles and you can play with them as point of definition. One pole is the moralist pole, whose essence is appeal to the emotions of guilt, duty, and sacrifice, which heavily affected the New Left. The other pole sees subjectivity as basically pleasure seeking, appealing to emotions of desire and the imagination. Those are the two poles and I'd want to know how you see that kind of psychology operating.

*guilt  
as a  
valid  
emotion*

CHOMSKY: – Well, I don't think you have to make a choice. I think both poles are quite valid. That is, I think there's a very good reason for feeling guilt, let's say, over frequently our treatment of poor people or the Vietnamese. I do feel responsible because I contribute to the functioning of this society, by passivity for example. I allow it to go on. In all these respects, in any respect in which you don't act in an extreme way to put an end to these things, you contribute to it, through passivity, through obedience or whatever. I don't see any reason not to feel guilt about that nor do I see any reason not to appeal to the guilt that I think ought to be shared by other people like me, students or faculty or any other people I'm talking to. I think that's quite valid. I don't see any reason to reject what is a proper, I think, and accurate response to these conditions of inequality and oppression. At the same time I don't see any point in getting a kind of guilt hang-up over it, and sort of deploring my own guilt or anything of that sort. The thing to do is use that perfectly valid emotional response as a basis for changing your pattern of action with respect to those things. So at one pole I see a lot of validity to what you're deprecating.

[At the other pole it seems to me entirely true that if a revolutionary movement is to have any validity for the great mass of the population, it has to open up new options to them and the option of being able to live in a society in which you are not an oppressor can be, could be, very liberating. Should be. And it seems to me, for example, to get back to what we were talking about before, the possibility of living in a society where the human essence is not defined by the assumption that you have to be a kind of economic man that maximizes production and who produces on demand, these are very liberating possibilities, just as much for the wealthy as for the poor, for the privileged as for the underprivileged. And here too at the opposite pole again, it seems to me there's a good deal of validity to what you say. But it seems to me true that it's an objective fact about our society that people like me, let's say, contribute in many ways to the perpetuation of oppressive and destructive institutions and I don't see any reason to be blind to that fact. I don't therefore take a vow of poverty because I don't think that would help in the least. Nevertheless, I am aware of it, and I respond to that awareness and I think it's perfectly appropriate that one part of the awareness should be a kind of feeling of guilt.]

B.R.: – Isn't the point that the left in this country particularly never got past that?

CHOMSKY: – What I disliked more about the New Left, I guess, response was not the guilt trip, which I thought was legitimate and proper, but rather the other thing I mentioned before, the business about trying to pretend to be a member of the working class and talk in terms of the values which it was assumed must be their values—material deficit rather than the need for freedom or something along those lines. And I thought that was completely phony.

B.R.: – It seems to me that operating from principles and such things is not totally the same as operating from psychological sacrificial guilt tripping. In most of your writings you stress a lot moral principles and you affirm action based on these principles. How do you think the principles and moral sensibilities can be restored to a cynical, mass-indoctrinated consumption oriented society like ours?

*principles  
and  
reason  
in a  
mass  
society*

CHOMSKY: -- Well, I think the principles of this society, namely consumption-oriented, etc., just have to be confronted with better principles which will be more appealing to people. Plainly people have other needs...People in their daily lives do not really live as maximizers of consumption. I mean, it's not true, let's say, in a family that everyone tries to get as much food as he can away from other members of the family. The official values of society are very remote, I think, from most of our actual life with other people. And that conflict ought to be made perfectly clear. Then I think there's a necessity to attack, to criticize, actively the official values, in part by a demonstration of how far they really are from the way you really act as a human being, and want to act. Now that's of course only one part of the story. ]

B.R.: – Is that demonstration possible through logical argument or do you think that possibly the way those other values are instilled makes it kind of almost impossible to change?

CHOMSKY: -- There is obviously a disparity between the values that people really live by when they can exercise a choice and the values that they are taught they live by. And I think it's important that that be brought out any way you can. But the idea of maximizing consumption is only one aspect of that. Other aspects which also have to be integrated into that are the idea of being subservient as a producer, which is probably more important. Now the idea that production, in the broad sense, has to be organized in a hierarchic and autocratic system, that too is an essential part of the governing ideology and here the critique of that ideology goes well beyond logical argument. It's precisely at this point that radicals want to build alternatives. And in fact at very level. I think you could say the same things about consumer cooperatives or other efforts to build solidarity among people by whatever means. All of these things, which are not really alternatives to a logical argument. They are complementary to it. First of all, they illustrate by action and organization the ways in which the logical arguments are correct and how the gaps between official values and human values can be overcome. So these go hand in hand. On the other hand, it's going to be true, I think at least, that if we ever get anything like a kind of a just society, things like my standard of living may very well not exist. In that sense there will be, I think, material deprivation in some manner for a large part of the population. And I think there ought to be. I don't think we should over-

look that fact and just pretend that everyone will have more.]

B.R.: — [You see economic democracy as basic to that because in your article on anarchism you sort of merged anarchism with anarcho-syndicalism. You didn't talk about, for example, anarcho-communism. Lately we've been doing work on Reich and it doesn't seem to us that merely economic democracy is sufficient. Although it's a necessary condition, it's not sufficient. Reich claimed that people internalize in their character structure a great deal of the authoritarian, autocratic society and it's very difficult to exorcise that. How does that sort of fit in to what we should do, if you want to give advice or whatever, in our 'propaganda', and how does that fit into the question of merely workers' councils or perhaps something much wider?]

CHOMSKY: [Well, first of all, I'm not very good at advice. I mean, if I could give you advice, I'd be doing it myself. So I don't know what to do. But I think your general point is quite well taken. I wouldn't want to suggest that propaganda or attempts towards workers' councils are the end-all of socialist agitation. But I do think that it's crucial for people to be able to...I think that a central aspect of the authoritarianism you mentioned is internalized, a very central aspect of this is the authoritarianism of work. It's in this respect that I think I have a personal privilege. The fact of the matter is that people like myself do have workers' control. We do control our own labor enormously. There's very little constraint on it. We can decide when we work, why we work, how we work, what we do. To the extent that there are responsibilities, they are self-imposed. They may be very extensive, but they are self-imposed. And, if somebody wanted to fink out, he could do it. Nothing would ever occur.]

SIT: — Like yourself? You mean everyone in the knowledge factory?

CHOMSKY: — Not everyone. This is an elite institution. I mean professors who have sort of made it at MIT. I don't think that kind of privilege has to be reduced. Rather that kind of privilege I think has to be generalized. But it may very well be that some of the material things that go along with that would have to be reduced in a very just society.

*workers'  
councils,  
productive  
resources,  
and  
scarcity*

B.R.: — But you're not talking of a return to scarcity?

CHOMSKY: — I don't think there's any return to scarcity. I think that people of my standard of living are just tremendously wasteful probably, from the point of view of what potential exists. Now maybe that's wrong. Maybe there are productive resources that haven't been used and that will be shown under some other society. I don't know. I'm skeptical myself. Incidentally, I think that I and others would benefit by that reduction in many ways. Take the obvious thing. It is almost physically



impossible for me to get to work without a car. It would take me around two hours to get to work without a car because of where I feel like living. Now there's no necessity for that. Very trivial, rational alternatives can be devised. For example, there is a railroad line which goes within a mile of my house and they could put railroad trains on it. So there would be a trivial way in which my material standard would be reduced by an economist's measure if I were to go to town by railroad, but my personal comfort would be increased enormously. So in this respect I'm not meaning to suggest that reduction of material level necessarily means even less physical comfort – quite apart from any ideological or psychological factors, It may mean more physical comfort.

R.: – I think what you're saying reflects back on the polarity that's been made earlier between the sort of masochistic character and the pleasure-oriented person. I think the real issue behind that is not that they're both valid, and we should assume both, but that the character structure gets fixated in one pole or the other. In other words, Reich makes the point that the masochistic character will put all its energy into that side and will express that in political work. Whereas, someone who is oriented toward life and the development of his own sexuality, his own powers, will be oriented the other way, but will still have a moral sense. The New Left did seem to have this very masochistic attitude. It expressed itself in trashing and a predilection toward authoritarian organization.

*political  
masochism*

CHOMSKY: – You call that masochistic? You mean the Weatherman sort of thing?

R.: – Well, Weatherman clearly.

CHOMSKY: – I didn't get that sense. I mean I wasn't really close to it and I disagreed with it, but the people I knew at least seemed to me to have a very different rationale, one which I thought was wrong but different. It seemed to me what they were saying was the way you can reach the working classes is by approaching them on their level, namely violence and destruction. I even remember being told by academic intellectuals, people kind of like myself, that if you really want to be serious about opposing the war what you have to do is go down to a bar on Third Avenue and pick a fight with the guy sitting next to you over any issue. And after you beat each other up for a while, then he takes you seriously, and you start talking about the war. I mean I was told that in those words and I think that that was sort of the core of the Weatherman ideology, at least as I understood it, and that's extremely....

SIT: – But that's the problem with the New Left, always working to be like someone else, to bring some group into the mainstream of American life. This Christian service ethic.

CHOMSKY: – From what I could see of the early 60's civil rights activity, it was trying to help with self-organization of poor and oppressed people and I'm all in favor of that.

SIT: – But to what end?

CHOMSKY: – Well, to ends that they will choose when they get into the position to choose. You know, the activist who's coming in from the outside may well have his own ideas, but his main idea ought to be that they're going to make the choice. And to compare....

SIT: – But they're going to be entirely christian...

CHOMSKY: – Well, why? Once they've decided to set up rural cooperatives or that they can organize their own unions and fight for their rights and so on, why should they make christian choices? If they do, well, that's the state of their cultural and other commitments and fine, I'm not going to force them to do something else. But the point is, the outside activist, like the civil rights worker, was doing just the right thing when he tried to integrate himself as much as possible into those struggles, suffer with the people, work with them, help as much as he could, bring his talents where they were valuable, but not try to dictate any solutions.

B.R. : – One of the attractive things about the early New Left was the earmark of joy, with a lot of interesting and fun-like activity.

SIT: – Oh yeah? Well, I went to meeting after meeting without joy.

*authoritarian  
ideology  
infects  
the  
new left*

CHOMSKY: – That sounds more like late 60's to me. Around 67 or 68 that became true and then everybody had to be more of an orthodox marxist-leninist than the guy sitting next to him and all sorts of strange things happened then.

B.R. : – It's exactly when very fine ideological distinctions began being made that that sort of behavior, that sort of attitude emerged. When people began being very self-righteous and becoming the two percent of the group that was correct that I experienced those attitudes coming into the New Left.

CHOMSKY: – See, I think this is connected with the kind of point you were making. That is, there were certain almost built-in limits to what could be achieved by the earlier movement. And those were given by very powerful institutional facts about this society that just couldn't be transcended by that kind of movement. And it seems to me that when the New Left ran up against them, when it ran up against

the realization that all we're doing, with all that, we're not going to accomplish more than getting some people organized in a better union than they might have been in otherwise or that they can vote where they couldn't vote before, so they could vote for Humphrey or some damn thing. When those realizations began to sink in, then I think the New Left disintegrated into this, it tried to find a messianic solution in marxist-leninism for the most part. So I kind of agree with part of what you're saying about the institutional structures that were just too rigid, too firmly embedded, for any of the earlier activities to shake them much and understandably this did lead to...well...

B.R. : – The late George Lichtheim once said: "The history of marxism is too important to be left to the post-leninist sects, those tiny ferocious creatures devouring each other in a drop of water." And this seems to be particularly true of the left in America. But at the same time it seems that leninism is a sort of consistent extension of certain aspects of Marx's writings, at least his public writings, and it's always described as "marxism in practice". So how do you see marxism as different from leninism and where did Lenin deviate?

*post-leninist  
sects  
and the  
tragedy  
of the  
Russian  
Revolution*

CHOMSKY: – Well, first of all there are, I think, very different strains of leninism. I mean there's the Lenin of 1917, the Lenin of the "April Theses" and "State and Revolution". That's one Lenin. And then there's the Lenin who took power and acted in ways that are unrecognizable as far as I can see when compared with, say, the doctrines of "State and Revolution". For a marxist, maybe for Lenin himself had he looked back, this would not be very hard to explain. [There's a big difference between the libertarian doctrines of a person who is trying to associate himself with a mass popular movement to acquire power and the authoritarian power of somebody who's taken power and is trying to consolidate it. So I don't think that transition is maybe very difficult to explain. So, in talking about Lenin, I'd ask which Lenin you are talking about. And of course that is true of Marx also. There are competing strains in Marx. But I think it's characteristic and unfortunate that the lesson that was drawn from Marx and Lenin for the later period was the authoritarian lesson. That is, it's the authoritarian Lenin who persisted, the one who concentrated on conquest of state power by the vanguard party and destruction of all popular forums in the interests of the masses. That's the Lenin who became known to later generations. Again, not very surprisingly, because that's what leninism really was in practice. And I think it's a tremendous tragedy for the socialist movement as a whole that the Russian Revolution was identified as socialist.]

See, here Lenin himself was ambivalent. He never identified it as socialist. He said some kind of state capitalism and probably you can't have socialism in a country like Russia and so forth. He varied, but basically that is what he was saying and that's sort of accurate. But then, of course, the kind of party ideologues and their various

slaves in the so-called socialist movements, for their own purposes, had to identify what they were associating themselves with as something a little better than just state capitalism, though that's in fact what it was. And so they then incorporated the whole socialist tradition within this extremely reactionary structure and thereby virtually destroyed it.

B.R. : – In terms of building a movement in this country, around concepts that are embodied in libertarian socialism, do you think that it's useful to continue to use the word anarchism? Do you think that it has an historical value, or do you think we should be more specific and talk about council communism or libertarian socialism?

CHOMSKY: -- Well, I think it has value. I think it's a very significant part of the whole broad anarchist movement, I mean the various socialist variants of it, whether communist-anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism, which were concerned with organization in a complex society, based on equality and solidarity. Now there is another strain of anarchism which is concerned only with, which really gives no weight to notions like equality, solidarity and so on. That's the right-wing anarchism and that's an extreme form of authoritarianism as far as I can see. It's perfectly obvious that under the formulations of someone like, say, Murray Rothbard, you will get such inequalities of power that it would be like living under Genghis Khan or something like that. Even though everyone will be technically free, they'll be free to make contracts with the person who has all the power, who owns the police and so on, or they'll be free not to. That kind of thing, in my opinion, just has to be discounted. But I don't see any reason to abandon the notion of anarchism because it has some strange periphery that also uses it.

*word  
pollution,  
right-wing  
anarchism*

B.R.: – Just as you wouldn't abandon marxism.

CHOMSKY: – Yeah, like I wouldn't abandon marxism. After all, we're not interested in making heroes and identifying ourselves with them, but of finding what's valid in various ideas and concepts and actions of the past that have some use for us.

B.R.: – To get back to leninism, what about the question of, for example, Vietnam or China or the 'Third World' movements in general? There is a real disagreement among anarchists on the question of the NLF and the worth of these movements in general.

SIT: – May I rephrase that a bit? Would you apply the same paradigm to, say, the response of the western European and to some extent the American Communist Party and the way they sort of idolized the Bolshevik revolution as their model or as the proof of what they said? Do you think you could apply the same thing to the Third World currents in the New Left?

CHOMSKY: – I think it's similar except less pernicious because...it's less pernicious only for accidental reasons, namely because the impact on western socialist ideology is much slighter, partly because it doesn't exist any more, and it did exist then, more. In that respect it's less pernicious. But basically it's the same error. A very similar error let's say. I wouldn't regard the Third World revolutionary movements as socialist in any sense. I still do think that they can be treated with sympathy and call for support, but that's a different issue. I did follow Solidarity's position on the NLF, and that's the one thing I really disagreed with, very seriously. In fact, virtually everything else I agree with on down the line. They were perfectly correct, and perfectly irrelevant, in pointing out that North Vietnam is not a libertarian socialist society. I mean, they don't claim it, it's not true, it couldn't be true. And I think they are also perfectly correct in saying we ought to criticise that society. However, not while the bombs are falling in my opinion. There were a lot of things wrong, let's say, with England in 1943. But I don't think that was the time or the place to point them out, particularly if you happened to be living in Nazi Germany. And that's the situation here. The West is really trying to crush these movements and I think that everyone here and in England is responsible for that. London Solidarity, you see, by not preventing the British government from assisting in the crushing of Vietnamese independence, were in a certain sense contributing to it. And therefore I think that they are in a very weak position to be criticizing North Vietnam as non-socialist, though that criticism is nevertheless correct.

*anarchists  
and  
third-  
world  
revolutionary  
movements*

SIT: -- Okay, I agree with that. For the most part. Except it seems that the way the left in general, the anti-war movement, sort of presented or managed to sell the NLF and the North Vietnamese was very much that they were creating a revolution, a socialist revolution. Thus they were bringing about a situation like that after the Bolshevik revolution, leading to the support of socialism in one country, etc.

CHOMSKY: -- See, I think the right attitude to take toward the Bolshevik Revolution was the kind that Bertrand Russell took. He said, look, you know, this is pretty rotten. But he also said that for the people of the West to talk about the oppressiveness of the Russian Revolution while they're contributing to it by supporting the counter-revolution, this is grotesque.

SITUATIONIST – In the sense that...if you're being moralistic it seems like it is really hard to keep more than one idea in your head at one time...If you're going to whip people into a frenzy to do something it has to be directed toward that one thing; it has a tendency toward Manicheanism basically, right?

CHOMSKY – But I think this is all quite apart from being opposed to the American war. I think that is just off in a different dimension.

You see, it seems to me that it was always a mistake for the anti-war movement here to take the position of being for the NLF, or for North Vietnam or anything. What we should always have been for is getting the bloody hands of Western imperialism out of there. After that, it is their problem.

Incidentally, I think it is a complicated issue. If we really look at North Vietnam, or say the Pathet Lao in Laos, which I did try to learn something about, I mean, first of all it is an egalitarian society that they're building; it's a society that has a lot of commitment to social welfare. It has some version of local democracy. It's very hard to know what version, something though. There is some kind of participation at the level of planning and so on at a local level. But all of this is imbedded within a fantastically authoritarian structure. You know, with total control from the top, with very little leeway for free access to information, or I suspect, though I couldn't say for sure. And what elements of democracy or popular control there are, probably are what function through the Communist Party apparatus. Now that's a tricky thing itself. You see, the Communist Party structure extends from the central committee down through the cells and factories, and from the little I could make out, I think that there probably is some sort of flow of control, and so on, through that structure, but of course that is very far from worker's control. And, you know, I think the thing to do is to understand what those societies are about, sympathize with what's good, criticize what is bad, offer alternatives, etc. In fact, I was interested to see that they're kind of open to this. For example, I had an interview with Pham Van Dong who had read *AMERICAN POWER AND THE NEW MANDARINS* in the French translation, and his first remark about it was that it was too anarchist...We had some discussion about that, you know...I'm sure I didn't convince him, he didn't convince me. Though he perceived at once that this was a kind of anarchist critique of communism, among other things, and you know, I think, if you have any respect for those people at all, you would be quite plain and clear about your critique of them, try enter into a discussion with them if you can.)

*critical  
honesty  
and  
third-  
world  
solidarity*

SITUATIONIST – I think that you may have inadvertently played against yourself, though, because, you know, both the capitalists, and the state capitalists, in their global chess game, have tried to represent the world where there's only two options; there's no third force. They did this in the Spanish Civil War. They did it very much in Hungary. I mean, it was incredible the similarity the way the Americans presented it as "these people want capitalism," and the way Russia presented it as "these people want fascist counter-revolution." Neither one of them would let any voice emerge and say, "No, they don't want either, they want something that is neither capitalism as we know it nor, quote, socialism as we know it." In other words, it ruled out the possibility of a third force. The failure of the American new left to identify itself as, "No, we don't want what they have in Russia,"

every time someone said, "Well, why don't you move to Russia," is, I think, one of the most damaging things you could have done. That is a lot of the reason we didn't reach more ordinary Americans who have these heavy anti-communist fears, is because we didn't identify ourselves as clearly not that, and a whole lot of people, my parents among them, really thought that we were either knowingly, or inadvertently because we were naive, playing into the hands of the second force.

*"Well, why don't you move to Russia?"*

CHOMSKY — Well, I get letters about this all the time. I've got one right here, let's see if I can find it...here, read this, that's a typical response of that kind. It says, "Are you a card-carrying communist, or just a sympathizer," or something like that...or "how could you say all these bad things about President Nixon if you weren't..." But, the point is, though I think your point is correct, I think that as a criticism, it is not valid. Because a lot of people, me included, made a big effort to do this. It is just very hard to break through the given ideological assumption that, you know, you're either for us or for the Russians. No matter how you say it, no matter how much you do about it, it is just very hard for a lot of people to see that there is another possibility, even when you keep saying that there is and why there is, and so on. Maybe more could have been done in that direction, but...

SITUATIONIST — Did you ever precisely, ah, mention the councils?

B.R. — Of course, in "Notes on Anarchism."

CHOMSKY — Sure, and in *AMERICAN POWER AND THE NEW MANDARINS*, one of the big discussions was about Spanish anarchism, and in fact, one of the main points I was trying to make there was that Bolshevism and American liberalism are basically manifestations of the same thing. Now, that was kind of abstract and I don't think that many people knew what I was talking about, really, and I probably didn't do it right and so on, and I'd agree with all that, but, you know, I was by no means alone in this. A lot of people were trying to do that kind of thing. But it is very hard to break through when the prevailing assumption is you're either a communist, meaning Russian apologist, or you support American imperialism. You see, I think a more valid criticism would be that the New Left did kinda idealize Cuba and China and Vietnam in particular, which was really quite silly. You know, I've seen people come back from Vietnam talking about how the Vietnamese were all into love and, you know, this sort of thing, which is ridiculous. Whatever they're doing may be valid or not valid, but it's surely not that.

*Kissinger's  
globetrotting  
and the  
effect  
of  
great-power  
politics*

B.R. – You have always argued, even in your latest book, that the NLF was independent, not a puppet of China or USSR or anyone. Last year you argued that the agreement that Kissinger signed was essentially the program of 'the enemy.' In view of Kissinger's globetrotting, and what everybody is saying about an engineered solution by the superpowers, with China and Russia putting pressure on the DRV to thwart any offensive by the NLF. Is it still possible after Tet to say that the NLF is an independent force and that the DRV is independent of either China or the Soviet Union?

CHOMSKY – See, I don't think that Kissinger's globetrotting or his global plans had any effect, really, on what happened in Vietnam. I think he tried to make them have an effect. But I don't think they did. For several reasons, for one thing because neither the Russians nor the Chinese ever were very enthusiastic about Vietnamese communism, and they didn't need Kissinger to make them less enthusiastic than they were likely to be in the first place.

B.R. – Why do you think that was?

CHOMSKY – Well, in the case of China, in part, because I think China does not want to see independent and strong societies on its borders. And a Vietnamese dominated Indochina under the communists, well, that would be a strong and a very independent force which would have no use for China, and would go its own way. And the Chinese have no interest in that. It's kind of the same reason why Stalin was opposed to the Greek communists—he didn't want to see a Balkan communist federation. It's really great-power politics, basically; it didn't matter whether they were communist, fascist, or anything else, they would be strong, independent, have popular support, and so on.

As far as the Russians are concerned, I think they are terrified in part by precisely the libertarian elements in Indochinese communism, which are there, alongside the authoritarianism. I mean, it is just that kind of thing that is very frightening to the Russians, just as those elements in Chinese communism are frightening to the Russians, and for obvious reasons. But, quite apart from that, the Russians are very racist, and I think there is probably just a lot of race hatred involved, and that kind of thing. But the main point, really, as far as the Russians are concerned, is that their international policy has always been to try to achieve what they call "detente," and that means subordination to the United States. What they want to be, as far as I can see, is to be accepted within the American system as a sort of junior partner, where they do their job, we don't bother them, etc. For this, support of Vietnamese nationalism is kind of inconsistent. They couldn't refuse to do it because then they would have lost whatever credi-



bility they had, internationally, or in the third world, or whatever, and that is important to them too, as leverage, and for power purposes. But nevertheless, I think that's a fundamental aspect of their policy, and it didn't take much convincing to get them to go along. But I don't think they had anything more than marginal effect on affairs in Indochina, simply because they don't have that much leverage. Now, however, I do think that there is a very good sense in which you are right when you ask whether the NLF has ceased to be an independent around the time of Tet, or something like that. But I don't think that had anything to do with China or Russia. I think that just had to do with the success of the American offensive. See, I think that the United States did really succeed to a large extent in grinding them down. The American war really was against South Vietnam, the other stuff was a side-show. And the war against South Vietnam was, in a sense, successful. That is, it pretty much destroyed that society, and since the NLF was a social force rooted in that society, by destroying that society I think the U.S. undermined the movement. And I think that was part of the purpose of the war, was to force the NLF into dependence on the outside, so it could not be an authentic South Vietnamese movement. Just the same reason the United States tried to drive China into the hands of Russia.

B.R. -- How do you see a decision like that being made?

CHOMSKY -- By the United States, you mean?

B.R. -- Yea, in terms of the strategy: "What we want to do is force the NLF into a close association with the north, in order to discredit them."

CHOMSKY -- Yea, that's hard to say. I guess the more sophisticated people were probably aware of it, and what they were doing. The ordinary hack probably just did that work in a sort of reflex fashion. He probably believed his own propaganda. I mean, the propaganda from the beginning was: these are agents of the north. And, you know, the Bundy-types probably believed it and went ahead and acted on it. But, some people in there must have known what was going on, better than what comes out on the surface. Take somebody like Robert Perlman, the guy who ran the pacification programs, who is a real technocrat, I mean a real brutal technocrat, but, you know, he said it very openly, "Look, none of our programs are very effective, but we've just got to grind them down by sheer weight and mass," or something like that...And that's about it.

*genocide  
and  
decision-  
making*

B.R. -- How much influence did people like Pool, who argued similar things like that—the destruction of the countryside, saturation bombing, the concentration compounds—have on policy?

CHOMSKY – That’s really hard to know. I suspect that all these people like Pool, Huntington and the rest, were really just periferal ideologists; people who sort of viewed what happened and tried to sugar-coat it a bit.

B.R. – For example, the role of a research institute like the Center for International Studies, are they mainly sugar-coating ideologists, or do they in fact really have an influence on policy?

CHOMSKY – Well, again, it’s hard to judge, but I just can’t believe that those people ever really had much to do with anything. They wanted to, I think, but I doubt if they succeeded. See, Huntington I don’t think understands even to this day why people are so outraged by the stuff he wrote. I, for example, probably his main critic, I never even criticized him. I just said look what the guy is saying, you know, and quoted long passages. And he doesn’t understand, he says, “Well, so what, I mean, what’s the fuss about, what’s wrong with that.”

B.R. – There has been such a tie between the university and the military. Kissinger was plucked from Harvard, and there was this thing, the Foreign Affairs Association, that a lot of university people belonged to, that apparently did have some real inputs into the government. Does Nixon act independently of the liberal intelligentsia of the North-East, does he just throw them out?

CHOMSKY – No, I think that there’s a sort of filtering system, though a very substantial part of the liberal intelligentsia does aspire to government service; they really are the Bolsheviks, basically. But, of course, only those get in who have the proper committments and ideologies. When Kennedy is looking for an historian to adorn his administration, you know, he’ll pick Arthur Schlesinger and not Barrington Moore. That is because he says the right things, he believes the right things, you know, that kind of business. The same thing here; if a guy like Kissinger wants to gain power, he’ll propose the kind of international policies that are acceptable to the people who run the society, then they’ll make it look as if he is determining things. You can find out exactly how much Kissinger is determining policy by asking yourself what would happen if Kissinger made a proposal that went counter to the interests of the American ruling class. Well, he’d be teaching history at Georgia Tech, or something.

B.R. – He seems like a clever technocrat, a yes-man, sort of thing.

CHOMSKY – He manages to articulate and formulate policies that are very much in the interests of ruling class groups, so they make him their manipulator.

B.R. – Then the question becomes how policy is made. Because Vietnam and Watergate have brought out a lot, and there's all this cowboy-yankee stuff, and all the rest. How do you think the decisions are made? I mean, they are clearly made to strengthen the capitalist system, but there also seems to be competition, and I can't seem to accept the mechanical Leninist view that the state is merely the executive committee of the capitalist class.

*Who  
really  
formulat  
foreign  
policy?*

CHOMSKY – Well, there is something to that, I think.

B.R. – Yeah, there is some truth there, but yet there is such conflict.

CHOMSKY – Yes, because the ruling class itself has internal conflicts, and, I think, there is a kind of dynamic involved that goes on everywhere. It's the kind of dynamic that led to the Interstate Commerce Commission being taken over by the railroads. Those elements of the ruling class that have a particular interest in one or another sphere of governmental activity will probably tend to dominate them. What they do may be in conflict with class interests of others, but the others do not care that much; it's not a major thing with them, so they let it go.

And I think pretty much the same is true of foreign policy. There are some elements of the ruling class, I mean, the corporate lawyers who deal with multinational corporations and therefore represent a kind of general interest in a free, international, global economy and such things. Those are the people who will try to take over, and succeed in taking over, decision-making positions in the foreign policy system, exactly the way the railroads will try to take over the ICC, or any other utility will try to take over the government structure that regulates it. Of course that means that often they will be doing things that are harmful to other elements of the corporate system that may not care that much about it, and suffer marginally. And sometimes this can break out into real conflicts. Serious conflicts. But still, with all those qualifications, it seems to me not unfair to speak of the state executive as simply a branch of the ruling class which is governing this particular centralized structure.

B.R. – I thought that was important because if you see the state merely as a class organ, then the dictatorship of the proletariat as a class organ becomes feasible, but if you can see that the state, particularly in modern society, where the government is 30% of the economy, the largest employer and corporation, etc., then something is different there, and the state is much more than just the executive committee of the ruling class. In fact, it has its own interests.

*the  
military  
coup  
and  
American  
fascism*

CHOMSKY — It does have its own independent interests, and I think you see that, for example, to some extent in some of the particular directions that state capitalism takes. Part of the impetus towards militarization of state capitalism has to do with special interests that have developed within that sector itself, and have just achieved a lot of decision-making power. Here, I think, someone like Seymour Melman is on to something important, though I don't accept his analysis completely. It seems to me that he is on to something when he says that there is a partially independent managerial system in the whole pentagon structure, which simply has tremendous assets at its disposal. And though of course it could be liquidated by the real ruling class at any moment by simply withdrawing its resources, nevertheless, that's not what happens because of its interpenetration with them and so on.

B.R. — There is a lot of talk around about military coup, fascism, etc.... It seems that, while the military has tremendous tie-ins with the defense industry, etc., that it may in fact have interests of its own, an ideological interest or whatever, that may coincide with certain segments of the ruling class, but one suspects that, from seeing fascism in operation, that there are independent elements within it that can dominate the activities, that aren't in fact, necessarily business elements.

CHOMSKY — They can, but I think the record pretty well supports the view that fascism is a last resort on the part of the ruling class that simply can't hold on to its privilege any other way. And that's why I wouldn't expect this happening in the United States, in a short time at least.

SITUATIONIST — Do you see the dangers of narrowly seeing fascism in those terms, I mean, the whole of Reich's MASS PSYCHOLOGY was an attempt to point out to the Leninoids running around at that time, that to cast fascism in those terms was far too facile. That it has also to do with character-structure, authoritarian character structure, people raised in father-dominated families from early in life, the church, you know, the whole complex of institutions that predate adult life.

Also this thing of people's conscious, calculating motives, economic man, and the subconscious of people, I mean, if fascism were just in the most narrow, reductionist sense, economic, then where did the role of the marching bands and the whole macho appeal that had people having collective orgasms at the Nuremberg rallies, where did that come in? It obviously went to something much deeper in people's psyche.



CHOMSKY – Yea, I don't disagree with that, but those same factors of personality structure, family structure, and so on, are just as true in pre-fascist periods. And I think it is correct to say that those are factors which can be easily exploited by a fascist organization, or by a so-called communist organization, or by any effort to carry out mass mobilization. In fact, to some extent, the whole Kennedy mystique here, at a lower level appealed to that kind of thing, and there are elements of that in the New Deal, and so on.

But, the question is, when will the ruling classes resort to such methods, when will they try to make such an appeal to these strains of authoritarianism in family and personality? Well, I think, by and large it is true to say that they will do so when it's the last resort for the preservation of their privilege. And I think there is a really good reason for that, and that has to do with the nature of capitalism as such. I mean, true, we don't really have capitalism, we have some variant of it. (But if you think about the ideal form, which we approximate to some extent, I mean, capitalism is basically a system where everything is for sale, and the more money you have, the more you can get. And, in particular, that's true of freedom. Freedom is one of the commodities that is for sale, and if you are affluent, you can have a lot of it. It shows up in all sorts of ways. It shows up if you get in trouble with the law, let's say, or in any aspect of life it shows up. And for that reason it makes a lot of sense, if you accept the capitalist system, to try to accumulate property, not just because you want material welfare, but because that guarantees your freedom. It makes it possible for you to amass that commodity.)

*freedom  
as a  
commod*

So, (this means, that quite apart from just material welfare, even the need for freedom, and so on, these needs are to some extent met, if you have enough wealth and power to purchase them on the sort of free market. And that means, I think, that what you're gonna find is that the defense of free institutions will largely be in the hands of those who benefit from them, namely the wealthy, and the powerful. They can purchase that commodity, and therefore they want those institutions to exist, like free press, and all that. However, this is only true up to a point. If those free institutions ever turn out to be striking at their privilege, of course, the rules of the game are changed, like, say, Chile as a case in point. I would expect the capitalist class to defend the freedom of the press, so-called, and the freedom of the legal system, because they're the beneficiaries of it, but only up to the point where there really is some kind of an effort to redistribute privilege.)

B.R. -- I think this raises the issue of what the anarchist attitude to transitional form should be, and how deeply we should get involved in politics, because it is very tricky in this country to distinguish between genuine decentralizations of power, which presumably we would support, and decentralizations of power which simply make the whole structure more powerful and efficient in its repression.

CHOMSKY -- Yes, that's a very serious issue and I think you have to face it concretely at every instance. Take the impeachment issue right now, that's a case in point.

B.R. -- Right.

CHOMSKY -- I'm very sceptical about the radical involvement in any of these impeachment things. It seems to me that they tend to contribute to the mystification of the presidency. While I think you may make a point that Nixon is a crook and a bastard and all this sort of thing, and let's get him out, but for the left to contribute to the belief that *that's* going to introduce any serious changes is simply to add to the belief that the president is some kind of God or King, and that what we have to do is get the right god in there, and then the whole story.

Some of the things that have come out are really bad. For example, I got this thing from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, who are really a good bunch of people, the people who take all the hard cases that the ACLU won't touch, etc. But they had this petition, and, I mean, I usually sign everything that comes around, but this was *so* bad that I just couldn't sign it. It was saying we have to impeach the president because this is the only way to restore the dignity of the presidency and to build our national honor, and it was just contributing to the worst sort of beliefs, you know, exactly the reasons why the intelligent corporate elite wants to get rid of Nixon in the first place--because he's diminished all of these. It's hard to revere the president when he's busy robbing everybody to build something in San Clemente. They want this guy out of there, he's striking right at the heart of the ideology.

B.R. -- How do you view the process of decentralization, then. Do you have a scenario of that, is it apocalyptic, or gradual, does it happen in phases?

CHOMSKY -- Well, I don't have much of a sense of apocalypse. In principle, I think it's right that you have to build the organizations of the future in the present society somehow. People have to have a picture of how they would run their community, or industry, or whatever it is, and they have to fight to do that to whatever extent they can. At the same time, I suppose that at some point, the ruling class will simply strike back by force, and there has to be defense against that force, and that probably means violent revolution. And I wouldn't be surprised if that is inevitable at some stage, simply in order to resist the force that remains in the hands of the privileged, who as in Chile or anyplace, will try to strike at any kind of free institution if it begins to take away their privilege.

B.R. -- You included a chapter "On the Limits of Civil Disobedience" in your last book, *For Reasons of State*. Then you think that we definitely will have to go beyond that sort of thing?

CHOMSKY -- Oh yea, that was about the Berrigans really, and I think that what they are doing is really important and I have a lot of respect for them, and so on, but that has a very narrow social significance. It's precisely useful in a case like the Vietnam War, when there is a kind of a marginal class interest of the ruling class which will be conducted *if* the costs aren't too high at home, and where a large part of the population sees that it is sort of wrong. Now under that combination of circumstances, civil disobedience can be effective. It can be a way of mobilizing this large part of the population that sees that it's wrong to raise the cost to the point where people who run the society will decide that it's not worth it. And that is useful and important and you know, a courageous thing to do, and I'm all for it, but it has virtually nothing to do with social change as far as I can see.

B.R. -- Do you want to make any suggestions as to some kind of organizational form, or comment on what kinds of strategies could effectively resist the modern technological police state, which seems so far to have resisted all attacks?

*resisting  
the  
modern  
police  
state*

CHOMSKY -- That is going to be very important. The techniques of surveillance and control, and all that stuff that's developing is a very serious thing. And, well, I think we just have to try to organize people in communities to tear down television cameras and organize the technicians to try to disrupt this. It's very serious. Somebody told me about an article in the *National Review* recently, I don't know whether or not you read it, I don't; but someone told me about this article by a guy named Miles Copeland who was, maybe still is, in the CIA. The article was about domestic surveillance and how great it's getting along. Apparently James Buckley introduced some kind of a bill saying that there should be a special category of people who are permitted to get all the intelligence information from all sources, and since they are very respectable we can be certain that they won't do anything wrong with it, and so on.

B.R. -- It's amazing how very little popular resistance there has been to this.

CHOMSKY -- There's not very much awareness of it. In fact, the kind of awareness that's coming is coming from funny places. A lot of the left-wing journals now have letters from prisoners, really interesting letters about stuff going on in prisons. Well, you know, that's where you'd expect it first, in the total-control institutions like prisons and schools. That's where you first see the behavior modification...the drugs...

B.R. -- the electrodes in the brain...

CHOMSKY -- the psychosurgery...(thoughtful pause)...incidentally, we're going to

*technological  
control  
and  
cable-TV*

have a big meeting here Friday to try to at least get some information out about this sort of thing, and see if there isn't something that kind of technically-oriented people can do, simply as a service, as a defense to communities, against this kind of intrusion and operation. Well, here's a concrete step where I think you can see the beginnings of a way of relating an immediate community interest to an immediate interest of M.I.T. technicians; of a lot of things like that, here is one.

B.R. -- I heard that M.I.T. is wiring one of the housing projects in this area with cable T.V., free of charge. I can't imagine why they would go to such lengths of generosity.

CHOMSKY -- There was a story around about cable T.V. having a two-way capability.

B.R. -- It has control possibilities beyond surveillance. It allows for much more selective programming in propaganda terms. You can devise one set of programming for housing projects, another for suburban neighborhoods, thus specializing and refining propaganda input.

CHOMSKY -- I know a lot of people on the left interested in media thought that there were a lot of opportunities in this cable T.V. thing, but it would be so voracious.

B.R. -- I think that what's developing out of that whole situation is that this so-called free-access, or open-access, is being recognized as an illusory public-relations gimmick, used by cable corporations to obtain franchises in towns and communities. Since the community groups don't actually own or operate the T.V. systems, as soon as something controversial gets on, it gets put off.

CHOMSKY -- Who runs the whole thing? Is it a corporate thing?

B.R. -- The F.C.C. has designed certain free-access rules, but they're very vague, and right now, in New York City they're in the process of being defined, and they're being defined mostly in restrictive terms. As far as ownership and ultimate control, and probably control of the F.C.C., are concerned, these are basically the same people who own everything else: Sylvania, Hughes Aircraft, and AT&T are all big in the cable industry.

I think that a lot of the radical groups that tried to snatch cable-TV up when it first came out had a very manipulative sense toward it, viewing it in traditional power-structure terms, as an opportunity to be slick and "trick" people into the revolution, or to advertise their organization, something like that.





B.R. -- Could I ask a philosophical question? I wondered why you are much more sympathetic to Marx's economic determinism, than, say, Skinner's behavioral theory, which is another form of determinism.

CHOMSKY -- Well, first of all, again, I don't read Marx as an economic determinist. I mean, I think he was talking about how patterns of choice are influenced by material interests and other interests that are defined in class terms, and he was talking about the significance of relations to production in defining classes, and what they will be, and all of that is correct. I think he was identifying crucial factors that play a role in social action in a class society. That need not be deterministic.

Now as far as the Skinner thing is concerned, my feelings are really rather different. I just think it's a fraud, there's nothing there. I mean, it is empty. It's an interesting fraud. See, I think there are two levels of discussion here. One is purely intellectual: What does it amount to? And the answer is zero, zilch...I mean, there are *no* principles there that are non-trivial, that even exist.

*B. F.  
Skinner  
is a  
rat.*

B.R. -- Skinner, not Marx.

CHOMSKY -- Yea, Skinner. Now the other question is, Why so much interest in it? And here I think the answer is obvious. I mean, the methodology that they are suggesting is known to every good prison guard, or police interrogator. But, they make it look benign and scientific, and so on; they give a kind of coating to it, and for that reason it's very valuable to them. I think both these things have to be pointed out. First you ask, is this science? No, it's fraud. And then say, OK, then why the interest in it? Answer: because it tells any concentration camp guard that he can do what his instincts tell him to do, but pretend to be a scientist at the same time. So that makes it good, because science is good, or neutral, and so on.

What it does is give a kind of cloak of neutrality to the techniques of oppression and control; and in that respect, it's the same kind of thing that the liberal intelligentsia gave to imperial domination. They *tried* to make it look kind of like an exercise in pragmatism, in problem solving, which is perfectly neutral. In fact, it's interesting...I've quoted dozens of times remarks by some of these counterinsurgency specialists, who try to say, 'Look, it's just like physics, certain inputs, certain outputs, you know, totally neutral ethically. Just a matter of solving certain problems. Only some kind of crazy moralist would be concerned about it.

Well, that is the behaviorists' contribution: to take the standard techniques of control and oppression and coercion, and try to make them disappear, to insulate them from criticism or understanding by assimilating them into science. And that has nothing to do with Marx.

*economic  
determinism  
and  
behavioral  
determinism*

B.R. -- I still feel that there is perhaps an analogy between saying, you know, that a class of people will do certain things under certain economic conditions, like if the ruling class is really threatened, they will use violence to defend themselves, and Skinner's assertion that if you use certain behavior reinforcing devices, an individual is bound to...

CHOMSKY -- Well, it's the "is bound to" part that's significant. If you say "he tends to" then of course it's true. I mean you can make very good generalizations about what people tend to do under certain circumstances. You know, you tend to go to the beach when the temperature is high, not when it's low.

B.R. -- But it's not a law?

CHOMSKY -- (Right, first of all it's not a law, you have individual control. And the principles of tendency themselves are kind of trivial. You don't have to go to scientists to find out anything about them.)

B.R. -- But by the same token, could you say that in certain situations the ruling class could, for moral reasons, say, voluntarily give up their privileges?

CHOMSKY -- Sure, it's conceivable, I just don't think there's any reason to believe it's gonna happen. And, you know, Marx himself speculated that it might happen, in England. And it could be; I could imagine that in a country like Sweden, say, which is a funny sort of mixture of things (and I don't know that much about Sweden), but it seems conceivable, that if it were not for external pressures, the deterioration in control and self-confidence and so on, on the part of the ruling class might reach a point where they simply would have no effective defense, either physical or moral. They've got to have a moral defense as well. That is, they have to convince themselves that what they're doing is right. Very few people can act if they don't convince themselves of that. Of course it wouldn't happen in Sweden because it would be conquered or something if that took place. But apart from that, that describes the kind of an evolution of both the sort of moral deterioration and the deterioration of power on the part of the ruling class groups that might make them maybe defect, or refuse to fight for their privilege, or something of that sort.

B.R. -- You have written a great deal about the technocratic mentality of the planners of Vietnam, etc., who are always working within a certain framework, which they never question. How would that fit in with the trend in Western, or at least Anglo-American society towards positivism? I mean, I can see where, for example, the Soviets and the Germans could use Hegelianism. But it seems that in the

West there is this positivistic tendency that tends to exclude all morality as pure subjectivity. How would this fit in with that mentality?

CHOMSKY -- Well, positivism has nothing to do with science or anything like that; it has to do with capitalism. It has to do with solving technical problems in the interests of whoever sets those problems and determines what are the right solutions. And there's nothing wrong with that. If, suppose let's say, we had a community that was controlling its own local organizations or industries or whatever, and they wanted a certain type of problem solved--well, you'd solve it in any way which best met those conditions.

*positivism  
and the  
"end of  
ideology"*

The ideological utility of this kind of pragmatism is that it contributed to the belief that there is nothing ideological about this, that it's simply neutral, that it is scientific, that it does not reflect privilege of power, which is of course garbage. In order to establish that, it was elevated to an universal ideology in very much the same way that, say, bourgeois ideology was elevated to an universal ideology centuries ago. The whole end of ideology debate is very amusing in that respect, because what many of the exponents were correctly criticizing in earlier ideologies, pointing out that they did in fact universalize particular interests; but then they went on to say, you know, we just solve problems, technically, and we have no ideology at all. Which, once again, is carrying out exactly the same activity that they themselves had accurately criticized in an earlier generation. The belief that they're just neutrally solving problems is of course nonsense, when you realize *who* places the conditions on an acceptable solution, who defines the problems, who is going to be able to make use of the solutions you will come up with, who will reject the ones he doesn't like, and so on.

B.R. -- This is a problem that always fascinated me. You know, philosophy can define a great deal, and limit a lot of choices. I'm not sure if there is a revolutionary philosophy, but I can't ever see anything progressive, any sort of libertarian thing, coming out of positivism. It just seems to exclude it completely. The whole thing that moral choices are purely subjective.

CHOMSKY -- Well, I'm not sure about that.

B.R. -- A lot of the mentality of "The Backroom Boys," etc., seemed to reflect that.

CHOMSKY -- I don't think it's fair to put the guilt for that kind of thing on the positivists, who were mostly sort of liberals and socialists, and that sort of thing, you know, who felt that it was possible by application of reason to achieve goals

*neutral,  
"scientific"  
problem  
solving*

that are humanly desirable. Take someone like, say Bertrand Russell. He's a person who always agreed, basically, with Hume, that reason is the slave of passion; I mean, you just have to decide what kind of things you want for whatever reason, and you use intelligence to try to achieve them. And someone like say Rudolf Carnap, who was a positivist par excellence, who was nevertheless a very strong civil libertarian and a courageous liberal and one of the earliest people to oppose the Vietnam War, and all that. And that's perfectly consistent with his believing that you can't give a scientific justification for value judgments, which may very well be true. }

The fact that guys like the Bundy-types, later made use of this terminology and framework, and distorted into an instrument of class-rule, that's something else.

B.R. — I didn't mean the people, but rather that tendency of thought.

CHOMSKY — Well, in so far as it tends to put to the side value judgments, or questions of choices and where they come from and so on, of course, it can have a very reactionary effect. But that is not inherent to the point of view, it is inherent to the distortion of it.

B.R. --Anarchism is often criticized for being utopian and unable to deal with complicated practical situations. One of the most complex situations around now is in the Middle-East.

CHOMSKY — Yea, I think it's a perfect example of the utility of anarchism, really. What you have in the Middle-East is an almost classic example of the total absurdity of people organizing themselves into state systems. I mean, what do the Jews of Israel gain, as human beings, by identifying themselves as the ruling group in a Jewish state? The only effect of that decision is destructive to them themselves. Take the rise of the whole theocratic control in Israel. *That* has nothing to do with roots in Judaism at all, it never existed. It's a reflection of the establishment of the state system. And to the people of the country that is terribly oppressive, Most of them aren't religious; they don't want any of that nonsense. But they are wedded to it once they insist that there be a state system which somehow distinguishes them from everyone else. Well, how does it distinguish them? By some kind of ideology that has to be created. Obviously it's going to be theocratic. And that means all kinds of interference in everyone's daily life, like, they're not gonna let you get married when you feel like it, and every other kind of thing. So, aside from the fact that it breaks up obvious common interests among, say, Palestinian and Jewish workers, or intellectuals, or anyone, apart from the fact

that it leads to endless wars and will probably end up destroying both sides, apart from all that, just in their daily lives it turns out to be oppressive and destructive, for those who win as much as for those who lose. I mean, there couldn't be a more dramatic example of the absurdity of people organizing themselves into state systems for the purposes of mutual destruction. And until that is overcome, there is just no hope there.

B.R. -- Do you have a scenario for a libertarian solution there?

CHOMSKY -- Yea, I think the only solution there, ever, and I've always believed this, has been to develop a common interest on the part of Jews and Arabs, which would transcend the national conflict. And there is such a common interest, namely, building a libertarian socialist society. If they want to identify themselves nationally in that society, OK. I don't see much interest in it, but if that is what people want, fine, that's their choice. There's no reason why you can't have national institutions even existing side by side, you know, and people choosing to identify themselves one way or another, if that's the way people want it. And also it ought to leave an option for people who don't want it, who don't want to be a part of one or the other of those systems. And that's perfectly feasible, you know, it could be done. I mean, it seems to me the only hope there really, for the people of that region, is to be able to build on that kind of joint socialist commitment. Incidentally, you know there was an early strain of the Zionist movement that insisted on this. And they were right, all along. They were right in opposing the Jewish state, and they're right today.

B.R. -- Would you also say that the world fuel crisis points to the absurdity of national control of international resources?

CHOMSKY -- But here I think one has to be pretty cautious, because you see the line of thinking is arising in the United States which says: Why should those crazy sheiks have all this resource to themselves?

B.R. -- The next thing is to invade.

CHOMSKY -- Yea, they don't say, Why should we have General Motors all to ourselves, or why should we have grain to ourselves, or something like that.

B.R. -- The *Globe* just had an editorial that said if we don't solve the problem soon, we'll all be at the mercy of a troupe of "sheiks in bed sheets", which in view of their recent comments on racism seems...

CHOMSKY -- Oh, I'm sure we are going to hear a lot of that stuff pretty soon.

*an  
anarchist  
solution  
in the  
Mid-east*

B.R. -- Do you think we'll also see a corresponding rise in anti-semitism?

CHOMSKY -- Yea, if you look at the election we had out in Lexington, the local newspaper had the first anti-semitic letters that I ever encountered, the last week or two.

B.R. -- Around the campaign?

CHOMSKY -- Actually, what it was, is they have a thing at Lexington Green, at Christmas, with a display of Christ, and so on. And a lot of people objected to it on the grounds of separation of church and state, etc. And there's always a fight about it, every Christmas. So this year, the letters in defense of it have a distinctly anti-semitic tone to them, a couple of them; saying well, you know, you're criticizing our putting the display on the green, but we have got to freeze because of you, and that sort of thing.

But you know, I think both things can go side-by-side, that is, anti-semitism, can develop along side of racist anti-arab feeling. And I think that is just what is going to happen this winter.

B.R. -- Both sides are being set-up to be sacrificed.

CHOMSKY -- I think that's just what's happening. You know, they have worked themselves into a system where they are both pawns of the superpowers. Purely on the basis of a commitment to a state system. That's the whole trouble right there. There couldn't be a better argument for anarchism.

*What  
is  
to be  
done?*

B.R. -- In view of what we were talking about earlier, and just what you were saying, what hope do you see for the future? I mean, many people in the movement are depressed of late, a lot has collapsed, and there seems to be a retrenching backwards. We've been trying to come to some grips with this. What do you see for the future?

CHOMSKY -- Well, it seems to me as hopeful as it did a couple years ago. I mean, the movement of the last ten years was very reactive. It was reacting to particular atrocities. It was never sort of structural, it was never really dealing with the society---why it should change, how it should change. Not much, at least, there were parts that were. Well, you know, it seems to me that now is the time to try to rebuild real popular structures, that aren't based on periferal, marginal groups like students, but that really grow out of living communities that will continue and that have a very great need to overcome repressive structures.



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**George Dickenson** has just quit her last job after spending two days adding carcasses at a meat packing plant and is struggling to live her life as a lumpen. From the Catholic Church to a fascination with Ayn Rand and through a brief stint with left liberal politics in California in the sixties George arrived at anarchism and later lesbian feminism. After moving to Vermont for a little R&R from Berkeley she learned to drink beer and became a member of a women's theater and of a number of lesbian/feminist/anarchist action and discussion groups. She has recently moved to Boston.

**David Dobereiner**, born in 1929, was raised in England under conditions of rural poverty, and after studying architecture in London emigrated to the USA, where he has since taught design in various architectural departments. His anarchist philosophy was sharpened and further evolved out of city planning considerations stimulated by correspondence with Lewis Mumford and an exploration of cultural anthropology, psychological studies of society and the individual, and ethology.

**John Hess**, born in Brooklyn to a proletarian family, was raised a devout Catholic. After being expelled from the seminary for general rowdiness, he read Bertrand Russell, thus becoming an enthusiastic atheist and political activist. Expelled once again from the first university he attended (for repeated curfew violations), he finally graduated without honors. A move to Boston for graduate school led to an involvement with PL/SDS and the leninist left, an involvement which issued necessarily in several arrests, a jail sentence, and an embracement of anarchism. He has worked as a postman, telephone switchman, garbageman, social worker and janitor. John, currently undecided about choice of a career, but will most likely follow his better inclinations to the grave as an unemployable declass lumpen hippie.

**Marian Leighton** comes from a background of the WASP lower-class in rural Maine, and was a Goldwater supporter, a Randist, and then a left-wing anarchist when she became aware of and involved in the women's movement. She worked with the Black Rose Anarcho-feminist group in 1971 and is a member of the Rounder Records Collective. Studying consciousness in women's history and developing a critique of consciousness/sexuality by integrating psychoanalysis in the service of feminist theory

are her present political work activities. Marian is participating in a seminar on forms of female expression in the Cambridge/Goddard Feminist Studies program. She is further concerned with emergent forms of women's consciousness and their potential for dynamic ritual expression.

**Marie Nares'** political education began at the age of three in a tenement in Spanish Harlem. She watched the lives of generations of her family being destroyed as she grew up, had to leave high school to work but finally got a college degree attending night classes. As has been the experience of many women in this society all this piece of paper has brought her is the right to a job as a secretary. She has learned to hate the irresponsible rich and complacent middle class.

**Steve N.** became a libertarian socialist as a teen-ager, influenced by relatives in the trade-union movement active in the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti and the Loyalist cause in Spain. Formerly a Columbia University graduate student, he has earned a living as warehouseman, janitor, and shoe worker. He is presently a sheet-metal worker in Massachusetts, and is active in union activities.

**Bill Nowlin** teaches politics at Lowell Technological Institute and is also a member of the Rounder Records Collective. Born in Boston, raised in Lexington, "The Birthplace of American Liberty," a graduate of individualist anarchism of the YAF/Ayn Rand/early 60's and later an ecumenical revolutionary who worked free-lance taking pictures with Liberation News Service and went to all sorts of demonstrations by all sorts of groups. Having made the switch to communism/collectivism at the Pentagon demonstration, it remained only to return to anarchism. Murray Bookchin's writings provided the impetus here, and Orwell's HOMAGE TO CATALONIA added the necessity for the critical approach.

**Doug Richardson** is a journeyman cable-TV lineman and a student of psychology and labor history. He grew up a thoroughbred proletarian around Flint, Michigan. Since then he has done a lot of things. His political roots are in life and in the 60's new left. He enjoys eating oysters and would like to make money as an ornithologist.

